

**HELEN POTREBENKO**

# **NO STREETS OF GOLD**

**A SOCIAL HISTORY OF UKRAINIANS IN ALBERTA**





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# HOW I BECAME A CANADIAN

My interest in researching Ukrainian Canadian history began when I was filling out the application for my father's old age pension. He told me to write a letter explaining that his original passport was taken away from him when he was about to be deported, and it wasn't returned when he got his naturalization papers.

How could they deport you and make you a citizen all at the same time? I asked.

Do you know what a *zhorna* is?

Well . . . There was this large piece of rock lying around the farm when I was a kid, but I have no idea how it worked.

That's part of it. What happened to the other pieces?

I don't know. What's it got to do with becoming a Canadian?

I'll get to that eventually if you're still listening. First, I'll explain about the *zhorna*. You start with a *kal'doob*, which is just a hollowed out piece of wood and easy to make. Over this you put a rock which fits tightly over the hole. The rock would be about two and one-half feet in diameter and four inches thick. It can't be too hard because then it can't be worked, nor too soft because then you'd get rock chips in the flour. The top of this rock is roughened with a chisel or *molotok*. Then you have to make a hole through the centre of the rock, which you do labouriously with the same *molotok*. Through this hole is stuck the *vertyonok*, which stands on solid wood at the bottom of the *kal'doob*, but with a *klinok* under it.

*Klinok?*

That's a sort of wedge-shaped piece of wood. The top rock is bigger and again, must be exactly the right kind of rock, not too hard and not too soft—these were difficult things to come by. This rock also had a hole in the centre and under it, a sort of steel nest for the *vertyonok* to rest in. This *vertyonok* also balances the upper rock. The *klinok* is pushed farther to raise the upper rock for a coarser grind of flour, and lowered for a finer grind.

When you're grinding grain, my father continued, you put your *zhorna* under a hole in the ceiling, which is the right size and height for the pole

to rest in. The bottom of this pole is placed on the side of the top rock, and by turning the pole, you turn the rock. With one arm you turn the pole; with the other you pour grain continuously into the central hole. The turning must be done smoothly for an even grind. The flour falls down into the *kal'doob* through the central hole in the bottom rock. The *kal'doob* has a hole in the side of it from which flour pours out with each turn of the rock.

It's women's work, my father said, but as a youth I helped my mother grind. I would take off my trousers, leaving only my shirt on, and it would flap when I moved my arm to turn and blow fresh air on my body. It's hard work and takes a long time.

Have we got to Canada yet?

Yes. The last farmer I worked for in Lamont during the harvest of 1930, just before we went to the homestead, offered to give me his *zhorna*, which he no longer needed, being a first-wave immigrant. But I said we came to Canada to find a better life and if we must still grind with a *zhorna*, then we may as well have stayed at home. So we went to the homestead without the *zhorna*.

We moved to the homestead, and you know all that, about how we built a house and started clearing land, and we had no machinery and no money, and there was no market for grain even if we had been able to clear and break enough land by hand. Besides, the crops were no good in the 30's even if we had been able to grow some, which we didn't. So every year I had to go and look for work, leaving your mother and first one baby, then two, alone in the house. You remember the house, the one we later used for a chicken coop.

Yeah, I replied, and I didn't think it was fit, even for chickens.

In 1934, my father said, I didn't earn anything on the harvest. I left home with 96 cents and I earned \$6 and things were pretty grim. And so they said they were going to deport us because we were communists. You should know about that. You will make poor revolutionaries if you don't know the history of your country. Of stories such as this is your history made up.

Very well.

It's the fall of 1934, my father said. Your mother cooked a chicken and some bread for me and I rode the freight to Edmonton.

That year the police were beating freight-riders something awful. But when my father and Selevich got to High Prairie, they met up with a lot of Sunset House people, so there were no more worries. There were a lot of them and the men from Sunset House were communists and stuck together. They rode the freight like *hospodars*, not like bums, because no one could touch them.

In Westlock there were normally only two RCMP cops. The freight had to stop and take on water there, and someone must have wired ahead

because the RCMP had reinforcements and there were five of them waiting for the freight.

Four of the mounties pointed guns out the police car windows, while a fifth was sent in to beat on the men. But the first four men he met up with were my father, Selevich, Alexewich, and Wasyl Shewchuk. The cop looked them over and then started talking instead of swinging. He persuaded them to get off the freight to talk. The freight was manoeuvring, picking up cars and the like, so they thought they could easily get back on. But after the train took on water, it backed up for about half a mile and then whipped by them so fast they saw only sparks flying. And cops laughing.

The RCMP were going to arrest them so they took them to the station. But there were a lot of them and jails were overflowing in the 30's, so the police only wrote down a few names and lost heart.

There was a flower garden outside the station, and the men dropped their packs on the flowers as they went inside. It was a kind of petty revenge since they couldn't think of anything else to do. Then, after the cops told them they could leave, they sat around eating and talking for a while. Finally they decided to leave. They had to walk all the way from Westlock to Edmonton with a police escort. A priest in a car stopped to pick up some of them, but the cops spoke to him and he drove off empty.

In Edmonton, the men were told that the crop in Saskatchewan had been a disaster and there was no use going there.

There was a concert at the AUUC Hall (then called ULFTA), my father said, and I don't really like telling you this part but I have said I will tell the truth. I had 96 cents, you will remember, and the concert cost 25 cents. But workers' organizations are always collecting money for some cause and this woman came to sit down beside me and do a pitch for money. I told her I understood how money was needed to build a workers' organization and I told her I was a communist, but I had a wife and two babies on the homestead, left there without a penny, and they would die in the winter unless I brought home some money. The woman persisted. Finally, I held out the 71 cents I had left and said: Look, this is the total wealth of a man, a woman, and two children—take it if your conscience permits you. She took it. Selevich looked over to see what had happened. *Ti korova nischasna*, he said, you poor cow.

They went south on a freight. My father remembers one town called Mirror where they were given water to drink but were not allowed to get off. They got off at the next station, for by then it was obvious there were no crops to harvest there either.

My father also remembers one night when Selevich, who was a heavy sleeper, asked my father to wake him early in the morning before the sun came up so that he could go and steal some potatoes. The provisions they had brought with them had been used up. My father let Selevich sleep



and got the potatoes himself, which surprised Selevich, who didn't think my father could do that sort of thing. My father got about three-quarters of a bushel of potatoes, enough to give to all the freight-riders. But there was no work, so they returned to Edmonton and then Selevich went home. My father didn't want to go home empty-handed, and he knew that in Lamont there would always be crops.

I knew many people from Lamont, my father said, since that was where your mother and I had worked, so I thought that if I hung around Edmonton for a few days, I would see someone I knew and get a ride with them. But no one I knew appeared. You couldn't get on a freight in Edmonton because the railway cops were particularly vicious and patrolled the yards with dogs. All of us men carried blankets on our backs and slept wherever we could. I slept under the steps of the Immigration Hall since that was one building I knew. There were, you understand, a great many men like me walking around Edmonton and a great many women caring for lonely homesteads, waiting, but there were no crops to harvest. They gave us food at the Immigration Hall. Twice a day we lined up. First you picked up a bowl and a spoon. The first man gave you some oats porridge in the bowl. The second put two spoonfuls of sugar in the bowl and the third filled the remaining space with milk.

After two days, my father continued, I was weak and found that I could no longer eat this oats porridge. Strange. There it would be sitting in front of me, and I couldn't eat. I simply couldn't eat. I think it's because of so much sugar, and maybe oats doesn't have much food value. I gave up hope of finding a ride to Lamont. What I did then was walk around to the bakeries in Edmonton and explain my situation. The first four refused. By the fifth one, another man with the same idea had joined me, and this fifth baker gave us a loaf of bread. I took my half loaf and started for the highway to Lamont.

For a long time, my father said, I stood on the highway with my thumb stuck out but no one stopped. There was a great deal of traffic on the road and dogs riding in some of the cars passing by. But I was only a man, so I walked.

After a long time I was tired and hungry. I stopped in a farmer's yard, a rich farmer, judging from his possessions, and asked the man in the yard if he would give me some food. He went away and presently a woman came out carrying a can full of skim milk, which she set down in front of me. I didn't want to carry the can away because it looked like a new one, so I sat down right there and pulled out my bread to eat with the milk. The farmer had many turkeys and chickens and geese and you know how curious these birds are. They all came over to where I was sitting—and there I sat, banquetting on bread and skim milk, surrounded by cackling, gobbling, honking poultry.

Then I set out walking again. By nighttime I had reached Fort

Saskatchewan. The prisoners there worked on a large farm and they had just stooked sweet clover. I scattered some of the stooks, made myself a bed of sweet clover, and slept.

The next morning, my father said, I continued walking. About noon a broken-down old truck passed me going in the other direction, then stopped and backed up. In it were a farmer and his son. Will you stook for a dollar a day? the farmer asked me. I replied I would and he motioned me to get on the back of the truck. We went to Edmonton. There I waited while they did all their business and by evening we were back at their farm, which was near Gibson.

\$1 a day? I asked. But you said that in 1928 you were working for farmers for \$2.50 a day.

That was 1928, my father said, and now I'm talking about 1934. The farmer owned two binders, one of which he ran himself, and the other one, his son worked on. There were two workers to do the stooking: a Czechoslovakian named Stefan and myself.

My father was very weak from walking and the lack of food. In the morning his nose started bleeding and bled slowly all day. He stooked 16 hours, dripping blood onto the bundles. In the evening he spoke to the farmer.

Listen, he said, when I said I would stook for \$1 a day, I meant for a normal ten hour day. Are we going to work 16 hours every day?

We will work as long as necessary until the harvest is finished, the farmer said.

Then you must pay us more.

Don't start demanding things, man; you stooked only about a quarter as much as Stefan.

I know that. I am weak and my nose bled all day but I did the best I could and I stooked for 16 hours. I'll settle for a dollar a day for a ten hour day, but for every hour over ten I want another ten cents a day. Today I earned \$1.60.

The next morning the farmer gave him breakfast and told him he no longer worked there.

Alright, my father said, but where's that \$1.60 I earned yesterday?

You're getting no money, not even a dollar, was the farmer's reply. You didn't do enough work.

My father started walking down the road. But the farmer's wife yelled and then his son joined in, so the farmer came out and threw a dollar after my father. My father came back to pick up the crumpled bill and kept walking toward Lamont.

Near the river there was a large farm with many bundles lying on the ground unstooked. The farm was owned by a Frenchman who was harvesting with a tractor. My father waited for the man on the tractor to come around to his side of the field.

You've got a lot of stooking to do, he said to the farmer. Will you pay a dollar a day?

The farmer said he would. My father stooked there until the field was done, which took five days. Now he had \$6 but his clothes were ragged.

Freshly cut bundles are relatively easy to stook as they are greenish and damp. But bundles which have been lying on the ground for a while are heavy because of the moisture they have absorbed from the ground on the bottom. (They're dry on top.) They can't be stooked fast because if you grab them by the twine, they'll fall apart. You have to grab them by a handful of the stalk each time and be fairly careful. The dry stalks are scratchy and destroy clothing. At the end of the five days, my father's denim jacket and overalls were a mess.

And still he had only \$6. It started to rain, a heavy rain which looked as if it could last for days. What to do? The only way to pass rainy days was to find a friendly farmer who would let you sleep in a barn or grainery out of the rain. But there wasn't anyone who would feed a worker when there was no work to do. And after the rain stopped, who knew if there was going to be more work? People were saying that even for threshing, the pay was only going to be \$1 a day.

My father decided he had better take his \$6 and go home. But how were they going to live through the winter? What were they to buy salt and flour and sugar and kerosene with?

He was near Kostyshyn's. Four years before, Kostyshyn had offered to give his *zhorna* to my father, but my father had refused, saying he had not come to Canada to live like that. Now he went to see Kostyshyn again. Kostyshyn even gave him lunch. Would he still give him the *zhorna*? Sure he would, only how was he to get it home? The bottom rock weighed about 70 or 80 pounds and the top one about 200 pounds. A train ticket from Edmonton to Rycroft cost \$14 just for the passenger, and my father had only \$6. Kostyshyn called his son to harness the horses. Since it was wet they weren't doing anything anyhow, so the son drove my father and his *zhorna* the 14 miles to Lamont.

In Lamont my father went straight to the store of the Ukrainian Jew named Tarnov. Everybody went to Tarnov. Ukrainians who were virulently anti-semitic in the Old Country discovered when they came to the new one that the only people who would help them were the Jews who had arrived before. On their side, the Jews were hated in the new country the same as in the old, and they were pleased to find among all the strangers some who spoke their language and were familiar with their culture.

Tarnov had a small business consisting of a store, a restaurant and other minor ventures. He put people up when they needed it, fed them, kept their mail for them, advised them about legal matters, wrote letters, and did whatever else was necessary. He was always scrupulously honest

and did not ask people for payment when they had none.

My father slept the night there. Tarnov advised him in the morning to go to the stockyards nearby since there was stock being shipped to Edmonton.

Almost as soon as he arrived at the stockyard with his *zhorna*, my father found a Ukrainian farmer who was taking pigs to Edmonton. The farmer told my father he could come along if he paid him \$5. My father said he had only made \$6 on the harvest and Edmonton was still a long way from home. They finally settled on \$1.25. So my father now had \$4.75 left.

The farmer was taking the pigs down 101st Street in Edmonton, which is the street the Immigration Hall is on. He left my father and his *zhorna* there. My father hid the smaller rock under the stairs of the Immigration Hall, and putting the other rock, wrapped in his blanket, on his back set off for the Dunvegan freight marshalling yards five miles away.

Two hundred pounds is heavy and it was getting dark. Walking by some elevators, he stopped to rest by leaning back against the crossbar on the door to ease the weight of the rock. Down the way he saw a flashlight, but ignored it until the person approached him.

What are you carrying? the voice behind the light asked.

Gold, my father replied irritably, starting to walk away.

The man seized the rock and since it was so heavy, my father was knocked over. Lying on the ground, he started cursing, but he couldn't speak English well enough to do it properly.

What language do you speak? the man asked.

Ukrainian, my father replied; and to his surprise the man started speaking Ukrainian. The man turned out to be a trilingual German from Bruderheim who was in the RCMP. My father told him about how he hadn't made much money on the harvest so he had been given the *zhorna* and was taking them home.

How will you get them home? the man asked.

I've already got that planned. I tie them onto a place under the train I know about while the freight is still in the marshalling yard, then I will jump the same freight and get to Rycroft that way.

What if you can't? What if you try to jump the freight carrying the rocks? It is difficult enough for an unencumbered man to jump a freight but if you try it with a heavy weight on your back, you'll fall under the wheels and be cut in two.

I'll take my chances, my father said. I don't have much choice.

Don't be dumb, man. Go down to the RCMP station and they'll give you a permit to ride on the train free.

My father laughed. The police? They are agents of the bourgeoisie. *Pahnski sobaki*. You wouldn't help a poor man.

You talk like a Communist. Who gave you the Red spectacles?



Red spectacles! Haven't I been here for six years, working harder than in the Old Country and for nothing? My wife and children are waiting at home for me to bring enough money to live through the winter. Someone had to *give* me Red spectacles? Can't I see for myself?

Oh, things will get better. In the meantime, the police will help you out. He gave my father an address.

My father continued walking to the marshalling yards, where he buried the rock, then walked back to get the other one, which he likewise hid. Then he went back to sleep under the steps of the Immigration Hall. In the morning, he got in the food line-up, breakfasted on oats porridge and went to the address the cop had given him.

Did you think they were going to help you? I asked him in amazement.

No, of course, not. I wanted evidence against the capitalist system.

Oh, you didn't have enough evidence—with making no money, and that stupid house and stupid farm and no roads, and . . . Oh, no! That wasn't enough evidence, you had to humbly ask the cops for more!

Never mind, my father said, taking a drink out of the vodka bottle I had set in front of him. At 8 a.m. I am waiting at the copshop, 30 years ago. The German policeman is not there, but instead, some kind of sergeant. What do you want? he says to me. I shake my ragged jacket sleeve at him. Then I lean over and shake the legs, one at a time, of my ragged overalls. Then I pull up my ragged pantleg so he can see my ragged running shoes which I have mended with a piece of twine. In my broken English, I tell him about the \$6, my wife and children, and the *zhorna*. He is very sympathetic, a good man. I even show him the \$4.75 I have left. He says he understands and is appalled, but that the RCMP have no funds for such circumstances. I can see he would give me his own money if he had any, but the police didn't get paid too well in those days either. You can't ride a freight with those rocks, the sergeant tells me, because you'll get killed. I sympathize but if we catch you tomorrow, we'll put you in jail rather than let your children be orphans.

The sergeant gave my father the address of the relief office and he went there next. He went through the same routine of shaking his rags and showing his twine-mended running shoes. They were also sympathetic but they were the relief office only for the city of Edmonton and couldn't give him a travel voucher beyond the city. They couldn't even give him a meal ticket because he had showed them he had \$4.75.

They sent him to walk to another place near the parliament buildings. The office had a name on it: Mr. McKenzie. My father went inside and there was a secretary. He shook his ragged jacket, his ragged trousers, and showed her his twine-mended running shoes.

Mr. McKenzie! she called over her shoulder.

A *pahn* came in, and my father began shaking his rags but Mr. McKenzie asked him please not to repeat the story as he had been

listening from his office.

How long have you lived in Canada? he asked.

Six years, my father replied.

Are you a citizen?

No.

Why not?

I haven't had time. I've been working at clearing some land, paying back debts, building a house, growing a garden. Nor had I the money for the application.

We can't help you then. You're not a Canadian.

But I need help.

We don't need your kind of people here! I'll give you a ticket back to Russia.

I need help, my father said, and I will sit here in your office until I get it.

He sat there all day and they pretended he wasn't there. At four o'clock Mr. McKenzie told him they were locking up the office and would he please leave. My father said he wouldn't leave until he got help.

Oh, you need help, do you? Mr. McKenzie said, and dialled on the telephone. Soon a burly cop entered the room.

Did you call? he asked.

Throw that man out, said Mr. McKenzie.

Which man? the cop asked, although my father was the only other person there.

That one, Mr. McKenzie said, pointing at my father.

The burly cop grabbed my father with one hand by the back of his collar and the other by the seat of his pants and pushed him at a fast run down the stairs. My father ran at a tremendous speed to keep from falling, down the stairs and out the door, then finally fell on the lawn. Christ, a man wants to cry at a time like that. Crouched on the grass on all fours, my father said "sonofabitch" through his teeth and finally gathered up the strength to get up.

Well, I said, handing him the vodka bottle, you had the evidence you wanted against capitalism.

Yes, I did. And heavy with the weight of evidence, I walked again to Dunvegan. I crawled into a field near the marshalling yards and lying between the rows so no one could see me, dug out potatoes with my hands and stuffed them inside my shirt, the way peasants do, you know, *za pazookhu*.

Yeah.

Then I went to a different place and started a fire over which I cooked the potatoes. I really ate a lot of potatoes.

You said before about cooking potatoes. What did you cook them in?

A tin can. There were always a lot of tin cans lying around. Most of us

carried salt with us, tied in a rag. That was no problem. The rest of the trip wasn't much of a problem either. Before dawn, I tied the rocks onto a freight going to Rycroft and jumped the same freight, just as I had planned. At Rycroft, I left the rocks with Roslanowsky and walked the 14 miles home. Normally I would ride the freight to the Burnt River which was a lot closer to home, and then jump off it when the train slowed down for the grade, but with the rocks this time I couldn't do that. Andrew and Sawa Shura owned one horse each by this time, so I stopped by Andrew's on my way home and asked them to bring my rocks home the next time they were in Rycroft, which they did in return for some work. I still had to carry them home a mile from Andrew's because there was no road yet over that creek by our place. That same day I bought some salt and some kerosene in Rycroft and spent all of the \$4.75.

So we were penniless again, my father said, and winter hadn't yet begun. Your mother had already been to the relief office and been turned down. Selevich was facing assault charges for being thrown out of the relief office.

Nikolaychuk and I went to the relief office and got a \$5 voucher each. Then they told us that anyone who got relief would be deported, so we didn't go back again.

Well, said my father to Nikolaychuk, how are we going to live?

I know a way, Nikolaychuk replied, but it will be difficult.

Difficult is not impossible.

I know how to kill and skin squirrels, said Nikolaychuk, and I will teach you how.

Bullets cost money.

I've got two boxes of bullets, said Nikolaychuk, and they cost 25 cents a box. I'll loan you one of them. Can you borrow a .22?

Sure. Omelyan has one.

A two-bit box contained 50 bullets. No matter how careful a person is, sometimes you miss and it may take several bullets to kill one squirrel. The average was about two bullets per squirrel and the skins were selling for two and a half cents each. The first day they went hunting they killed 25 squirrels and expected to get 75 cents for them. After skinning and stretching them, my father walked to Spirit River—18 miles away—to sell them at Harper's Co-op. And for once, a miracle occurred! The price had gone up and he got a nickel per skin. He bought two boxes of bullets and still had 75 cents left over. He doesn't remember what he bought with it.

We couldn't tell anyone, my father said, that we were selling squirrels for a nickel each or I wouldn't have been able to borrow a .22 any more. So Nikolaychuk and I disappeared early next morning and our wives told everyone we'd gone to look for work. We stayed overnight this time, until all the bullets were gone. This time Nikolaychuk went to Spirit River. I told him what to buy me with the money and he bought me what I wanted

and gave me some money besides because the price was then seven and a half cents per skin. By spring, squirrel skins were 12 and a half cents each. We got through the winter all right.

What was Mother doing all this time? I asked. There was her and the two kids alone most of the winter.

She did whatever it is women do when looking after small children. She was a good mother. There was lots and lots of work to do, all that wood and water to be brought in....

But what did she think about it all? Summer is precarious enough, but winter? All my life she told us we would freeze to death if we once stopped that continuous getting and cutting and chopping and carrying of wood. Was she bitter then? Those years that fear was taking over her mind, was she bitter?

I don't know.

Did you talk to each other?

Oh sure, we talked. But....

He beat her the day he got home from the relief office. He came home tired, hungry, angry. They have each told me different versions of how it started so I include neither version since I don't think the details matter. In both versions, for no good reason, my father beats up my mother.

I had been insulted and starved and degraded, my father said. None of them *pahnni* treated me like a human being, but like some beast of burden, but no matter . . . I was still boss in my own house, and I could still beat the shit out of my wife and kids and so I did.

I started to hand him the vodka bottle but then thought I better have one myself first.

But you've already told me . . ., I said. She was just as degraded and insulted and peasant women always work harder than men, and on top of that she had you to deal with? Was she bitter?

Maybe she was, but she was never afraid. I have never known another person like her. She was *never* afraid. Even, I had a gun at her head once and she spit in my eye. How are you going to look after the children if you kill me? she asks. She was never afraid.

He was only her husband so he wouldn't know. Like all peasant women my mother never accepted the inferior role handed her. But I was her daughter and I know she was afraid. Afraid of freezing, afraid of starving. No, that's not right for death itself has never had any particular threat for her. What she was afraid of was cold, hunger, illness....

In the spring, my father continued, another one of them *pahns* arrived. He said we would be deported because of the \$5 relief voucher. They couldn't deport Soviet Ukrainians because of the political situation, but our part of the country was still ruled by the Polish empire at the time. They deported thousands of our people after the Winnipeg General Strike, yet they were still fearful of the poor for they might become



communist. Nikolaychuk wasn't a communist so he wouldn't be deported, but the *pahn* told me we would be deported. Then we didn't know what to do. It didn't seem worthwhile to clear any more land because we wouldn't be planting it the following spring, and people all around us were being deported. So we just sort of dragged around, still working, but mostly waiting.

In the summer, this policeman arrived, my father said. We had planted a garden but it yielded poorly that year. I was out clearing land, sort of half-heartedly. Who knew what might happen? The policeman spoke to your mother, walked around the house, then pulled out one of the poor carrots from the garden and ate it. Then he came to see me. I didn't know he was there. After a while he came up to me and said: I've been watching you work for two hours, you know. Oh? All these mosquitoes, the policeman said. It was all bush and swamp, the area around there before we cleared it, and mosquitoes bred in unbelievable masses. Wherever a person went there would be a cloud of mosquitoes so thick you couldn't see him.

I know, I said. My mother once told me she couldn't take little Rose outside because she would get bitten by mosquitoes and get infected and babies could die of it.

Yeah, well, I don't know anything about children, that was her job. This policeman said he'd been watching me work, surrounded by mosquitoes. He asked me what I thought about being deported. I told him I didn't care one way or the other, but that I wished they would make up their minds. The policeman said we hadn't been deported yet because of the previous police report, but I didn't know anything about that report.

Why don't you care about leaving? the policeman asked my father.

You saw my house, my father said, you saw how my kids were dressed, you saw what furniture we had, what food we ate? Tell me, do you think it's possible for life to be any worse?

No, the policeman replied.

Then why should I care about leaving it?

All right, the policeman said, why don't you want to go home then?

It isn't much better there either. It's better because then we would be with our own people. But on the other hand, I left six years ago to go to America and if I go back now, they will call me "the American" for the rest of my life, and talk about how I left to find a better life and came back ragged and hungry....

I see, the policeman said. We won't deport you if you sign this form which says you will never apply for relief again.

But my father refused. You do whatever you want, he told the policeman, but I can't sign any such form. For myself I might, but if my children are hungry, I will do whatever I have to do to feed them.

Soon they received word through Haig, the storekeeper who was also

the postmaster, that their deportation had been postponed. They were tired of hanging around like that, not knowing if they would be allowed to live here or not.

I still had some money from the squirrels, my father said, and that summer I went to the court in Grande Prairie and paid the \$5 necessary to apply for naturalization papers.

The court was full of people waiting to be called. I was about second. The secretary tells the judge I don't speak English, but the judge says he will talk to me and find out for himself. He asks me about the relief and I tell him I'd made no money on the harvest and had no way to live through the winter. Then I tell him about the squirrels.

Naturally, the judge says, as soon as you had some money you rushed down and repaid the \$5 to the relief office.

No.

Why not?

I don't have \$5 to spare. I made only enough money to keep myself and my family.

But you had \$5 left over to make this application.

Yes, I judged it important because I don't want to wait around to be deported.

The judge says I speak very good English and he had enjoyed speaking to me so much that instead of granting me naturalization now, he will ask me to come back later and speak some more. There is a buzz in the courtroom, all the people there having been curious to see how a communist would be dealt with.

I went home and stopped in Haig's store on my way. You got your papers, Haig says, and I tell him no, and tell him what the judge said.

But I'm a government agent, being a postmaster, Haig says, and I know better than the judge. I know you got your papers.

I tell him he's crazy. But only about a week later when I went to the store, he waved an official envelope at me. He wasn't supposed to be opening the mail, but he knew what was in it.

And that's how I became a Canadian.

Naturalization for wives of citizens was almost automatic, so my mother got her papers soon after. And that's how I came to be born a Canadian about six years later.

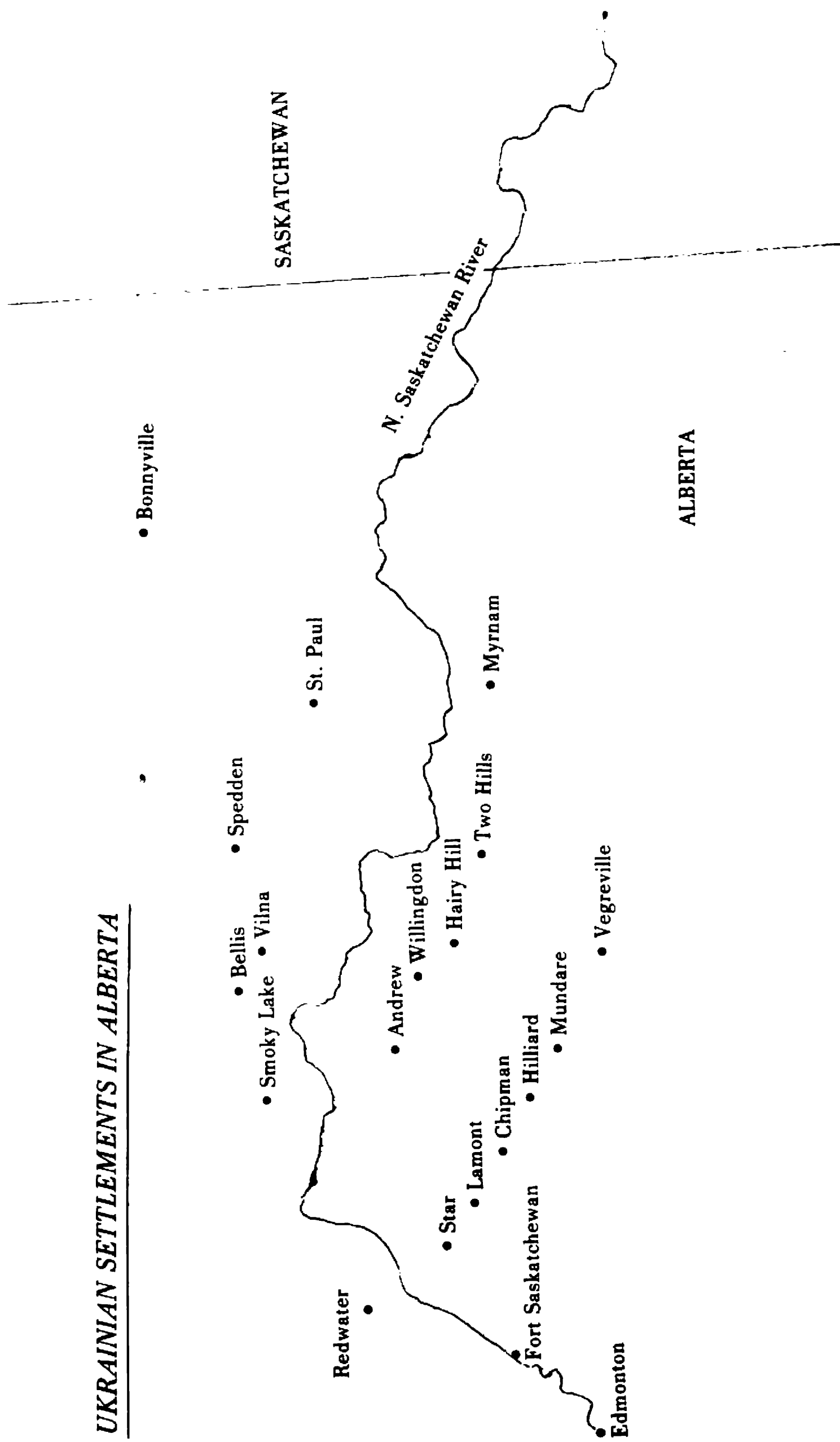
When my father first told me this story it seemed straightforward—a poor family struggling for survival. They survived, but it seemed to have been made unnecessarily difficult. Of Ukrainian immigrants to the prairies, James MacGregor has written: "To an empty land, they came empty-handed." But the land wasn't empty originally—it was teeming with buffalo and other game animals. It was populated first by Indians, then Indians and Metis. Where did they all go?

And why was my father walking down the road hungry? Why was my mother poor, isolated, battered? Was it just because of the depression? Because they lived in Alberta? Was it because they were Ukrainians? Or was there something wrong that lay deeper than the fates of the individual immigrants?

**1**

# **The Homesteaders**

UKRAINIAN SETTLEMENTS IN ALBERTA





# The First Ukrainians

There were three waves of Ukrainian immigration to Canada: the first from 1891 to 1914; the second, 1923 to 1930; and the third, 1945 to 1961.

It is estimated that 170,000 Ukrainians came to Canada in the first wave. It began with Ivan Pylipiw and Wasyl Eleniak arriving in Montreal on September 7, 1891. They left for Winnipeg by train that same day. After looking at farms in Manitoba, they were told the climate was better in Alberta (!), so they went there. Because of Pylipiw's friendship in the Old Country with a German named John Krebs, they visited the area near Bruderheim where Krebs was homesteading.

Wasyl Eleniak stayed to work in Canada while Pylipiw went home to tell of what they had seen. He was jailed by the Austrian authorities for encouraging emigration so he was not able to return to Canada for another year. In 1892, therefore, other Nebiliw villagers became the first Ukrainians to take out homesteads and settle on them in Canada. Among the first immigrants were the families of Stefan Chichak, Wasyl Feniak, Nikola Tychkowsky, Anton Paish, five Melnyk's, and others.

The Nebiliw villagers settled on homesteads at Edna-Star, just east of Bruderheim, between 1892 and 1894. The area was first referred to as Beaver Creek. When the post office began, the postmaster called it Edna after his daughter. A different postmaster changed the name to Star. From this area the Ukrainian settlement was to spread until it covered 52 townships.

At first only the Nebiliw villagers arrived. Only after several years and more publicity did the mass immigration of Ukrainians begin. They were eager to come because of the poverty of their homeland.

This poverty was caused by the semi-feudalism in the Ukraine. Austria had taken the province of Halychina in 1772 during the first partition of Poland. In 1774 Austria also took the Ukrainian provinces of Bukovina and Transcarpathia. Russia retained eastern Ukraine and took Belorussia from the Poles. This change of rulers changed the position of the peasants not one bit. Serfdom remained and Polish nobles were allowed to retain their Ukrainian lands.

Rebellions throughout the Austrian territories brought about the abolition of serfdom in 1848. But the peasants weren't any better off and gradually became worse off. This was due to the way the land was divided.

In 1848 a few thousand landlords in Halychina were given 42.2 per cent of the land. Peasants were allowed to buy the rest at high prices. The government paid the landlords immediately, then the peasants had to repay the government. These payments lasted until 1908; in addition, peasants were more heavily taxed than landlords. In 1888, the average income of 5,000,000 peasants in Halychina was about \$14.80 a year. The situation in Bukovina was similar.

In Transcarpathia, only 20 per cent of the land under cultivation belonged to the peasants. One hundred and thirty great landlords owned the same amount of land as 400,000 peasants.

Emigration proved to be the most widely used solution to the "land problem." Between 1890 and 1910, 302,330 people emigrated from Halychina. At first they went to South America. Slavery had been abolished in Brazil in 1888 and the plantation owners were avid for cheap labour. Passage was paid for Europeans, but the conditions were unbearable—workers were even kept in the old slave lockups. After 1896, emigration of Ukrainians to Brazil stopped, with most people going to the U.S. and Canada.

In some areas, emigration reached astounding proportions. Between 1890 and 1914, about 400,000 people—roughly half the population—emigrated from Transcarpathia.

Ukrainian socialists, including Ivan Franko, wondered for a time if this was a good idea and some people suggested that mass emigration should be discouraged. But emigration fever had taken hold of the people and nothing could stop them, so socialists and others merely tried to keep the emigrants from being cheated.

Living conditions in Russian Ukraine were not much different than in the Austrian portion. Serfdom was not abolished in the Russian empire until 1861. Household serfs got no land at all so they were in the same position as before. The rest got small plots of overpriced land. Peasants got about half the available land to be paid for over 49 years.

Belorussians were in about the same situation. This land is a low, marshy plain, with the Priapet area flooding every spring. Being poor land, more of it was needed to provide subsistence. When the serfs were freed in 1861, they got only 38 per cent of the land. In 1900, one Count Potocki owned 592,000 acres in Minsk province. Peasant holding varied from 2.7 to 57 acres. Jews were not allowed to own land at all. The land-owning gentry prevented industrial growth to keep the towns from developing as rival powers.

The first wave of Ukrainian immigrants to Canada was all peasants. They came almost entirely from the Austrian dominated provinces of Halychina and Bukovina. They were all sent to the prairies.

## Alberta Then

At first the prairies and NWT were called Rupert's Land. When Manitoba was granted provincial status as a result of the first Riel Rebellion, this name was dropped and the remainder of the unprovinced land was called the North West Territories. It was ruled from Regina by a lieutenant-governor chosen by the federal government. Later, any 1,000 square miles which had 1,000 white inhabitants could have a representative. By 1897, the NWT was self-governing in local matters.

The first agricultural settlers in Alberta arrived about 1881 but this wasn't followed by a rush to the land. Although the land in the area around Edmonton had been surveyed about 1882, by 1891 the population of Edmonton was only about 700. Calgary, which had the CPR railway by this time, had 3,876 people.

Population growth in Alberta came in the 1890's. The trickle of immigrants became a flood from 1896. The CPR railway from Calgary to South Edmonton (Strathcona) was completed in 1891; in 1892 the curling rink in Edmonton was converted into an immigration hall, and an immigration shed was built in Strathcona.

The first Ukrainians did not fare well. Most of them arrived nearly penniless. They were cheated by various agents in Europe and this continued after they arrived in Canada. They were transported to Canada on cargo ships. The cargo, often cattle, was unloaded in Europe, then the emigrants were loaded on. The food was shocking and few attempts were made to clean up the ships.

When they arrived, they were cheated by immigration agents, land agents, and other parasites. Then when they went to their lonely and isolated piece of bush, they met up with that most insidiously demoralizing phenomenon: mosquitoes. *Halychina* was mostly cultivated so no such pests had existed. In the days of swamp and bush in Alberta, mosquitoes were much more numerous than they are now. Animals were driven mad by them, babies died if not protected in some fashion. Besides mosquitoes, there was racism.

The word "Slavs" is a linguistic category generally referring to people living in eastern Europe and western Asia. The West Slavs—Poles, Czechs, and some smaller groups—use the Latin alphabet and

historically belong to the Roman Catholic Church. South Slavs are Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Macedonians, Montenegrins, Bosnians, Bulgarians. The East Slavs—Russians, Ukrainians, Belorussians—use the Cyrillic alphabet and were adherents of the eastern Orthodox church.

The movement of people throughout history makes any notion of purity of races or nationalities an absurdity, so like Anglo-saxons, Slavs are a mixture of many different peoples. As well as descending from the Slavic tribes probably originating in the Priapet region, they are mixed with: Scandinavians, Greeks, Romans, Huns, Goths, Finns, Turks, Tartars, Mongols, Khazars, and other nomadic peoples.

Because it would be difficult to prove Slavs are of a race other than Caucasian, it is not quite accurate to use the word "racism" in connection with their treatment in Canada. But then, the idea of race is itself not accurate. No people can be precisely defined except by where they live and the language they speak. Racism is, however, not connected with any quality of the people being exploited. It involves exploitation of a definable group of people and is a social relationship, not an objective definition.

Not until the 1950's were Ukrainians and other Slavs in Canada regarded as white people. In the early days in Canada, even French Canadians were considered by other Canadians to be of a separate, non-white race. Germans and Dutch were considered white; Italians were not, and there was some doubt about Scandinavians.

Halychan immigrants had already noticed on the ship that in the eyes of English chauvinists, they counted as people of a "lower race." They were kept separate on the ship from the English who were also emigrating to Canada to settle on the land or work in the cities. The English got better food, better services, and they were quartered in clean cabins. (Krawchuk, 1968: 10. Translated from Ukrainian.)

But there wasn't much they could do about it. They had left to escape the poverty of the Old Country, and nobody had enough money to go home again.

## Dominion Lands Policy

Between 1870 and 1930, the federal government owned and administered all the land in the three prairie provinces as well as the Northwest Territories. The policy they adopted caused many of the difficulties the new settlers encountered.

The grid survey began in 1871. This is the square township method of dividing up land, a method to which the Metis objected because it did not

take into account people's needs.

They reminded one of the Russian Czar who, when asked to indicate the course of the new Trans-Siberian railway, simply ran his finger in a straight line across the map, regardless of lakes or swamps or mountains. (Lysenko, 1947: 33)

The Land Act was passed in 1872. It was almost identical to one passed in the U.S. ten years earlier. For the fee, the settler would be given a quarter section (160 acres) of land. In order to acquire title, the family was required to live there for three years, build a house, and clear 30 acres of land. The house was most important.

Left to themselves, people would have built villages and lived somewhat communally. The first Ukrainians agitated to live in villages or be allowed long strips of land beside the road for housing; this was forbidden. If there was no residence on the farm with proof that people were living in it, the family would not get title. The Doukhobors insisted on living and owning land communally; their land was taken away from them. As well as punishing the Doukhobors for their transgressions, this served as an object lesson for everyone else.

Forced isolation meant loneliness. It meant cold and hunger and death. But individualism had to be enforced in this and many other ways so that the individualism of farmers could then be proclaimed as "natural."

There was also unnecessary dispersion due to land within each township being withheld from settlement. A twentieth of the land south of the North Saskatchewan River was given to the Hudson's Bay Company. The railway companies got 6,400 acres of land per mile of railway. Since the CPR got the best land and didn't choose it until late in order to avoid paying taxes, large blocks of land were kept from homesteaders until the CPR had made its selection. Two sections in every township were set aside for school revenue. All odd numbered sections were reserved as public lands to be disposed of only by sale. Immigrants were lured by promises of available homesteads, but there were homesteads in only 4/9 of every township. Then there were the land speculators.

Among the worst speculators were the land agents, appointed to facilitate settlement; in some cases they did their utmost to prevent it. Taking advantage of their official position, they speculated in public lands, working their racket through the medium of nominal purchasers who in turn sold the land to actual settlers on a commission basis. (MacDonald, 1966: 15)

Settlement, once it got under way after 1896, was accomplished with stunning rapidity. There were many reasons for this unseemly haste. One was the fear of another rebellion by native people unless they were

moved to marginal lands and outnumbered. Another reason was the lack of available land in the east which caused sons and daughters of eastern farmers to migrate to the U.S. in search of land. The problem in both Ontario and Quebec was with absentee landlords who held vast tracts of fertile land undeveloped.

At the same time, American settlers were getting covetously near the border and were being encouraged by their government to move north. By 1860, the westward expansion in the U.S. was well under way, and both Americans and Canadians thought that settling the land with white farmers was the best way of establishing ownership.

Not the least of the reasons why the prairies had to be settled and settled quickly was that the railways had to be made richer. The CPR had been built to join B.C. and the east, and the train could not be expected to trundle empty across the prairies. If there were farmers on the prairies, there would be someone of whom to charge inflated rates for taking their produce away, and bringing manufactured goods. Eastern industries needed food and raw materials for their development. Industry can only develop when it has sufficient fuel to run the machines, sufficient raw materials from which to make things, and a food supply for the workers.

So the CPR and the government dispatched an army of agents all over the world in search of farmers. The CPR supported and promoted the homestead policy because they thought it was also the best way to make money on their land. Land has no value all by itself. It can only acquire value through labour, and there weren't enough agricultural labourers on the prairies. If the CPR was to realize massive profits on its land, the North-west had to be settled by farming people. Then the CPR land would have acquired value through their labour.

From the U.S. experience, it was clear that 160 acres was not a large enough farm in a cold climate where summer fallowing and machinery was necessary. But when people invested a lot of work and money into their quarter section, they didn't want to leave and would therefore, invest more work in buying the adjoining CPR or Hudson's Bay land.

"We built the west," a CPR brochure proclaimed. They did not build the west. People built the west; the CPR only reaped the profits.

The *Ottawa Free Press* figured out at the time of the building of the railway that the CPR was being handed \$260,000,000. Since then, many more millions of the people's money has been handed to the company in the form of various subsidies. Then and now they have also made enormous amounts of money on land speculation.

Between 1893 and 1930, the Hudson's Bay Company made \$59,962,916 on the sale of its illegally acquired land. The CPR with more land made \$153,964,233 and the Canadian Northern railway, \$34,518,978 in the same period. (Hedges, 1939: 306-308)



Very soon the massive wheat exports began; at times they were Canada's main source of revenue. In 1878, the railway going south from Manitoba had taken away the first wheat shipment from western Canada. But it could not become a major wheat producer until the introduction of wheat with a shorter growing season. The first such wheat was Red Fife (which came from Ukraine by way of Scotland); later Marquis and other wheat varieties were developed which would grow in the short prairie summers. Some writers spend a great deal of time discussing the development of "dry farming" in the U.S. This method basically depends on the steel plow, summer fallow, and the cultivator. None of this can be described as a new technique; it is simply the result of better technology and more available land.

In southern Alberta, the CPR made great efforts in the direction of irrigation for which they made the farmers pay. Irrigation was intended to develop southern Alberta and make Calgary the main city at the expense of Edmonton. The amount of effort put into irrigation made it too good for anyone but the British; therefore, a system of "ready-made farms" was worked out for British immigrants. The company gave the farm family 160 acres on which farm buildings and a well had been built and a few acres plowed. The farmers were to repay the cost of all this over a 20 year period, and only after this repayment would they receive title to the land.

For Americans, there was a scheme called "loans to settlers" which amounted to pretty much the same things as ready-made farms, except that Americans were just given money and had to do the first breaking and building themselves.

These plans in southern Alberta were largely a failure. Even before the massive droughts of the 1930's, the irrigation districts were plagued with problems. Many writers blame the farmers for their insufficient knowledge of irrigation and their inability to foresee droughts. But the main problem was that the initial cost of land and irrigation facilities was too high and farmers could do little under the crushing weight of debts other than try to produce a subsistence living. Far from being a favour to British and American farmers, the scheme was just another rip-off.

There was slightly more success with sugar beets, in terms of both land conditions and available markets.

Its production, however, required a special type of labour. The average Canadian, British, or American farm family would not submit to the arduous labour which sugar beet growing entailed. The agreement with the Canadian Colonization Association for selecting Mennonite and other Continental European families seemed a step in the right direction. (Hedges, 1939: 303)

The Dominion Lands Policy was not a policy at all. It consisted simply of dividing the land into squares and leaving settlers to fend for

themselves as best they could. During the period the policy was in effect, the rate of cancellation on "free" homesteads was 40 per cent. Abandoned farms in 1926 accounted for 10 per cent to 60 per cent in different regions. The CPR and the government took no responsibility for the failure.

They raved about the few who succeeded at the cost of all that made life desirable, but ignored the thousands who failed. They described pioneering in bright but deceptive colours, and were silent on its drudgery and hardships, its monotony and solitude, on the crushing burden of mortgages and debts. They hinted at high wages and were silent on high rents; they spoke of constant employment for the immigrants and were silent on the ceaseless drift of native sons out of Canada into the United States. They kept silent also about the sweltering summer and bitterly cold winters, and dabbled in mean temperatures in order to deceive the unwary. (MacDonald, 1966: 43)

For the white settlers at least, the surveyors had gone before them so they didn't have to worry about not having title to their land as did the Metis.

The Homestead Act was presented then and ever since as a remarkably generous piece of legislation. It was not. The land was not free in the first place—\$10 was required for registration. Then there was the cost of the necessary equipment for cutting down trees and breaking land. There were no roads. In many places there was no water and many a farm family was destroyed in the endless search for water. There were, however, mosquitoes and frost and fire and swamps.

In addition to all these other problems, there was the inordinate hardness of the prairie soil. The ox-drawn plow could do no more than scratch the surface and even the horse-drawn steel plow did a poor job of it. To break this kind of soil, a large capital investment in modern machinery was necessary. Many people gave up the struggle, broken by the immensity of the problems.

In Alberta between 1905 and 1930, the casualties amounted to 46 per cent or 16 million acres out of 35 million acres. (Hedges, 1939: 524) When the CPR loaned homesteaders money or gave them "free" rides, the family didn't get title to their land until they paid it all back. Government relief was of the same variety—not relief at all, but a mortgage on the land and labour of the family.

It will be conceded that in some respects "free" homesteads have been costly beyond computation. The Great Homestead Act of 1862 was once characterized as a wager in which the United States staked a quarter section of land that a man could not live on it for five consecutive years. In Canada the odds have been easier—three years instead of five—but all too many wagers have been lost by the

settler in the silent but deadly attrition going on upon the frontier. (Hedges, 1939:431)

## The Immigrants: 1895

In 1895, the population of Alberta was 30,000. Freight rates were high but wheat was selling for 75 cents to 90 cents a bushel. Women were not allowed to vote. Edmonton had a serious problem:

It should be stopped. The Main Street is not the proper place for breaking horses. (Edmonton *Bulletin*. April 1, 1895)

Otherwise everything was fine.

We are a happy and contented people and totally free from many of the disturbing elements that cause so much friction in the social government of the United States. (Edmonton *Bulletin*. September 5, 1895)

But "disturbing elements" in large numbers were about to be introduced into this tranquillity. In 1895 Professor Joseph Oleskow and Ivan Durundiak visited the area to assess its possibilities. They travelled across the country and stopped to see the Nebiliw villagers at the Edna settlement. They were impressed by what they saw. Upon returning home Oleskow wrote a pamphlet which was widely distributed. In it he advised Ukrainians to emigrate to Canada rather than to Brazil. He was a member of the intelligentsia and although he was a friend of Ivan Franko and presumably a socialist, he didn't like peasants much, considering them to be "worse than Indians." The pamphlet advised people to improve their manners before emigrating. It also sounded a word of warning:

You can ride through all of England and America, and from one end to the other you will not be able to obtain sauerkraut or black rye bread. (Quoted by Lysenko, 1947: 23)

In spite of this hazard, by 1895 Ukrainians in Canada had already chalked up several firsts. Wasyl Eleniak was Canada's first Ukrainian cowboy; Mykhailo Melnyk first built a proper house with a floor and shingled roof. Immigration agents had great hopes for the people.

The Ruthenians are throughout agriculturalists, very modest, thrifty, and hard working, a primitive people and generally ignorant, about 80 per cent of them not being able to read or write; but they appear quick to adapt themselves to their new surroundings and, although they come mostly with very small means, they all exhibit great eagerness to get a piece of land and own their home, preferring the

country to the city, and I doubt not but that they will stay with it and be a success. (Hugo Carstens to Clifford Sifton. *Sessional Papers*. Annual Report of the Department of the Interior, for the year 1896. p. 120)

Professor Oleskow sent about 120 people to Canada in 1896 and although he could get no official recognition or assistance from the government, he guided almost all Ukrainian immigrants to Canada for a time. There was no further immigration of Ukrainians to Brazil. Until 1899, the Canadian railways transported the immigrants free to Winnipeg; perhaps for this reason, Oleskow sometimes idealized Canada and the government's attitude towards the Ukrainian settlers. But on the whole, he appears to have had the interests of the people at heart and to have done his investigation and assisting only in order to keep immigrants from being cheated.

Until 1867 immigration to Canada was unorganized and unrestricted. After 1874, provincial governments controlled immigration except for the North West Territories, which were under Dominion control. Until 1892, they were under the control of the Department of Agriculture; from 1892 to 1917, the Department of the Interior.

Until after W.W. II, farmers, farm labourers, and domestic labourers were the desired immigrants. But there was a gap in time between the arrival of the settlers and the time they could produce surplus goods to be expropriated, and during this time the government intended to do nothing to help the settlers. If they wanted roads, schools, hospitals, or any other amenities, they would have to provide their own. Accordingly, only a very particular type of immigrant was required. Besides being agricultural or domestic, they were required to be of "good character." As far as I can figure out, this means they had to be incredibly hard workers, and more important, sufficiently desperate that they wouldn't complain about conditions as they found them on the prairies.

Agents were sent all over England and the United States to encourage people to emigrate. These agents distributed pamphlets, sponsored essay contests in schools, arranged for exhibits at world fairs, solicited letters from successful settlers, contacted religious and philanthropic societies and so on. After W.W. I, a system of assisted passage for Anglo-saxons was instituted. All along, any steamship company was given a bonus for the immigrants they brought for the prairies.

There were government agents and there were CPR agents, or maybe they were the same ones—in those days there wasn't much difference between the government and the CPR.

The immediate lures had been and were the offer of free homestead land and the persuasiveness of the Dominion Department of the Interior, the Canadian Pacific and Grand Trunk railways, the

Hudson's Bay Company, and a few private colonization concerns. For twenty years all these agencies pooled their resources behind one of the largest, noisiest, and most successful medicine shows of all time. It covered two continents and was conducted in a dozen languages. (Allen, 1961: 3)

In spite of all this, there were never enough domestic and farm labourers. It doesn't seem to have occurred to anyone that if these workers were well paid and well-treated, they would have been easier to get. Instead, the appalling conditions under which people worked remained unchanged while agents spent their time telling lies in Europe.

There were four categories of immigrants: assisted, preferred, non-preferred, and forbidden. Some British immigrants were assisted and no one from the U.S. or Britain needed a passport. British people can't even be considered as immigrants since they didn't have to conform to Canadian norms; on the contrary, they set the standards to which Canadians were to conform. Americans were also popular, about on a par with the British.

Anyone from northern Europe could come, but they needed a passport. Those from central and southern Europe were the non-preferred people and only farm workers, domestic labourers, or relatives of people already here were allowed.

Chinese immigrants had a special category. They were welcome so long as the CPR needed cheap labour. It was said that without the Chinese, there would have been no railway. In 1885, following completion of the major portion of railway building, a head tax of \$50 was imposed on every Chinese person coming to Canada. This was increased to \$100 in 1901 and \$500 in 1904, but still Chinese people kept arriving. After that they were forbidden entry.

The boom period of immigration was 1896 to 1914, and that was when the prairies were settled. By the 1880's, Britain was largely industrial and only about 25 per cent of the population was engaged in agriculture. Of those farmers willing to emigrate, many were not sufficiently desperate to put up with conditions as they found them on the Canadian prairies. The numbers had to be supplemented from other places.

Britain having destroyed the local industries in Ireland by 1830, there were for a time many Irish available to do cheap labour. But by 1867 about a million had died of famine and another million emigrated, so no more Irish were available.

The earliest settlers on the prairies who were not Indian, Metis, French, British, or American, were Icelanders fleeing the volcano which erupted in 1875. They were remarkably desperate and didn't complain so they were considered a desirable class of immigrants. Although a few more Icelanders followed their relatives to Canada, there weren't many

immigrants from Iceland after that first group.

Mennonites, fleeing conscription and assimilation in Russia, arrived in 1874. There was considerable hostility to them at first, but they fit the government's requirements for good settlers.

The first years's crop was injured by grasshoppers and the two or three subsequent crops by excessive rains, but the people never lost heart. (*Sessional Papers. Annual Report of the Department of the Interior for 1893.*)

A lot of other German people came as well, and they were more welcome than the Mennonites. Although most of the first large group of Germans came from Ukraine and Russia where they had lived for many generations, they were favourably received. In 1889 the first Germans from Halychina settled at Dunmore, near Medicine Hat. In 1891 they moved to the more fertile lands near Fort Saskatchewan. They were followed by Moravians from Volynia and other Germans from Slavic countries. Two-thirds of the early German settlers in Alberta came from eastern Europe and only a tenth from Germany; the remainder came from the U.S. All of them were farmers.

Among the early agricultural settlers were the Mormons, who in 1886 moved from Utah to Cardston, Alberta. They introduced irrigation on a community scale in Alberta. Another desirable class of immigrants came from Finland. They were suitably desperate and willing to do even domestic labour.

Scandinavians were much yearned after for domestic and farm labour but during periods of prosperity at home they wouldn't leave. When they did leave home, they joined friends, relatives, and acquaintances in the U.S. Accordingly, much propaganda was done among Scandinavians in the U.S. and some of them came to Canada.

Father Morin started colonies of French Canadians in 1891. Some were from Quebec, others were repatriated French from Michigan whom the church wanted to bring home in order to save them for Catholicism.

In 1891-92 there was an immigration of destitute Jews from Russia. They had not been allowed to own land in Russia and had, therefore, no knowledge or experience in farming. Though some settled on the land, only a few had the money and experience to become successful farmers.

Doukhobors were at first welcomed by immigration agents but in 1902, it is reported they were seized by a "strange religious mania" following visits from "foreign socialist agitators." The newspapers never liked them.

No matter what was done, there was always a shortage of domestic servants and farm labourers.

Women domestics are at a premium and when the applicant is healthy and of good moral character no difficulty is found in placing

her in a good position. (John Hoolahan. *Sessional Papers*. Annual Report of the Department of the Interior for the year 1900.)

And no matter what was done, there were never enough British immigrants to satisfy the immigration department, although at all times, English-speaking settlers outnumbered all the others. The agents were scandalized to find in 1904 that British people who left the Canadian prairies sometimes wrote letters to newspapers at home talking about their difficulties. To counteract such complaints it was necessary to obtain testimonials from people who were happy, only there didn't seem to be too many around on the prairies in those days. Norman Macdonald (1966: 37) reports that at least two men, Alexander Somerville and Peter O'Leary, were paid to write letters from "successful settlers" to newspapers in England.

Since British adults were overly reluctant, immigration officials decided that taking children from workhouses and orphanages was a cheap way of getting British immigrants. Between 1869 and 1909, 60,000 British children were sent to Canada. In the next 20 years, another 27,699 children arrived. These children were at first overworked and cruelly treated, but it is reported that they showed good character nevertheless, i.e., they were powerless and couldn't fight back.

Until 1923 Canada did not help financially but only did propaganda among religious and philanthropic societies in Britain, who did the actual sending. For the English, it was a good way to get rid of unwanted children so philanthropic societies were set up to rid the islands of a social problem, the most active of these societies being Dr. Barnardo's schools.

The children we receive are not without many childish faults, for which we cannot blame them, when we think of their neglected infancy, by parents who forget their responsibility, and cast to the world's tender mercy those young souls. (Agnes Brennan. *Sessional Papers*. Annual Report of the Department of the Interior for the year 1900.)

Almost nothing is mentioned in the government reports about what happened to these children when they came to Canada. From the pictures of cherubic children, it appears they were sent to farms or apprenticed at various trades. Although the agents express pleasure at thus cheaply acquiring British immigrants—even though they were only the cast-off waifs of the master race—it is most probable that these children were primarily used as cheap labour. I very much doubt that they were grateful.



## The Immigrants: 1896-1899

More and more Ukrainians came through Edmonton on their way to the settlement at Edna.

The country was going to be overwhelmed by them. All summer long the wierd, menacing hundreds trekked east—"damned foreigners," "bloody bohunks." (MacGregor, 1969: 148)

The press couldn't immediately whip up a hate campaign because of the confusion about who exactly all these people were.

As a result of the recent visit of Professor Oleskow from Austria, there arrived on Monday's train 22 families, comprising about 70 souls in all, of Austrian Poles and naturalized Germans from Galicia. They are described as Ruthenian settlers. (*Edmonton Bulletin*. May 14, 1896)

The confusion about the identity of the people continued into the following year:

Two coaches of Ruthenian immigrants will arrive on to-night's train. . . . They speak Polish and Russian, no German or English. (*Edmonton Bulletin*. March 1, 1897)

Then they change their mind and report that they were not Ruthenians at all, but Austrian Poles from Galicia. (March 8, 1897)

The problem was, of course, that Halychina and Bukovina, both of them Ukrainian provinces, were under the control of the Austro-Hungarian empire. But the local landlords were Polish as a result of previous domination of Ukraine by the Polish empire. Both the Poles and the Austro-Hungarians were interested in wiping out the Ukrainian culture and would have preferred there be no memory of the Ukraine at all. For this reason, they would not permit the people to be called Ukrainians. The Austro-Hungarians called the West Ukrainians in the province of Halychina, Bukovina, and Carpathian Ukraine "Ruthenians." "Ruthenia" is probably a Latinized form of "Russia." It most likely derives from the word "Rusyn," referring to the ancient Kievan kingdom of Rus.

I have had trouble with the word "Galicia" because the letter "g" in the Russian alphabet is pronounced "h" in the Ukrainian alphabet. I have therefore chosen to call the province usually referred to as "Galicia" by the name "Halychina" which more closely approximates the Ukrainian pronunciation. The province no longer exists as such, it now being the regions of Lviv, Ternopil, and Ivano-Frankivsk of the Ukrainian S.S.R.

The Alberta newspapers finally recovered from their confusion and referred to Ukrainians as "Galicians" even if they came from Bukovina. Official sources usually called them "Ruthenians."

Almost as soon as the newspapers gave them a name, they began a hate campaign. The Ukrainians were reported to be "uncivilized" (*Edmonton Bulletin*, June 2, 1897) and not properly dressed. (June 10, 1897)

If our foreign immigration agents cannot send us a better class of immigrants than these it is almost time to consider whether we might not dispense with immigration agents altogether. The southern Slavs are probably the least promising of all material that could be selected for nation-building. (*Daily Nor'wester*, Winnipeg, December 23, 1896)

The government, however, insisted on their right to allow Ukrainians in. They knew what they were about.

These people were brought to Canada partly to do the rough manual labour needed in road-building and harvesting, partly with the idea that they would bring our rough bush lands under cultivation and so provide freight for the railways. We do not need to pretend that they were brought in for philanthropic reasons. They were brought here so that some people might make a profit, or to put it more nicely, that Canada might become wealthy and prosperous. (A. J. Hunter, quoted by Lysenko, 1947: 93)

Therefore, the newspapers could rave as much as they wanted about unsuitable material; the government and the CPR knew the Ukrainians were desperate enough to make good settlers.

Galicians have been inured to cold in their native land and brought up in the hard school of adversity. They are accustomed to the practice of rigid economy, and thus are able to start farming upon such small means as would be inadequate for the average English settlers and they willingly settle on land of inferior quality, if somewhat wooded, which would be rejected by the ordinary American and Canadian settler. (Commissioner of Immigration, Winnipeg, to Clifford Sifton. *Sessional Papers*. Annual report of the Department of the Interior for the year 1897. p. 172)

The police reported that Ukrainians were well-behaved, law-abiding, and made good navvies.

The girls who have gone out to service have improved rapidly, and are said to be very clean and careful of their employer's property. Their arrival may solve the servant problem for the Territories. (L. W. Herchmer to Wilfred Laurier. *Sessional Papers*. Annual Report

of the North-West Mounted Police for 1898. p. 15)

Some Ukrainians went to work on the CPR's construction of the Crow's Nest Pass railway where conditions were particularly bad. In some cases, they never got paid. They were told to go to Edmonton to collect their money, but after waiting around for months, could not persuade anyone to pay them.

The police insisted there was nothing wrong with the working conditions on the Crow's Nest Pass railway even though there were an extraordinary number of complaints. Workers always exaggerate, was the cops' attitude. Men who complained of not getting paid were accused of being drunk.

Numerous fatal accidents occurred. They were, as a rule, due to the carelessness of the victims. ... In no instance could they be ascribed to the negligence of the contractors. (L.W. Herchmer to Wilfred Laurier. *Sessional Papers*. Annual Report of the North-West Mounted Police for 1898. p. 40)

As in all such cases, it has most to do with who does the ascribing. Even the reactionary *Bulletin* was upset about the working conditions. Van Horne said the working conditions were no worse in the Crow's Nest Pass than they had been on the main line of the CPR, and that, said the *Bulletin*, was exactly the problem.

It was all named progress. The country was being developed, the prairies were being plowed, and wheat exports were increasing. More people kept coming.

Several wagon loads of the newly arrived Galicians passed through town on Saturday on their way from the railway station to their new home in the Limestone Lake country. They were the most grotesquely dressed party that has yet struck town. Several snapshots of the party were taken by an amateur photographer. These were of the class known as Bukovinians as distinguished from other Galicians, and have the distinction of introducing smallpox at Halifax and Winnipeg, at both of which places they were held in quarantine. (Edmonton *Bulletin*. July 14, 1898)

In retrospect, it seems despicable that people who were poor and ill should be vilified for no other reason than that they were poor and ill, but it seems to be a capitalist tradition.

The first wave immigrants were usually easy to handle because they didn't speak English and many were illiterate even in their own language. Immigration agents simply told them where the "good" lands were, pointed them in the direction they were to go and never thought about them again. When a new area was opened to settlement, immigration agents took a group of people there, and then their friends

and relatives had to follow.

Occasionally there were rebellions. In 1898 an agent named Speers planned to take a group of Ukrainians from Regina to Fish Creek. The people said they didn't want to be homesteaders at all, and at least they wanted to settle near friends and relatives near Edmonton. Speers put them on a train which he said was going to Edmonton. When they discovered it wasn't, they got off the train. Speers sent a pathetic telegram.

Almost distracted with these people, rebellious, act fiendish, will not leave cars, about 75 struck out walking Regina, perfectly uncontrollable. Nothing but pandemonium since leaving Regina. Have exhausted all legitimate tactics to no avail. Policemen assisting—situation eclipses anything hitherto known. Edmonton, Edmonton, or die. Will not even go inspect country, have offered liberal inducements, threatened to kill interpreter. Under existing circumstances strongly recommend their return to Edmonton and few Dauphin and get another consignment people special train leaving this afternoon. Could take them Regina. Answer immediately, am simply baffled and defeated. Quietest and only method will be their return. Waiting reply. Mostly have money and will pay fare. They are wicked. (Speers to W.F. McReary. *Sessional Papers*. Annual Report of the Department of the Interior for the year 1898.)

The *Alberta Tribune* of February 4, 1899, reported Father Morin as pushing French Canadians as the ideal settlers and quoted him as saying about Ukrainians:

As for the Galicians I have not met a single person in the whole of the Northwest who is sympathetic towards them. They are from the point of view of civilization, ten times lower than the Indians.

The *Tribune* defended them as thrifty and industrious and said the Minister of the Interior wouldn't let them in if they were bad settlers.

When the anti-Ukrainian sentiment was made more explicit, it was clear the media hated them because they were poor and powerless. The *Edmonton Bulletin* of January 30, 1899 reported that 321 British people bought CPR land, thus showing they were the best settlers. Of the 289 non-British buyers, only two were Ukrainians, and this "proved" them to be of lesser value.

The papers and prominent men also complained frequently that Ukrainians didn't understand democracy and could not help maintain the high standard of "Anglo-saxon civilization," and similar such absurdities.

What is this country coming to? Doukhobours pouring in by the thousands on the eastern slope, Galicians swarming over the central

portions, and rats taking possession of Dawson City, one would imagine that Canada had become a veritable dumping ground for the refuse of civilization. (Calgary *Herald*. Febuary 2, 1899)

But the economic interests of the CPR and the government overrode mere racism, and they encouraged Ukrainian immigration. An agent was sent to their homes in Austria-occupied Ukraine, and a favourable report was returned about these people when they were at home.

The fact that an official of the Dominion Immigration Department during the course of the year has had the opportunity of visiting Galicians and Buckovinians in their old country homes will certainly help dispel the totally mistaken idea of considering these people below the average level of humanity, and almost on a par with the Chinese, necessitating special legislative measures for regulating their further influx into Canada, which measures in view of the attained results would certainly appear an unfriendly act. (Schulz, Austrian Consul-General in Canada, to James Sutherland. *Sessional Papers*. Annual Report of the Department of the Interior for the year 1899. p. 103)

No matter what was said about them, Ukrainians were more or less white people, and this was the major consideration in official minds. The immigration officials were constantly congratulating themselves on the success of the new settlers, and they measured success in the only way capitalists can: in terms of money. Ukrainians were reported to be buying farm machinery and building up herds of cattle. The merchants liked them and the prejudice against them seemed to be disappearing. Young people were learning English and several school districts had been formed. Over 300 had jobs on the CPR.

The picture wasn't really all that idyllic. Every year the agents reported that the prejudice against the Ukrainians was disappearing. If it really was disappearing, would there have been prejudice around to keep disappearing every year?

It is reported that few Ukrainians applied for relief, and it is also reported that "Galician girls" liked doing domestic labour. Clearly, they did domestic labour, but whether they liked it or not is another matter.

This description of the immigration officials' attitude towards Ukrainians should not be interpreted to mean they had lost sight of their main goal, which was populating the country with Anglo-Saxons. It was simply that the officials, having decided that contrary to popular opinion, Ukrainians were almost white, allowed them to come in as a minority.

A little dose of them may even in variation, do good, like a minute dose of poison in medicine.... I am not saying we should absolutely

shut out and debar the European foreigner as we should and do shut out the Oriental. But we should in no way facilitate his coming. (Stephen Leacock, 1930)

## The Good Old Days: 1900-1901

Eighty-two per cent of Alberta's population in 1901 was rural. The times were relatively prosperous. Immigrants poured in and wheat production went up. The long depression had finally ended about 1896; increasing prosperity brought more immigrants who further increased prosperity. Most writers attribute the flood of immigrants to Clifford Sifton and the policies of Sir Wilfred Laurier's government. At the time these men were vilified for the policy; in the present they are eulogized. The truth is, however, that immigrants are lured by economic prospects, not by politicians or policies.

Clifford Sifton, the Minister of the Interior, is supposed to have been some kind of genius. But in 1892 the press termed him "as accomplished a hypocrite as ever walked the prairies," a view that is probably closer to the truth.

Sifton was a lawyer whose father, John Wright Sifton, had made money by graft on the CPR. His brother, Arthur, was a judge, then premier of Alberta. In 1896 Clifford Sifton became Minister of the Interior from whence is supposed to come his position of greatness. People found only one fault with his actions—that he had allowed Ukrainians into Canada. Sifton's biographer feels obliged to defend him from this dastardly accusation:

The impression that Mr. Sifton's immigration policies flooded the west with unassimilable Slavs still lingers as an echo from those days of bitter controversy; but there is no warrant in the records for any such belief. The Slavs are listed in the returns as Galicians, Austrians, Russians—they were in fact Ukrainians—and putting them together and contrasting the totals with the immigration from the United Kingdom it will be found that in no single year did the Slav immigration begin to approach the immigration from Britain in volume. (Dafoe, 1931: 317)

According to his biographer, Sifton only did good deeds, like opposing the rights of French Canadians and supporting the CPR. For building the railway from Lethbridge through the Crow's Nest Pass, the CPR demanded and received \$110,000 for 330 miles. They also received 250,000 acres of coal lands, with the support of Sifton in his capacity as Minister of the Interior.

In 1915 Sifton was knighted for his good deeds and moved to England. By the time he retired in 1918, he owned the *Manitoba Free Press*, *Regina Leader-Post*, *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, and other newspapers as the beginning of the newspaper empire handed down to his descendents.

Frank Oliver, the owner of the *Edmonton Bulletin*, replaced Clifford Sifton as the Minister of the Interior in 1905.

The election of 1900 was the first time Ukrainians had participated in a Canadian election and they were somewhat surprised by it. The Conservatives plied them with liquor and explained that democracy meant you voted for whoever bought you booze. When the Conservatives were defeated, they blamed the foreign vote. A Ukrainian is reputed to have replied:

Before the election when canvassed for our votes, we were called gentlemen by the party that now calls us sheep. The same party also bought a large quantity of liquor to help influence our vote. We drank the liquor and then voted for Mr. Oliver. (Quoted by Palmer, 1972: 75)

The truth is that the Liberals and Mr. Oliver were no different from the Conservatives. Oliver had now been elected twice and both times basically the same methods were used. For instance, each party paid \$1 per vote, and if a Liberal canvasser discovered someone who planned to vote Conservative, he was given the wrong date or the wrong polling station. The people east of Edmonton desperately needed a railway and the railway had for many years been promised momentarily. Frank Oliver hired an entire survey crew before the election to conduct a phoney survey in the district. The surveyors told people they were hired by the railway which was about to be built due to Liberal efforts. If a farmer was particularly hostile to the Liberals, the surveyors surveyed through his barn and told him that's where the track would go. The farmer would then complain to Mr. Oliver, Mr. Oliver would pretend to pull some strings and the surveyors would move over. (MacGregor, 1969) This was democracy and many people complained about the fact that foreigners were allowed to vote before they understood democracy.

People emerging from serfdom, accustomed to despotism, untrained in the principles of representative government, without patriotism—such people are utterly unfit to be trusted with the ballot. (Woodsworth, 1909: 239)

Frank Oliver explained to parliament that German settlers objected to being lumped together with Ukrainians and Doukhobours. He said the Germans from Halychina were superior to Ukrainians from Halychina. He went on to claim that Ukrainians and Doukhobours held back the progress of "civilization" in the west.

We did not go out to that country simply to produce wheat. We want to build a nation, a civilization, a social system that we could enjoy, be proud of, and transmit to our children, and we resent the idea of having the millstone of the Slav population hung around our necks in our efforts to build up, beautify and improve that country, and to improve the whole of Canada. (*The Bulletin*, Edmonton, May 3, 1901)

To each his own millstone—it's a free country. However, those who defined civilization as that which Frank Oliver held back did not own a newspaper to transmit their views.

## Trackmen's Strike: 1901

In 1901 the Brotherhood of Railway Trackmen went on strike for increased wages and union recognition. These were the men who maintained the railway right-of-way and they were primarily unskilled workers. The strike began June 21 and ended in August and the increase was won. But it was a difficult battle.

As far as I can discover, this was the first major strike in which large numbers of Ukrainians participated. I think it is important that this first organized venture was successful, for success makes people bolder. This victory probably helped in causing Ukrainians to support radical and militant unions.

The CPR employed scab labour in this strike and on July 6 a train went north from Calgary to Edmonton for the first time since the strike began. This was accomplished with the help of the strike-breaking abilities of the Mounted Police, who were asked for assistance by Mr. Niblock, superintendent of the Calgary division of the railway.

The majority of those on strike were foreigners, mainly Galicians, and very hard to deal with. Several times I had to clear strikers from the railway yards and the station, and to prevent them from boarding trains. Supt. Niblock organized work gangs which he accompanied himself, and I furnished him with police to prevent those working from being disturbed. (Supt. G.E. Sanders to A. Bowen Perry. *Sessional Papers*. NWMP report for 1901. p. 65)

The CPR hired special constables, about whom the *Albertan* wrote sarcastically:

Mr. Niblock is to be given credit for the way in which he holds the line open, but my, what company he keeps. (July 6, 1901)



The CPR experienced increasing difficulty in finding scabs. It helped that the CPR constables were arrested for trying to force workers back to work at gunpoint. It helped that it was a popular strike and everyone sympathized with the strikers. Marie Joussey of Kamloops wrote a song for the strikers, part of which went like this:

O railway kings who sit at ease  
 Within your private palace car,  
 And grudge your workers less per day  
 Than what you pay for one cigar.  
 Lift high your glass of costly wine  
 And drink to Mammon, God of Greed,  
 The hour of reckoning is at hand  
 Your God may help you in your need.  
 (*The Albertan*. July 10, 1901)

The strikers were poor people and there was no way for them to live during the strike. A group of Ukrainian and Doukhobor workmen lived in empty boxcars in Calgary, from which they were evicted several times by the police. During one such eviction, a worker was arrested but released immediately when the Mayor of Calgary intervened and offered the strikers the curling rink as their residence. There they lived for the duration of the strike.

In Edmonton there was an empty square where the MacDonald Hotel now stands. The square sloped downward toward the North Saskatchewan River. A group of strikers got together and dug caves overlooking the river. There they set up a communal kitchen and those who could get odd jobs such as mowing lawns, digging ditches, etc., put their money into the communal pot so that everyone could eat. The papers named this living arrangement the "Galician Hotel."

CPR agents tried to hire scabs in the eastern states. Fifty Italians were brought from Boston to B.C. At Revelstoke the men discovered they were to be strike-breakers and refused to work. But the only way for them to leave was by means of the CPR, and the railway wasn't about to let them go. About 40 of them got on a train and ordered the engineer to take them to Calgary. The police were telegraphed and the train stopped directly in front of the Calgary police station. The Italians were returned to B.C. to be tried and were, presumably, deported back to the U.S. Twenty more Italians were brought from Boston under false pretences; some of them had to stay and work because they had no money, no food, and no way to return.

The CPR did not pay the strikers for the work they had done before the strike. Scabs were promised \$10 per day plus room and board in some cases, but were actually paid \$2 a day. The condition of the track deteriorated, trains ran only irregularly, and there were a number of

minor train wrecks.

Finally, on August 30, the strike was settled. The union was recognized, all workers were reinstated, charges resulting from the strike were dropped, and wages were raised from \$1.25 a day to \$1.50 a day.

But it was only a short-term victory. All these many years later, the CPR still doesn't pay enough to keep men working at maintaining the track. In an investigation in B.C. of a train wreck resulting in several deaths, the CPR's representatives whined about not being able to get sufficient workers.

Asked by Commissioner John Woodward if low pay rates were to blame for the shortage of available workers, Kerr replied: "No. I would say UIC and welfare rates are too high." (Vancouver *Sun*. April 24, 1974)

Pity the poor CPR—in spite of its millions it cannot compete with welfare.

## Subsistence

The problem for immigrants wasn't just that the CPR and the Hudson's Bay got all the good land. There is an almost limitless amount of good land on the prairies, although much of it in Manitoba and Alberta is covered with swamp and bush. This makes initial cultivation a Herculean effort. The other problem was the immensity of the distances. There were no roads, no schools, no stores, no means of transportation. People who live in the middle of nowhere must be self-sufficient.

The first wave of Ukrainian peasants, arriving between 1891 and 1914 had to be totally self-sufficient for some ten to 15 years, working occasionally for other farmers or on the railway built through the Ukrainian settlement about 1906. I asked my father how they provided for their basic needs in the Old Country and in the early days in Canada. Subsistence requires a definite and fairly complex division of labour. The culture which emerges is one in which almost all the rules reflect upon the need for food, clothing and shelter.

The first, of course, was food. Peasants needed enough cash to buy salt and a small amount of sugar; everything else they had to produce themselves. The basic foods in the Ukraine were bread, *kasha*, and *borsch*. *Kasha* was made from buckwheat, malt or barley. It was simply a mush of grain cooked in water and eaten with a flavouring of lard or butter if these were available. (My father says I can't call it mush because it was tasty food and very important, but there isn't another word.) The same kind of grain was also added to cabbage soup which was called *borsch*. Potatoes were introduced relatively late and do not seem to have

the food value of *kasha* probably because the cooking water is drained from potatoes whereas in *kasha*, the grains absorb the water.

The peasants grew those different grains themselves, with the division of labour between men and women strictly defined. My father doesn't know the reasons, but thinks it may be that men did work which involved standing up and women did bending-over work. The plowing and sowing of the seed was always done by men. A woman who knew how to sow was quite heroic, but women such as widows, who didn't have a man around, would usually hire one to sow for them. It is done by standing and throwing seed around you, but it requires more skill than that. Too much seed means stunted growth and too little would be wasting land.

When the land was plowed for sowing, whatever manure was available was scattered on the field by women. That's standing up work, but my father says you wouldn't expect men to get shit on their hands.

Weeding and harvesting required bending and was women's work. Men cut hay with long handled scythes. Grains with seeds were cut with short-handled sickles; this was women's work. A woman with a sickle cut the grain one handful at a time in straight rows and lay handfuls down in piles. Then a few strands of the grain were twisted together and the pile tightly bound with this makeshift twine to make a bundle. Men then put the bundles on wagons and brought them home from the field.

At home the seed had to be separated from the stalk. This was men's work. We know the process as threshing, or combining, but the peasants had no machines, only a flail. The flail was a long stick with a shorter stick tied to it at the far end with leather. With this, the men beat the bundle on a wooden screen so that the seed fell down below the screen. After the bundle was beaten, the long straw was put aside to be used for making thatched roofs. Shorter straw was mixed with grain for use as cattle feed.

When the straw was separated, a pile of grain mixed with chaff remained. A man then sat down beside the pile, took handfuls of grain and threw them around the room in a circular motion in the process known as winnowing. The different components fly different distances, depending on their weight. The chaff was used for pig feed, and the grain was taken to the women.

The women did different things with it, depending on what grain it was. Malt was used whole. Buckwheat had to be mashed in a large wooden mortar and pestle because the skin cannot be eaten and must be fanned out. It will not cook or digest and if eaten, produces constipation and bowel obstruction which can cause death. Barley skin also cannot be eaten.

Grain grinding was done with a *zhorna* (millstones). This device consists of two large round rocks, bolted together, with a handle on the upper rock. The top rock is turned to grind the grain inserted between the two rocks.

As a boy, my father told me, he helped his mother do this, but when he became a man, he would ask her to keep aside his half so he could do it in the middle of the night when no one would catch him.

When does a boy become a man? I asked him curiously.

When he's about 15 or 16 years old and starts chasing after girls.

And why couldn't you be seen grinding grain?

It's women's work.

So what? What would happen if someone caught you doing women's work?

If it was another man, he would laugh and laugh and tell everyone. It's embarrassing. But even worse, suppose a girl caught you! You may not believe it but I would have died straight away from shock if a girl, especially one I was interested in, saw me doing women's work.

I still don't understand why it's so terrible, I persisted.

Well, jesus, he said, then she'd expect me to do it for her after we were married. I would not be considered a man; people would say I was a woman's ass-licker.

It appears that the struggle to keep women in their place in peasant society is much more determined and immediate than in industrial society. The sky falls in if a man steps out of his role. This is not so if a woman does men's work; therefore it seems as if the whole thing was a power struggle which women lost. The smallest let-up in a man's vigilance, however, could result in total disaster, i.e., a woman getting some power. If male supremacy was not established during the courtship years, a man was doomed for life.

An old Ukrainian proverb says that three corners of the house rest on the wife's back and only one corner on the husband's. To keep women in their place peasant men had only their superior physical strength and even this was often not enough because peasant women are very strong and they usually worked among pots and pans which can easily become defensive weapons. My father claims that purely physical battles between men and women usually ended in a draw. My mother says men always won.

Women would never stay in the place assigned to them. Thus there seem to have been other ways developed to keep women from seeking equality. Many pregnancies plus a division of labour which left women doing more of the work seems to have been the primary method used. Men who killed their wives hardly ever went to jail. Even without direct murder, men often lived through two or three wives—only in industrial societies is women's life expectancy longer than that of men.

To return to the grinding of grain—if a man was not yet married, or was a widower, he could not grind his own grain even if he had the necessary skills and equipment. He would rather sell the grain and buy back ground meal than cast his manhood into doubt.

Flax seed was sometimes eaten whole, but usually it was made into flaxseed oil to be eaten during Lent when animal fats were prohibited. To make the oil, the seed was fried and then taken to a special press. The pressed seed was used for pig feed, the oil for human consumption. This was not done after they came to Canada because the special presses were not available.

For vegetables, there were cabbage, onions, garlic, potatoes. No others were known. The settlers brought seed for grain and vegetables with them from the Old Country.

Poppies were grown for the seed which was a great luxury and used in the special holiday bread. Opium was known but not used except occasionally to keep babies asleep, and even then, not without disapproval. (It was said that some relative of mine was a bit strange because his mother had given him opium when he was a baby.)

In the Old Country, there was hardly any meat available and there were also many fasts during which no animal meat or fat could be eaten, and sometimes no milk or cheese either. The fast before Easter was seven weeks long and the one before Christmas, six weeks. There were also two in the summer: one of which was three to four weeks long and the other, two weeks. Thus almost half the year was spent fasting.

The purpose of the fasts was, of course, to provide a greater surplus of meat for the *pahns*. Landlords and other members of the ruling class ate meat and drank liquor even during fasts, unless they were unusually religious. Religion was for peasants, not for landlords. Even priests didn't always keep the fasts, explaining if they were caught, that they could receive divine dispensation. But a peasant who sinned was not only punished herself; the sin fell upon the whole family. While a woman might be willing to risk hellfire herself, she could not risk her children's eternity.

Back to the subject of food, the husband bought the animals since he was the one who went to market most often. Women always milked the cows, and until my father came to Canada he couldn't imagine men milking cows. The women also fed the cows and pigs, but the horses were fed by men. Husband and wife might go to the barn together, where they separately took care of their animals.

Pigs were butchered in time to eat the perishable parts before the fall Lent. A male professional was hired to do this and was paid with a meal and a bottle of vodka. If he was a poor man, he might also be given a piece of fat to take home, but if he had a pig of his own this wasn't necessary.

Pigs weren't scalded as they are here because that doesn't make for tasty skin. Instead, the hair was burned off. The pig was first covered with straw which was set on fire, then the skin was burned golden with metal pipes heated in an open fire. Much of the meat except for the hams was salted and spiced with bay leaves and other spices and wrapped in

fat. This would keep about a year. The shoulder part of the front leg was chopped up for sausage as was some of the fat.

The entrails were not the business of the hog butcher but of the housewife. They first had to be thoroughly cleaned. The small intestine was mixed with blood (caught when the pig's throat was cut) and baked with buckwheat. The large intestine was also cleaned and then stuffed with previously prepared meat spiced with salt, bay leaves and other imported spices and fat. Then the sausage was hung by the chimney where it kept warm and cooked slightly.

They did not know how to preserve beef. Calves were killed only for special occasions such as weddings, when they would be eaten immediately. If an old cow died by some accident, the meat was sold.

Milk was another food staple. It was drunk fresh, eaten sour, and a continuous supply of cottage cheese was made.

Clothing was entirely the business of women. Flax was threshed and winnowed like any other crop. If the stalk was to be made into thread, it was bound into a tight bundle with a stick tied at the top and the bottom. Rocks were then tied to the bottom stick and the bundle put in some standing water like an old quarry or something.

The length of time the bundle of flax stalks was left in the water depended on water temperature and weather. The woman tested it from time to time by rubbing it together with her fingers. Apparently what must happen is that the inner part of the stalk must rot away, leaving only the outer part. If left too short a time, it won't turn out right; if too long, the whole thing will rot. When the woman figured it was time, the husband loaded the wet bundles onto a wagon and took them to a meadow or other dry place with no grass and safe from cattle. Here it was spread to dry.

When dry, it was taken home and put in a dry place. The wife then brought her *ternitsa*—two horizontal boards separated from each other and with a third tied to one end to make a kind of lever resembling a guillotine. A good husband would have made his wife one of these to fit her height exactly, and made it neat and artistic. She took the dried flax stalks a bit at a time and, holding them across the two boards with one hand, brought the lever board down on them with the other. This shook out the rotten straw interior, leaving only the outer part of the stalk. My father says the husband cleared away the straw if he was a good husband, and handed his wife handfuls of the stuff to be prepared. My mother says there weren't many such men. A good wife would do the motion rhythmically to music.

Hemp was prepared in pretty much the same way. It made a coarse thread used for rope, sack, rags.

The prepared stalks were either sold or made into thread at home. If made into thread, the next step was carding, the same as for wool.

Carders were made by placing wire teeth closely together on one side of two small boards with handles. The linen was then put on the bottom one and combed with the top one until it was soft and in straight lines. Then it was tied into small bundles ready for spinning. The small bundle was either attached to a pole or otherwise immobilized. Some people had a spinning wheel. Others used a device that looked like a sharp stick with a small round of wood carved near the pointed end to act like a small gyroscope and keep the stick turning. One hand pulls, spreads and twists the linen as it comes off the pole and the other twirls the stick to wind the thread. Then the thread was ready for weaving.

Spinning is particularly intricate work requiring great skill and dexterity but after a while, women do it with amazing speed. If left to themselves they would get very bored. So they packed up all the necessary equipment and went to a neighbour's where a whole group could work together. This was the main kind of social activity. The young men would come to the house where women were carding and spinning, and people would sing, talk, and tell stories. Men might knock over spools of thread, pinch women, and otherwise indicate they found them pleasing. The main social accompaniment was singing. Women spun, carded and sang. People sang while going out to the field, while working, on their way home. The songs are in the mournful minor key of the Slavic countries, although there are also the gay Gypsy tunes for festive occasions. In addition to the regular folk songs, songs might be composed for special occasions, or alternate tunes or words made up from old songs. Every village had its own music, with variations on the national music. The songs expressed all the hopes, dreams, rebellion, of the people. They sang out their pain, their despair, their never-ending poverty.

When the Ukrainians first arrived in Canada this was how they made their clothing. But it was time consuming and used up the time needed for clearing the homestead. Thus flour, sugar and salt sacks became the material for clothing and continued until after the Second World War, except for woollen clothing. But they kept the clothes they had brought with them from the Old Country. My father says that at a church festival in Mundare in 1928, about half the people there were wearing home-grown clothing.

Linen was used for shirts, pants, underwear, skirts, blouses. Jackets were made from a sheep's skin inverted so that the wool was on the inside. Few people had shoes, and feet were wrapped in rags over which were *postoli*, a kind of sandal woven from willow bark. These were replaced by moccasins or felt boots in Canada.

The first houses in Canada were various kinds of dugouts in which people lived through the first winter.

Our husbands borrowed spades and began digging a hole on the

homestead in order to build the same kind of *bordey* Mikola Boychuk had. In the evening they came and told us how much they had already done. They told us the way to the place. When they went to dig in the morning, we cooked some kind of soup, took some bread and carried food to them. We took our children with us.

When we arrived we saw only their heads above the hole. They climbed out to eat and talk to us. My sister and I said we wouldn't return to the house, but would stay with them. There were great hordes of mosquitoes. The men had a pail in which leaves were smouldering—the smoke kept the mosquitoes at bay.

We got some hay. It was very soft and light. We gathered such large bundles that we couldn't be seen behind them, and brought them to the hole. In the morning we all returned to the house. My husband ordered wood for sawhorses and two window panes. Setting up the sawhorses, we cut some willows, put them on for a roof, and spread hay over them. We mixed up some *hlina* and put it over the hay to soak down and cement the whole thing together—almost shingles. We plastered the cracks with *hlina*.

We cut posts from willows, put them in the ground and wove willow shoots through them—thus surrounding the whole *bordey*. The bed we also made from poles, which we tied together and covered with *hlina*.

We women dug a hole in the *bordey*, cut some hay and mixed it with clay. We're pasting the walls, but the *hlina* won't stick and falls off. How much we toiled before we covered the walls with this *hlina* mixed with hay! It was even harder with the bed, because the poles had leaves to which the *hlina* would not stick. My sister made a torch of dry grass, lit it, singed the leaves and only then would the *hlina* stick to the poles.

Now we have walls, a bed, windows. How were we to make a door? We took two poles, made holes in them, laid them crosswise. From long straw and *hlina* we made a screen and with this we covered the cross poles. And there's a door, only it has no hinge with which to attach it to the wall. We took some willow shoots, twisted them into rings for a hinge and chained the door to the pole with this.

We made an oven. From it we stretched one long bed—nine of us slept on it. We made a bed from poles, put some hay on, covered it with home-made blankets we had brought from the Old Country. We covered ourselves with everything we had, though it wasn't cold yet. And so we lived from spring until the following spring.

My brother-in-law during that time prepared some wood, took it to his farm, built a house, and in the spring they separated from us. We remained in the *bordey*—and lived in it for three years.

My brother-in-law bought two cows, they had calves; there was



milk. But this was the Pilipiwka Lent, the fast before Easter, and we weren't allowed to eat animal products, so we even threw out the whey.

All year the men went into the bush to kill rabbits. Besides rabbits and bread, we ate nothing else. In the house we didn't have a potatoe, not an onion, absolutely nothing. (Maria Yuraychuk. *Life and Word*. April 3, 1972. Translated from Ukrainian.)

If one family had built a house earlier, newer immigrants would live with them until their own house was built, so there might be four or five families living in the same one room shack.

In the Old Country, only skilled workers built houses. This was because of the acute shortage of building materials—a mistake would have been a disaster. In Canada they had building materials growing in nauseating profusion, so they built their own houses.

Alan Gowans, commenting on the fundamental similarity of most peasant housing, maintained that folk builders will ultimately arrive at common, basic solutions to the problems of dwelling design and the provision of shelter. Although different cultures will evolve stylistic characteristics of their own, their dwelling will remain fundamentally similar in that they will be solid, unpretentious and timeless. (Roe, *Alberta Historical Review*. Autumn, 1973: 13)

The walls of the house were simply logs stacked on top of each other with notches in the corners. There aren't any nice straight trees in Alberta so if one were being particular, he cut off the slab from four sides to make a straight, square log. This was done by sawing through the trees lengthwise with a hand saw. To me it sounds like too much work to be possible, but my father insists that it was done. The logs were piled on each other, fitted into the notches, and the hollow spots stuffed with grass and moss.

In the Old Country, roofs were made of straw, but the thatched roofs were a luxury in the early days in Canada. No grain crop, no straw. One alternative was to use turf. A roof of poles was made by putting them as closely together as possible, with some going horizontally so the turf wouldn't slide off. A turf roof kept people warm but it didn't keep them dry. Heavy rain quickly soaked the sod so that water continued to drip for days after a rain was over. My father says the Boshko's—Panas, Panasikha, and two children—lived in a house like that. When it rained they would upend a tub over a pole and the four of them would crouch under it.

Dirt floors were too cold in northern Alberta so floors were made of boards cut lengthwise from logs with a hand saw. This is an unbelievable amount of work. Such lumber was unplaned or hand-planed and must

have been full of splinters. How did mothers manage when they couldn't let their children crawl on the floors?

The inside of the house was whitewashed. I'm not sure how this was done in the early days. I remember that my mother bought lime at the store, added blueing, then mixed it all up and applied it all over the inside of the house. It was hard work and she was always in a bad mood while whitewashing. It was redone at least once a year. Whitewashing would have had two purposes, one of them being the aesthetic aspect of maintaining clean, white walls. The other would be anti-bacterial. Overcrowded houses cause people to die of infection, and the whitewash would have prevented some of this because the alkali would destroy bacteria.

The outside of the house was finished with *hlina*. This, too, was women's work. The log construction left gaps which were stuffed with moss but which allowed drafts and dampness to seep in. So the women plastered the outside with *hlina*. Clay will dry and fall off by itself, so in the Old Country it was mixed with manure for adhesion. But in Canada there weren't enough animals at first to provide manure, so grass was used instead. The woman got a tub of clay from a river and dragged it up the hill to her house. Then she tore up grass and threw it in to make the clay stick together. To make the grass mix in and to soften the clay for application, she had to knead the whole thing with her feet. Then she applied it by hand to the entire outside of the house.

John Shura's first wife died of this kind of work. She got chilled from having her hands and feet in the clay, and she was working very hard in order to get the house finished. She succeeded, but when John Shura came home from work, she was very ill. She died soon after.

The purpose of the division of labour, besides keeping women in their place, was to emphasize the necessity of families. In conditions of acute poverty, no one person can survive alone. Children who had only one parent were considered orphans for they suffered greatly. To be childless was also tragic. The more children a peasant family has, the more likely they all are to survive. Children became full-fledged productive members at about the age of eight, depending on their strength and intelligence, and from that age until they died, they led lives of unceasing labour.

The absence of trained midwives in Canada caused great hardship in the early days. In the Old Country the medicine women knew about medicinal herbs and could fix fractures, but their main job was midwifery. They never delivered a baby or administered herbs without chanting magic incantations, without which the medicine would not work. If the medicine didn't work in spite of the chants, it was because the patient was too great a sinner.

The peasants didn't really believe all this stuff and weren't as

superstitious as popular mythology would have us believe. It was simply that they had no other choice. And who knows, maybe it was true after all; there weren't any other alternatives. Because their lives were so difficult, people were much more easily convinced of the existence of evil than of good. Satan flew around in the night and there were any number of witches.

Witches were considered hateful women but they were also envied because they could do things like making their husbands behave by slipping magic potions into their food. In practice, witches didn't have much to do with people's lives, and a person might live next door to a witch all her life without it making any difference. But if your husband was running around, you could ask her to mix up a love potion; then you had to be careful, because then she had you in her power. Witches could be accidentally evil too, and say something like: that's a nice fat pig you have there, whereupon the pig would sicken and die. In general, good things were not praised because Satan might hear and notice and take the thing for himself.

Women's lives were more difficult than men's and therefore they were more likely to seek divine or satanic intervention since they had so little control over their own lives. In particular, afflicted with helplessness when a child was ill, mothers would do anything to try and restore it to health. As so many children died, all the possible treatments had to be tried. In Canada, with increasing prosperity resulting in lower child mortality, all this disappeared very quickly. By the time I was growing up only the old and sick still believed in the existence of witches.

Doctor's fees in Canada were prohibitive so either a neighbour or a husband would attend a birth. Since they didn't know how to deal with complications, maternal mortality was high, as was invalidism and other kinds of permanent damage.

Women worked harder than men and still do. In addition to the division of labour described, they had also to do the cooking, cleaning, washing, and were entirely responsible for the care of the children. A peasant father wouldn't be caught dead playing with the baby.

The trouble with the new society in Canada was that it wasn't really a new society. The people were not allowed to become part of Canadian society because of racism and isolation. So they did the only thing they could—try and remake the old society in the new place. This wasn't possible because there were too few of them and the necessary conditions weren't available. They couldn't live in villages, which are required for the proper division of labour. What they were, then was simply a disintegrating peasant society—neither able to remake the old society, nor allowed to become part of the new.

## The Good Old Days: 1902-1904

When they first arrived, many of the Ukrainian settlers had to get outside work because uncleared homesteads yield no income. Some of them worked on railroad construction.

The Grand Trunk Railway owners complained of the government's favouritism towards the CPR. Besides all the money, the CPR had been given a lot of coal lands which they began developing immediately as there was a market for coal in the growing eastern industries, a means of transporting it eastward, and a source of cheap labour. In 1901 a mine was operating at Blairmore, and one just beginning at Frank, Alberta.

By 1902, the Grand Trunk had been given only \$15,422,000 of the people's money. They asked if they too could build a transcontinental railway in the same profitable way the CPR had done. In 1903, the government announced a new national railway, but the Grand Trunk need only build half of it. The government would build the National Transcontinental to Winnipeg and the Grand Trunk Pacific would go from Winnipeg to the coast at Prince Rupert. The Grand Trunk was to have guaranteed bonds of up to 75 per cent of the cost of construction.

This railway wasn't completed until 1914 and all during those years, the government kept giving the Grand Trunk more of the people's money. The books claim only the dealers and promoters and politicians are involved in railway building. Nothing is said about the actual building of railways—they appear like magic on the pages of Canadian history.

The promoters and contractors and politicians made money, but the people who built the railways weren't always paid their miserly wage. There were a few attempts at organizing but it was too hopeless with isolation, the law, the police, the army lined up to smash any incipient organization. In addition, there were the immense Canadian distances through which travel was controlled by the same railway owners who were exploiting the workers. They couldn't even quit their jobs without permission from the company.

James Mutchmor in his memoirs tells a bit about the building of the National Transcontinental Railway. The government contracted out large pieces of it. The large contractors sub-contracted smaller pieces, and so on.

Eventually, in my day, the real work of grade-building was let in one-hundred-foot sections, and generally to a group of newly-arrived Slavs. They got shovels, axes, picks and wheelbarrows from the contractor. They hewed their own planks from the woods, built their

own shelter and their claybake ovens. They toiled long hours, seven days a week. In due course their job was completed, measured for cubic yards and paid for. Let it be noted that there were no big earth-moving machines, the bulldozers, graders and mammoth trucks, as are in use today.

In the contract system the cream was skimmed off not once but four or five times, as profit margins were cashed in by a top contractor and three or four subcontractors. Then came the men, generally Slavs, who did the work. They had nothing to sell but their labour. How often was it poorly rewarded! I saw Slavs paid by contractors whose loaded revolvers were on the table. (Mutchmor, 1965: 37-38)

Mutchmor was one of the church representatives who raced along newly-built railways to set up shop in new towns. The Protestants took time out from converting the heathen in Asia and Africa to send missionaries among local Ukrainians.

The first Methodist missionary arrived in 1901; by 1914 there were 24 of them in seven missions. The Methodists thought that converting Ukrainians to evangelical Protestantism would be a good beginning for assimilation. Rev. Charles H. Lawford was the first missionary; he ran a mission at Pakan where most of the settlers were Bukovinians. Since he also had medical training, a hospital was built for him in 1907. But the settlers couldn't afford to pay the medical fees and sometimes complained they were being robbed by the church.

It was not until 1909 that the Methodists had their first two converts in the area, and the following year they converted 15 more. There was also a mission at Wahstao established in 1904, but it was doing only half as well and had only one convert in 1907. The Methodists wanted to liberate Ukrainians from what they saw as their inferior religion. Dr. Lawford believed:

...that the spiritual improvement of the Ukrainians would make them better citizens and would prevent them from exercising "a most baneful influence on our nation throughout." Yet Lawford seemed unable to surmount the personal dislike for Ukrainians; perhaps this was the reason why he declined to become fluent in their language. (*Alberta Historical Review*. Spring, 1971. p. 11)

The missionaries were, in fact, less interested in conversion than assimilation. Missionary evangelism by definition denotes rejection and even contempt for what the people already are. Hence, the aims are always more political than religious.

With many different churches battling for control of their souls, some people thought the solution was to have an independent church. This set in motion the tragi-comedy of Bishop Seraphim who arrived from the U.S.

in 1902. It was said that he was a defrocked Russian priest. In 1903 he began organizing an independent Greek church. People who didn't want to be Protestants and didn't want to get involved in the Catholic/Orthodox controversy, flocked to this new and independent church. But some of the finances were provided by Presbyterians who had despaired of direct conversion.

Two Ukrainian men trained as ministers by the Presbyterians became priests in Seraphim's church, and he consecrated fifty more priests. In 1904 some of the priests seceded into a separate group under Presbyterian control. But the plan did not work when the congregations did not follow their priests. The Presbyterians were not "our people" and the popularity of the church had rested solely on its independence of foreign influence.

Deserted by his followers, Bishop Seraphim despaired and with his remaining two disciples, set about building the "Scrap-Iron Cathedral" in Winnipeg. It was to symbolize what he saw as the moral and spiritual poverty of the people. The structure was shaped like a lop-sided square and was made from old doors, beds, bicycles, cans, cars, cardboard, and whatever other materials could be found at the city dump. The Independent Greek Church without a congregation was officially absorbed by the Presbyterians in 1913.

Even within their own church, Ukrainians were having problems. Religious differences had begun centuries before, while Ukraine was part of the Polish empire.

Protestantism, which swept western Europe as part of the Reformation, made no impression on eastern Europe. Poland remained strongly Catholic and part of the counter-reformation. In a further attempt to keep the peasants within their empire under control, the Poles ordered Ukrainians to become Roman Catholics in 1582 and in 1596, made Polish the official language throughout the empire.

The Ukrainian princes converted to the religion of the masters, adopted their language and culture, and sold out as completely as local rulers always do. But the peasants clung to their language and what they felt was their religion: Greek Orthodox. It was their way of defending themselves against the oppressors. The Poles, on their side, needed a submissive peasantry so that it would be easier to expropriate any surplus. The Orthodox churches were closed, people driven out, and in general, the conversion to Roman Catholicism proceeded in the usual Christian fashion.

Yet the people remained obdurate. By 1550 the Orthodox clergy had become thoroughly debauched. The peasants were not, therefore,

defending the church, they were defending themselves against the landlords.

Since direct conversion was unsuccessful, the Poles tried another method. In 1595, the heads of the Churches announced a Uniate church, also called Greek Catholic. This was a scheme whereby Ukrainians would gradually become Roman Catholics and in the interim, go from Greek Orthodox to Greek Catholic. Greek Catholics were allowed to keep the Orthodox rites and language but they were forced to accept the supremacy of the Pope in Rome. The conversion was accompanied by mass murder of Orthodox peasants. There were peasant rebellions in 1595, 1600, 1618, 1623, 1648, during which

...the peasant revolted against the authority which oppressed him economically in the person of the landowner, who was, in most cases, Catholic in faith and Polish in his way of life. (Vakar, 1956: 61)

Thus, the fight for national identity and economic rights took on a religious character.

From 1597, Halychina and Volynia were made into Greek Catholics. But the next step—conversion to Roman Catholicism—was never accomplished. The Bukovinians remained Greek Orthodox.

No priests had accompanied the first settlers to Canada. Before the homesteads were cleared, there was no surplus to expropriate, and the church cannot be expected to care about people who have no money. Initially the people were united by their lack of priests. In 1897, Ivan Pylipiw organized the first Greek Catholic society at Beaver Creek and more groups were organized in other places—this was only in order to obtain free land for a cemetery.

One group of people went to a Roman Catholic priest, in the absence of any Greek Catholic priests, to have food blessed as they had been accustomed to doing in the Old Country. The people and the priest did not speak each other's language so the people simply held out some bread, eggs, milk, to be blessed. The priest supposed it was some kind of offering and began helping himself to the food, whereupon the people quickly seized what was left and hurried away. (*Edmonton Bulletin*, April 26, 1897.)

In 1897 a priest named Dmitriw arrived in Edna from the U.S. He wasn't impressed and returned to the U.S. within the year, after which he wrote a book about how dirty and uncultured the people were. In consequence, when Rev. Paul Tymkewich arrived in 1898, he was greeted coldly. He could not find a place to live and no one would pay him for his priestly duties.

He left Edna in 1898 after pawning his overcoat and some personal books to enable him to return to the United States. (*The Ukrainian*

*Pioneers In Alberta, 1970: 17)*

In 1898 Ivan Zaklynsky arranged for the building of the first Greek Catholic Church and stayed around a bit longer; eventually he, too, left for the U.S.

From about 1900, Russian Orthodox priests began coming down from Alaska. There had been Russian settlement in Alaska from as early as 1747, and their Czar sent them priests. There is little difference between the Russian and Ukrainian Orthodox churches apart from the nationality of the adherents. Russians were "our people," unlike the alien Roman Catholics; nor did the Russian priests try to take ownership of churches and church property from the local church societies.

The rivalry between the Orthodox and Catholic adherents began with the long conflict over the church at Star. At Easter, 1901 one group invited the Greek Catholic, Ivan Zaklynsky, to officiate while another group asked the Russian Orthodox priest.

With *paskas* which the people had brought to be blessed, one group spread out on one side of the church and the other, on the opposite side. There they argued with each other so that it was embarrassing to listen. And from that time rivalry began in the community. They ended up in court; first in Edmonton, then Ottawa, and finally in London, England.

The process lasted four years and cost more than \$75,000. The society membership was over 60, but only 26 paid the court costs, because the others left the society. Some joined the Roman Catholic church. (Czumer, 1942: 63. Translated from Ukrainian.)

To compound the problem, in 1902 three monks and four nuns of the Basilian order arrived in Canada. The sisters were named Ambrosia, Isidora, Emilia, and Taida. The Basilians were not popular. They were a small order and hardly anyone had ever heard of them. It is said that they encouraged ignorance. More immediate was the charge that they were trying to guide Ukrainians into the arms of Roman Catholicism. The fathers were themselves under Roman Catholic jurisdiction while in Canada, and they tried to make people sign over church property to the "French Corporation." Thus, it seemed that the religion of the thieving Polish landlords was the same here as it had been at home and people wanted none of it. In addition, Catholic priests are supposed to remain celibate while Orthodox priests could marry. It was then, and remains a fixed idea, that unmarried priests perpetrate all manner of sexual perversions on their female parishioners and nuns.

Apart from the issue of celibacy, the rites of the three churches were similar—only the control is different. Greek Catholics took orders from the Pope in Rome as did the Roman Catholics. Russian Orthodox were under the jurisdiction of the Patriarch in Moscow and the Greek



Orthodox, the Patriarch of Constantinople until W. W. I.

In addition to these three major religions, there were a few Baptists around, also called *Shtundists*.

The religious strife caused some to pronounce a pox on all churches. Those who wouldn't participate in the absurd rivalries and con games played by the priests were called "socialists." Some of these people started reading societies and these societies were the beginning of some sort of community among Ukrainian Canadians. Being left out of the dominant culture and without community, demoralization had begun to set in.

For some years, gangs of Ukrainian men, brutalized by the working conditions and with no families to redeem them, wandered around the country. They were called "Don't worry" or "Jacks" because they adopted the English style of clothing and manners. They hung around drinking and gambling and fighting and being generally no good. They often ended up in jail, usually just for being a public nuisance or for trying to rescue one of their fellows from the police. Gradually, as the reading societies developed, these homeless ones were saved.

As soon as possible, Ukrainian settlers continued the tradition brought from their homeland, of forming organizations. The first *Prosvita* (literary club) in Ukraine was formed in 1868 in Lviv and Dr. Joseph Oleskow was involved. Although the nationalists soon took control of these groups, Ivan Franko popularized the works of Marx and Engels in Halychina from the 1870's. Bukovina also had a radical literary movement.

Although there are some reports of a reading society in Winnipeg as early as 1899 in Kyrilo Genik's house, Krawchuk (1971: 76) says there is no evidence of this. There is definite evidence that Genik (a friend of Oleskow) helped set up a reading hall named after Taras Shevchenko in 1903 in Winnipeg. There were thirty members and the dues were 25 cents a month. Monthly meetings were held and books, either donated or bought with the membership dues, were available. (Krawchuk, 1971: 79) In 1904 they also put on a play.

According to other sources, the earliest reading associations were formed in 1901 in Edmonton involving Peter Svarich, Michael Gowda, Ivan Letowsky, Toma Tomashevsky. Both the churches and socialists were involved. Lysenko (1947: 103) writes that the first reading society in Edmonton was formed in 1903. By 1904 there were many more of these and a drama group had been organized in Beaver Creek by Peter Svarich. Soon even the smallest districts had their own cultural/reading organizations. They were mostly named after Shevchenko and Franko. Czumer (1942: 68) also says the first reading society in Edmonton was formed in 1903, in Paul Rudyk's hall on Kinistino Avenue. This first one broke up when the members went to work in mines all over B.C. and

Alberta. The next one was controlled by church people.

Krawchuk, the communist historian, says that nationalists, priests, and politicians took control of the reading groups. However, in 1907 the Taras Shevchenko Educational Society in Winnipeg formed by socialists and anarchists, put out a newspaper called *Red Banner*, edited by Pavlo Krat.

By 1910 almost every district in Alberta had a reading hall. When priests, particularly the Basilian fathers, got control of these they did their best to close them down for it was not in their interests to have the people educated.

Although the priests discouraged it, literacy was always a concern of the people. Half the first two Ukrainians in Canada (Wasył Eleniak) were illiterate and this percentage was about the same for the rest of the Ukrainian immigrants. In the reading societies, the literate taught reading and writing to others. People read books aloud and discussed what they had read. Every Ukrainian organization, whatever its main purpose, was also cultural, so although their primary aim was self-education, the members of these societies danced, sang, and put on plays.



**2**

**Provincehood:  
1905 - 1914**



# A Great Time for Railways 1905-1908

The several years following the formation of two new provinces were great ones for the Liberals, the railways, missionaries, and the Socialist Party—although they were not, of course, working towards a common goal.

The Alberta Act and the Saskatchewan Act were passed in the House of Commons in 1905. Since these new provinces would have no source of revenue—the federal government administered the land and natural resources, and the CPR could not be taxed—they were to receive an annual grant from the government. The Liberal Party being in power federally, they handed over the provincial administration to the Liberal Party machine in Alberta and named a Liberal lieutenant-governor. A.C. Rutherford, a Liberal lawyer who had been an MLA since 1902, was named premier. He was pro-Edmonton so this appointment pretty well ended Calgary's chance of being provincial capital.

The official ceremonies marking the beginning of Alberta's provincehood were held September 1, 1905. When Edmonton became the capital, a great deal of work was necessary to make it into a proper city. Sidewalks had to be laid, sewers dug, water mains laid. Most of this work was done by the newly-arrived Slavs.

The first provincial election was held November 9, 1905. Rutherford and the Liberals got 23 out of 25 seats.

In the early days, voting patterns were determined by the railways. The CPR had planned to develop southern Alberta first and to make Calgary the major city.

Correspondingly, Calgary became the centre of gravity of the Conservatives, close to the money and influence of the Canadian Pacific. R. B. Bennett, the first provincial leader of the party, was the partner of James Lougheed in a law firm that did a lucrative business with the C.P.R., the telephone company and other big corporations. (Trofimenkoff, 1972: 142)

Southern Albertans voted mostly Conservative until the demise of the two party system. Edmonton was controlled by the Liberals.

Edmonton got its long-promised railway in the same year it became the capital when the Canadian Northern was completed in November, 1905. Since the railway went through Lamont, the town of Star, three miles



away, gradually disappeared. Lamont was incorporated as a village in 1910. The old town of Vegreville was by-passed so that MacKenzie and Mann as well as Byron T. Huyke could make money on land speculation.

William MacKenzie and Donald Mann started as contractors on the CPR. They decided they had enough influence to make the CPR's methods work for them. About 1900, they got subsidies of about \$65,000,000 from the federal government as well as guarantees of bonds up to \$245,000,000 to build yet another transcontinental railway, the Canadian Northern.

By means of money subsidies from the government, by sale of bonds guaranteed by the government, and by issuing to themselves virtually all the common stock of the company, MacKenzie and Mann had achieved the construction and control of 10,000 miles of railway without themselves investing a dollar. (Hedges, 1939: 130)

The grades on the railway weren't properly built and the company didn't service or grease the trains properly so breakdowns were frequent. But by 1913 they had been given 7,000,000 acres of land as well. MacKenzie's personal fortune was estimated at between \$15,000,000 and \$40,000,000 but not a penny of this would he use on the railway. When he threatened bankruptcy, Sir Robert Borden's government gave him another \$45,000,000. By the time Mackenzie and Mann forced the government to take the Canadian Northern over, the government owned all of it as collateral on loans. But the Bank of Commerce was also a creditor and Sir Thomas White, a cabinet minister, had also been a director of that bank. So the government paid more of the people's money to buy the railway it already owned.

Because they were big-time crooks and not your ordinary petty criminals, Mackenzie and Mann have been eulogized ever since by bourgeois historians.

They were a rare and able pair, both sprung from good Ontario stock, of the best Presbyterian blood and persuasian. (Allen, 1961: 56)

In 1902 a strike on the Canadian Northern allowed a young man named Mackenzie King to practise being a labour arbitrator. Here he first tried the technique he was later to perfect—granting a minimum of reform and giving credit for this to conservative union leaders.

In other labour matters, the miners of the Crow's Nest Pass joined the Western Federation of Miners, organized in Butte, Montana in 1893 and for a short time, a militant union. The United Mine Workers Union of America (UMWA) started in 1890. In 1903 a deal was made with the Western Federation of Miners whereby the latter sent all of its coal miners to the UMWA and concentrated on metalliferous miners.



Eventually the Federation joined the AFL, lost its militancy, and disappeared. The UMWA organized its District 18 in the Crow's Nest Pass and in 1903, when they won their first contract in the district, they claimed a membership of 3,293.

Working conditions and wages were appalling. A mine explosion in Fernie on May 22, 1902 killed 150 men. The company offered to pay for their funerals.

Working conditions and wages elsewhere weren't good either. By 1901 the salary of domestic labourers had gone up to \$10-\$15. All that was necessary to get this princely (princessly?) sum was youth, experience, good health, no sex life. Besides English and Scandinavians, "Galician girls" were reported to be happy as servants and over a thousand were so employed. If they were indeed happy it was only because domestic labour was less oppressive than farm labour. By 1913, the wages had gone up to \$13-\$24 a month, and there were still no jobs for women except as farm labourers or domestic labourers.

Socialist parties were formed quite early in the U.S. The Socialist Party campaigned for women's suffrage and was the first party to do so. In 1894 a branch of the American Socialist Party was set up in Ontario. It was sectarian and against trade unions. In 1895 an Independent Labour Party was formed in Winnipeg. In 1905 the Socialist Party of Canada was formed in B.C. It didn't acquire a very large following. A split in the Vancouver group a few years later resulted in the Social Democratic Party of Canada. It was not a resounding success either. The leaders of both talked about unionism and socialism as if they might be in contradiction with one another. The problem has plagued many left-wing parties.

Most Ukrainians arrived apolitical although some were familiar with the Ukrainian Social Democratic Party which had been formed in Halychina in 1896. In 1907, Ukrainians in Winnipeg formed the Ukrainian Social Democratic Party of Canada, affiliated with the Social Democratic Party of Canada. After a conference in November 1907, the first issue of the paper *Chervony Prapor* (Red Flag, or Red Banner) was issued; 18 issues later it folded for lack of money.

But socialism flourished. The works of Marx fired the imagination of the poor—they began to see that poverty was not an eternal condition. Ukrainian farm men had to find jobs in their first years here because they had nothing with which to work their uncleared land. In their search for work, they spread across Canada, and their "memoirs . . . read like a twentieth-century Odyssey." (Woycenko, 1967: 49) Working conditions and wages were unbearable. The women and children were left to hack at the bush on their isolated farms.

They had escaped across the ocean from bitter exploitation expecting to find freedom but they found only death. (Krawchuk, 1963: 116. Translated from Ukrainian.)

Marx wrote that they suffered and died in order that others could make a profit, but more important, he said they could refuse.

The first Mayday parade in Edmonton was reported by Tony Cashman to have been held in 1908. He writes that a group of "foreign labourers" putting in a sewer line suddenly whipped out a red flag and marched away, singing in a foreign language (p. 145).

Alberta's population was growing rapidly. In 1901 the population had been 73,022; in 1906, it was 185,412. The population of Edmonton in 1906 was 14,088, finally outstripping Calgary's 13,073.

Small communities were developing as well. Bruderheim, which had been settled by 20 Moravian families from Russia in 1893-94, was a thriving village. Myrnam had first been settled in 1904; the post office was opened in 1907. The first postmaster, Paul Melnyk, named the town "Myrnam," meaning roughly "peace be with us." In 1909 a school was built, and in 1910, the first store.

Small towns were different in those days. In spite of its small size, Vegreville had a number of secondary industries. In 1908, there was a creamery, a lumber company, and a brickmaking factory.

In 1907 the Vegreville *Observer* began publication. It had world news: "A mouse scurried across the auditorium of the Royal Theatre in the Josefstadt, Austria, during a performance and caused a great deal of excitement;" and advertisements: "A sound stomach means a clear head;" and advice for everyone: "Women are born home-makers and every intelligent, happy woman enjoys adding in every way to the beauty and comfort of her surroundings." (Vegreville *Observer*, May 1, 1907)

The first Ukrainian newspaper, the *Canadian Farmer*, began publication in 1903 with funds from the Liberal Party. In spite of his disapproval of Ukrainians, Frank Oliver thought this would be a good way to get their votes. The actual publishing was done by Kyrilo Genik, Ivan Bodrug, and Ivan Negrich in Winnipeg. The settlers liked it, for the editors were allowed considerable control and only during elections was politics heavily pushed.

Soon the Conservatives too were putting out a Ukrainian newspaper but it was coarse and vulgar and lasted less than a year. (Krawchuk, 1971: 93)

The city of Edmonton also got another English newspaper to rival Frank Oliver's *Bulletin*. It was the *Edmonton Journal* which began publication November 10, 1903 and was run by staunch Conservatives who pretended to have no political affiliation.

So there you had the *Edmonton Journal*, a fearless independent newspaper which always supported the Conservatives; or you had the *Edmonton Bulletin*, an equally fearless and independent newspaper which always supported the Liberals. (Cashman, 1956: 94)

Ukrainians were chalking up more firsts. The first two Ukrainian businessmen were Pavlo (Paul) Rudyk of Edmonton and Peter Svarich of Vegreville. Peter Svarich began as an interpreter for the Liberal Candidate, then he got an appointment as weed inspector.

It is quite possible that English speaking generations yet unborn will come to look upon the descendents of Galician immigrants as their equals and friends; at the present time we do not so consider them. In view of their education, ideas, moral standards and mode of life, we justly regard them as inferiors. We are prepared to treat them with all fairness and civility; we are not prepared to be bossed by them. No doubt there are individual exceptions and Mr. Svarich may be such a case; he may likewise be a good Liberal, and his influence with the more ignorant mass of his fellow countrymen may commend him to Government consideration and favor; this is natural. But when it comes to investing a Russian yokel with authority to dictate, in the Government's name, to English speaking British subjects, we think that this is going too far and anticipating too boldly on the future. We resent it as a humiliation; and it is unlikely that white men in the Province will stand for it. (H.D., Columnist, Vegreville *Observer*. July 29, 1908)

Immigrants continued arriving. Most Ukrainians were still going directly to homesteads in the colony east of Edmonton. The newest immigrants still threw up the usual hovels. As soon as possible, proper houses were built. Though colourful and picturesque, these thatch-roofed huts were a shocking fire hazard. A spark flying out of the chimney could easily ignite the roof.

Those who mourn the passing of the "picturesque" phase of immigrant life do not realize that life in the picturesque thatched houses was crowded, mean, unhygienic and uncomfortable; they do not realize the hideous social tragedies that resulted....(Lysenko, 1947: 232)

Ukrainians weren't the only people having problems. In 1908, during an economic crisis, more stringent laws were passed to keep out "undesireables," and British judges were told they shouldn't give criminals the alternative of Canada or jail. Between 1902 and 1911, 4,667 people were deported, most of them English. The reasons given were as follows: public charge, insanity, criminality, TB, general debility, vagrancy, mental weakness, epilepsy, rheumatism, alcoholism, crippled, heart disease, imbecility, prostitution, defective sight, paralysis, senility, varicose veins, nostalgia, injury, frostbite, trachoma, bad character, hernia, venereal disease.

## Childbirth

Pioneering in Canada wasn't much different in any decade. When my parents were homesteading in the Peace River Country in the 1930's, their lives weren't substantially different from the lives of the homesteaders 30 years earlier, or even a hundred years earlier.

It's cold in the Peace River country and one of the main tasks was the constant preparation and carrying of wood. It had to be cut down, cut into chunks with a hand-saw, chopped in stove-size pieces and carried inside. It's a never-ending job. At the same time, water had also to be carried in—water for drinking, water for cooking, water for washing.

Always there was water to be carried in. But finding water was a problem in the Peace River country. My father dug wells all over the farm, hired water diviners, all to no avail. There were no wells nearby from which to get water. In winter, snow could be melted down. A large amount of snow melts down into only a small amount of water, so tubs of snow must be dragged inside nearly all day to supply normal household needs.

Later, we had a dam scraped out and this supplied the cattle. But this was surface water, stagnant and teeming with animal life, unfit for drinking, cooking or washing. For water in the summer, ice had to be cut in winter. My mother and father would go down to the river or to someone's cleaner dam after the ice had frozen thick but before the snow got too deep, and cut ice into squares. These were transported home and carefully packed in sawdust. In the summer, the ice square was dug from the sawdust, the sawdust scraped off, the ice washed, cut into chunks, and put into pails to melt for drinking and cooking. It is a tedious, difficult, and neverending job.

I remember what a job washing clothes was. In warmer climates not so many clothes are required, but washing long underwear and long woollen stockings on a scrub board is an impossible task. You can't get sheets white on a scrub board. Several weeks wash took three days to do. First, there was the preparation and hauling of enough water, then heating the water, boiling the white things in bleach, then scrubbing and scrubbing things that would never quite come clean.

A good husband would have brought in some of the wood and water—my mother's husband was off at political meetings. I think it's impossible to raise children under these conditions. But my mother did.

Thirty years later a group of us were sitting around my mother's kitchen table when a friend complained she had only three clean diapers left for her baby. Mother nodded sympathetically, and then, as if an evil

spirit had entered from another world, she shuddered.

But I..., she said, I raised four children with a total of six diapers.

And just as quickly, she shook off the horror of those days and began cooking a meal. Later I asked her how one raised babies without diapers.

When you're holding a naked baby, she said, you can tell if it's about to pee by a little catch in its breath, then you hold it over a slop pail or the floor and wipe it up. We never had to toilet train our children. Why would you toilet train a baby? They learn all by themselves. If a baby wet on a visitor's lap it was supposed to be a sign of good luck. It meant you would drink at the wedding, people used to say.

The baby slept in the same bed, my mother told me. When it's tiny, you lay on your side, give it the breast and go to sleep. I kept my arm bent over it, just so all night, so the quilt wouldn't fall on the baby. When one breast is empty, you either change sides, or just move your left arm from under you and lie flatter so that the baby can reach the other breast. You lay the baby on a diaper. I used to keep a dry one under my arm so I wouldn't have to get out of bed when it was so impossibly cold. I could feel around in the dark and if the baby was wet, pull out the wet rag and throw it on the floor. I went to bed with a dry one under my arm, which I would then slide under the baby. It worked very well. A big-breasted woman might accidentally smother her baby like one of our neighbours did. She cried a lot about that. It was a nice baby. They buried her on the farm.

My mother had the first Mike in the hospital in Lamont. All the rest were born at home. Rose was an easy birth; the rest were awful.

January 13, Rose's birthday, is Ukrainian New Year's Eve; there was to be a party at Sereda's to celebrate. My father asked Mother if she wanted to go and as she did, he put on clean clothes and washed. Mother kept delaying and finding things that needed doing. Finally he said irritably: are we going or not? To which she replied: we're going all right, in such a way he knew that the baby was about to be born.

It took only about ten minutes. Mother crouched down beside the bed with her arms and head leaning on the bed. After a while she said: take the baby. He reached under her skirt and there was a baby in his hands, much to his embarrassment. He had never held a baby before.

My mother had delivered one of her mother's babies so she knew a little about midwifery. She told my father what to do while still crouched down, leaning over him to see that he did it correctly while he cut the cord and tied it with clean linen. Then she directed him to wrap the baby in clean flannel and lay it on the bed.

He then ran over to Sereda's. But you don't, as a peasant male, go bursting into the house to announce your wife had a baby. He apologized for being late and stood around as if he had only come to the party. But Mrs. Sereda knew the baby was due and when he gave her a meaningful

look, she casually got her jacket and went out. As she went by my father, she whispered: how long? It's already there, he replied, so she ran out the door. Presumably her job was to look after the delivery of the placenta and clean up. Presumably also, my mother had been in the early stages of labour for some time without my father noticing.

Now my father knew all about childbirth. No fuss at all. By the time the next baby was born in 1938, he considered himself an experienced midwife.

But this was an entirely different situation. My mother crawled around the floor moaning in the last stage of labour, but the baby wouldn't come. She went unconscious several times. She had convulsions, and a few times he thought she was dead. Four hours later she was all blue and didn't appear to be breathing, but then she made one last feeble effort and the baby was born. They named him Mike, the first one having died.

I was born in the summer of 1940. My father says their standard of living had improved by then so Mother had been examined by a doctor and was to deliver in hospital, but my mother says she never saw any doctor.

My father says some relative of Sereda's from Sexsmith was coming to visit and he was supposed to drive my mother to the hospital. On the day he was to arrive, my father was working in the fields when my mother called him in early. He thought this was because she was going to tell him to fix his own lunch. He came into the house and asked if the man had come early. Yeah early, she replied, and continued fussing around the stove. Father was irritated about being called in early and as there was no lunch ready and Mother wasn't talking, he lay down on the floor to read a book. But he kept glancing at her and saw that her face went white and drawn at regular intervals. He realized she much have been in labour for some time already. So he got to be a midwife again.

Rose hadn't known Mother was pregnant so she was most surprised on arrival home from school to find Mother in bed with a baby. Mike took one look and cried: It's a piggy, take it to the barn! It was a cold day in June and I cried a lot, thereby suffering an umbilical hernia.

Art was the most difficult birth of all, for my mother's health had degenerated due to hard work, childbirth, poor food, beating. My father wasn't around for that one and I don't know who helped at this last birth. Perhaps she was alone. He was born puny and sickly, unlike the rest of us, who had been large and fat. He grew to be unbelievably beautiful and we all loved him and looked after him; perhaps he didn't miss not having a father. He claims to have been a spoiled, sissy kid. There must have been times when I hated him, but I only remember being awe-struck by his beauty.

My father didn't like babies because men weren't supposed to and my father spent much of his life being the epitome of masculinity. Women

poured out all their affection onto babies, a compensation for all the ugliness and drabness and never-ending labour. Affection between men and women was almost non-existent, as it was considered a weakness and men were to have no weaknesses. Even worse, if they did get warm and affectionate in an unwary moment, there was another baby. My father once said if he could change it all, it wouldn't be the economics he would tackle first, but the lack of birth control. The only method available was *coitus interruptus*, which didn't always work, and for some never worked. A few invested in a condom but because these were so prohibitively expensive, they were washed and reused and failed anyway.

When my father was on the train from Lamont to Vancouver in 1929, he saw English children on the train. They were clean and clothed and had toys to play with, and he thought bitterly of the bare-assed babies he would raise. My mother had only four surviving children and although she isn't pleased about how we turned out, she never thought she had too many babies.

## Child-raising

You were all easy to raise, my mother said, and caused me no trouble at all. Nowadays children can't even cross the street unless someone is holding their hand. We left ours by themselves and they survived. Mrs. Dreger's doesn't count because that was an accident. One of the Lucuk's died in Lamont, yes, but that was an illness. Our first Mike doesn't count. Yakimuk's John had epilepsy or some falling sickness like that. They didn't have a basin so they washed in the creek. One day when he was washing, he fell down and drowned. Annie died because her nose bled. I think a Vanusya of Panasikha's died too.

I pointed out that this was quite a large number of exceptions, and if accidents and illness didn't count, what did? I said that with more supervision, there may not have been so many accidents and illnesses.

You had to leave them alone, she said. Who was going to supervise them? Your crazy father was off at crazy meetings. I had to cut the ice, bring in water, cut wood, chop wood, bring it in. Who was supposed to do all that? I milked the cows, fed them, cleaned the barn and chicken coop, gathered eggs—and all that time the children were in the house by themselves. One night when your crazy father was away and I had to fix the fence, I noticed there was no light on at Lucuk's house, so I went to see if everything was alright. There were Mary and Harry sitting by the door. Harry was a fat little boy, with a huge stomach and fat face. He was hiding behind Mary's arm. Where is your mother? I asked. Mary replied in baby language that she had gone to listen for the bell. They didn't have



a fence so they put a bell on the cow to hear where she was, and that evening the cow must have gone a long way. I waited around a few minutes and then left again. Why would I look after her children? My own were at home by themselves.

My mother raised all her children without even a cradle. For babies, she cut down two stout willow sticks. Then she nailed two sticks crosswise to make a rectangle. Over this she pulled a sack, loosely, so that it sagged down. Over the sack went a blanket, or if there wasn't an extra blanket, just whatever soft rags were available. This made a bed for the baby. A rope was tied to each corner, the middle tied together, then the whole thing attached to a nail on the ceiling. It worked really well until the baby was old enough to sit up, at which time it would fall out of such a makeshift cradle. My mother had an old *sindook* from the Old Country on which the handles had broken off. When she was going to the field, she would take this along, and put the baby in it near where she was working.

Now he brags about how much money he has, my mother said bitterly, but then he wouldn't buy anything for his children. The second Mike nearly drove me crazy. It was just spring—muddy and cold—and the boy was like a caged cub. Your stupid father asked me how I could stand it, and I asked what I was supposed to do when you're sending our last \$7 to the Old Country. So then he wrote to Eaton's catalogue for boots, and when the boots came, I put the boy outside. He was like a whole new person. That's the kind of child he was—needed to tire himself out and then he was happy.

They had only flour sacks to make clothing from and sometimes Rosalanowsky would give them some salt sacks. In 1934, they paid Leo Litke \$6 for a sewing machine and then my mother sewed clothes out of the flour sacks. She wasn't a fancy seamstress, but better off than Panasikha who couldn't sew at all and suffered greatly because of it.

At first they couldn't afford to buy wool. Later they bought wool at Sexsmith and then my mother knit socks and sweaters and mitts and they lived better then. Selevich made a spinning wheel and my father worked for him in return. It cost \$5 and lasted some 30 years. They also had a home-made *kryosna* (loom) on which my mother could weave a simple cloth. Even a few yards of bought material would have made a great difference, but there wasn't any; there was just the incessant and never-ending labour and poverty.

In the winter they trapped rabbits and salted them in a barrel. My mother says she also trapped weasels around the yard. My father would be out trapping with Selevich and Ivanko, and Mother says she caught more around the house than any of them. But she didn't know how to skin them so she would keep them frozen until my father got home to skin them. Then he would split the furs three ways.



But, my mother said, even in the midst of all that, there was always someone who had an accordion. Not many people knew how to dance, we only knew how to work hard. But we got together anyway and danced and sang. Those who couldn't dance just walked around the floor and we were happy. Then later, those with better luck and better health got rich and wouldn't talk to the poor people any more. It got so that there were always two segregated groups, even at picnics. In the early days, we had all done things together. We used to wrap the children in blankets and each carry one or two over the snow to someone's house for an evening of music.

My eldest sister was mostly brought up in the old house. When she was a baby she slept in the same bed as her parents, but when she got bigger, she graduated to the table. My mother still has that table. Selevich made it. He not only made it strong, he put fancy work on the legs to make it decorative. To make those fancy legs, he used a tool like a bow and arrow, only with a knife attached.

When Rose was sleeping on the table, she would sometimes be allowed back into the parents' bed which was warm and cuddly and a big deal. When she got too big for the table, she had her own bed on the floor. There weren't any such things as mattresses in those days so the bedding would have been sacks stuffed with straw. Every morning, Mother rolled up Rose's bedding and laid it on their bed. There wasn't any room to walk around if the bedding was left on the floor.

Rose was just six when Mike was born. He was wrapped in a blanket and laid on the bed. Being a cranky little ape, he cried a lot. The blanket was wrapped so that you could rock the baby when it cried. The eldest child was supposed to supervise all the younger brothers and sisters. Rose was much too young at six to look after a baby and she hated him every single minute. But there was no one else to look after him. When he got to the toddling stage, she had to take him everywhere she went and see that he didn't get hurt. She hated every minute. She doesn't remember me. When Art was born, she was a bit older and she loved him as if were her own.

It seems most probable that many eldest children died accidentally. If the eldest child survived, he or she would look after all the rest—I don't know of any younger children who died. Rose says that once she and Mary Tarnowski and Mary Lucuk discussed the fact that they were tired of bringing up babies. Mary Sereda told them how babies were made, so they went home and told their mothers there was to be no more of that.

My father went to seven different meetings. I don't remember what they all were. At Selevich's, they read and discussed Marx. There were also meetings at Yaremko's, Peda's, Bzowi's. The nearest meeting was three miles away and the farthest, nine miles. If it was too late to walk home, my father might stay away several days.

Once he was the principal character in a drama presentation to raise funds for the organization. But my mother laid down the law. The government had told them they had to pay taxes or move, and they didn't have the money for taxes. There was wood and water to bring in. There was land to be cleared.

So my mother said he couldn't go to rehearsals. Both of the children were ill with childhood diseases, and my mother was suffering a raging toothache. Toothaches, like dying children, are part of the communing with nature that rich people's children advocate nowadays. My mother's face was swollen, and she was half-mad with pain. My father said he would go and get her some medicine.

But having escaped the house, he went to rehearsals. When he came home two days later, she was lying on the bed, moaning and holding her swollen face. I've brought you some medicine, he told her, and she leaped from the bed wildly, seized a knife, and he thinks she would have killed him in her delirium if he hadn't run.

One summer there was a picnic to raise funds for the organization. My father left the day before to carry supplies from the store to the picnic site. He was part of a group which spent a whole evening making ice cream, singing and talking. My mother was alone on the farm with two children. She came to the picnic. After it, my father had to return the unused stuff to the store, and there was more discussion. My mother was left to get the children home. Rose was too little to walk, so Mother carried her, leading little Mike by the hand.

The waters of the creek by our place had risen in the spring and carried the bridge away. A log had been thrown across. The top branches of the log had been cut off, with branches left along the side for people to hold onto if they fell in. My father had rescued Pernarowski once when he fell in the water from a similar log. There wasn't anyone to help my mother. She could only take one child across at a time because the log was slippery. If she left Rose and carried Mike across, Rose cried and crawled toward the water. If she left Mike, he would run after her into the creek. She struck Rose and threatened her with worse if she moved, then carried Mike across. But then he wouldn't stay and wait for her while she went back to get the baby.

Well, how did she manage? I asked my father.

How the hell would I know, he said irritably. I was off studying Marx. I don't know how she stayed sane.

It wasn't that my father intended to neglect his family, but that in common with most men of his generation, he took it for granted that the final responsibility for care of children rested with women. More than that, he believed the political work being done would ultimately benefit his family as well as everyone else. So he neglected his family, believing that it was for their better future.

Many of the immigrants were illiterate. Both my mother and father could read and write. My father went to school for four years; my mother, six months.

It was while they were refugees in Russia during the war that my mother got to go to school. It was a big deal. But she hadn't any shoes and after a short time her feet were so badly frozen she couldn't walk. She lay on the brick extension from the oven and cried for months. Only in her old age, 60 years later, has she become reconciled to the fact that she couldn't go to school. When they got back home after the refugee time, they were living in a colony of Poland, and the Poles only allowed boys to go to school at that time. However, even six months was more than other people enjoyed. Being "educated," my mother continues to write letters for other women, and to read to them out of the Ukrainian newspaper.

I am not giving an accurate picture of their lives at all. Most of my mother's days were spent in the harsh drabness of labour. Day after day after day she kept lifting and bending and carrying. But when you write about someone's life, you write of the highs and lows, not the dullness of unceasing labour. It's not that she worked all that fast—speed and incredibly high productivity per person are inventions of industrial society. The work in pre-industrial societies wasn't done at such a speed or under such pressure. But it was more difficult, more boring, more endless, and never resulted in anything observable except survival. So my mother fetched and carried and cut and lifted—and sang. I suppose that's what kept her sane. Ukrainians don't work without singing. The songs were primarily the mournful ones in the minor keys in which people poured out all their misery and suffering, so they could stay alive.

When the first Mike was still alive, my mother got back from cleaning the barn one day to find that Rose, who was about two at the time, had stuck a metal case from a bullet up her nose. She had wanted to see if it would fit. When my mother came into the house, there was Rose, crying with her nose bleeding. There was no way to get hold of the cartridge case to remove it.

My mother took Mike to Sereda's and carried Rose to Zaichkowsky's. Walking was difficult on slippery winter roads. Zaichkowsky's had horses so they harnessed them up and took my mother to Rycroft. Later, my father repaid them with some work. In Rycroft, Mother borrowed some money from Joe Roslanowsky and hired a car for \$3 to take her and the child to Spirit River, where an old doctor lived. He had her wait until Rose's stomach was completely empty, then he anaesthetized the child and pulled the cartridge case out with a clever little hook. If my mother had owned such a hook, she could have done it herself.

After she paid the doctor with the borrowed money, he asked if she had any money with which to pay the hospital. Since she didn't, he told her she must take the child away immediately. She still had a nickel left for

coffee so she took the drugged child and went to have a cup. But then she had no money left and the child was still unconscious, foaming from the mouth from ether. My mother walked from Spirit River to Zaichkowsky's down the railroad track. There was a cold wind blowing. She wrapped Rose in her sweater and, removing her kerchief, tied the child securely to her back with it. Then she walked off down the track.

There was a cold wind blowing. Her head ached for weeks afterwards. She walked bareheaded down the track with the sleeping child tied to her back. Her thoughts were cold and bitter as the wind as she walked down the track. She thought if she had a decent husband it might have been different. But she had nothing decent and she thought it would be better for both of them to jump from the railroad bridge with the child still asleep on her back. But there was the other one at Sereda's—little Mike waiting for his mother to come home. Nobody would care for him if she died, not even his father. So she walked down the track with the child still asleep on her back, the cold wind blowing, and her thoughts as bitter as the winds of Alberta.

A year later, the boy was dead.

Don't write about that, my mother said. It's better forgotten. We didn't live like people, we lived like animals. Well, even animals lived better. I don't want to talk about it any more. Just say we were poor and that women could survive if they had a decent husband; but if you add a bad husband to poverty, then it's no life at all, and women spent their lives cursing the day they were born. I don't remember how we lived. If I don't remember, then there isn't so much heartache.

## 1909-1913: Uplifting Influences

The Liberal Party and Premier A.C. Rutherford were re-elected in 1909. By this time they had chartered 13 railways, not all of which got built. The Alberta and Great Waterways Railroad caused the most immediate problems.

This railway, begun in 1906, was to go to Fort McMurray and tap the resources of the tar sands, there having been interest in them from 1897 when they were explored and researched for extraction. The railway was also to join the Athabasca, the beginning of the water route to the Peace River Country. From 1905, a few more settlers every year were going there in search of better land. From Edmonton, one must circle either to the left or right of the impassable Swan Hills. The railway made easier the original route, which was the water route to the east of the hills.

The scandal burst in 1909. The company, in the person of Mr. William Rockwell Clark of Kansas, refused to speak to the press to explain the

scheme which had

. . . no railway system behind it, no money other than that the Province gives it, and no means of getting the money to pay the interest charges on the road until the enterprise becomes self-supporting. (Edmonton *Bulletin*. May 3, 1910)

Supporters within the government said there was a railway company backing this non-railway company but no documenting facts were available. Another criticism was that the railway was to be allowed \$20,000 per mile, which was more than was required for its construction. Further, the specifications were inadequate. To this, the government replied that no one would think of building a railway to such poor specifications, but faith in the invisible man from Kansas was the only guarantee. In addition, \$8,140,000 worth of bonds had been issued, but only \$7,400,000 worth of money was received for them. A commission was appointed to investigate the matter, but Mr. Clark of Kansas refused to appear before it, and the government would not compel him to do so.

In all, it added up to devastating mismanagement and/or corruption on the part of the government and Clark Rutherford resigned as premier over the matter but retained his seat in the Legislature. Arthur L. Sifton, who had been Chief Justice, became the new premier.

Interest in the investigation waned after the resignation. It had all been a political game. W.H. Cushing had led the insurgents in the hope that he might become the new premier, but since he had been in the Cabinet, he was at least partly responsible for the mess. The Liberals saved their party by appointing an uninvolved outsider as premier.

More benefit from the affair accrued to a young lawyer named R.B. Bennett, leader of the Opposition. He lost interest in the investigation when the publicity died down. In the end, a Royal Commission "after long deliberation, cleared the accused of the charge of financial corruption, though not of lack of wisdom in the arrangements made with the A.&G.W." (*The Alberta Golden Jubilee Anthology*, 1955: 273)

But there were further problems. The money raised for the project remained in the bank pending appeals by the company and share-holders. In 1913 the Royal Bank took the case to the Privy Council in London, which found in its favour. The government was not allowed to use the money for general provincial revenue, but was obliged to build a railway.

Another railway, the Edmonton, Dunvegan, and British Columbia Railway began in 1910. It reached Peace River Crossing in 1916, unaccompanied by public scandals. A train chugged into Grande Prairie for the first time on March 22, 1916. This railway made obsolete the other routes to the Peace River Country, one of which was the water route to the east of the Swan Hills. The Edson Trail, built to the west of these hills

had been mostly impassable.

By 1911, provincial government grants to railways in Alberta totalled \$44,000,000.

At the same time the federal government was building the National Transcontinental. Many protested the cost of building this railway but few protested the meagre wages the workers were paid. The Grand Trunk Pacific was building its portion of the railway west of Winnipeg, and by 1910 it was running a train between Winnipeg and Edmonton. Foley, Welsh and Stewart were given the contract to build west from Edmonton.

The first grain shipment by the National Transcontinental from Winnipeg to Port Colborne was delivered in January, 1913. According to the government's original agreement with the Grand Trunk, the latter was now to take over the running of the whole railway. But the Grand Trunk owners weren't interested in railways, only in money. Smithers, the Grand Trunk president, pretended that the National Transcontinental wasn't really finished yet. Instead of forcing the company to live up to its agreement, the government gave them another \$8,200,000 of the people's money.

The people were trying to organize themselves. Farmers' cooperatives became a tradition on the prairies after they were started by the Metis in the 1870's. After 1900, the largest of the farmers' marketing cooperatives was the Grain Growers Grain Company, which became the United Grain Growers (UGG) in 1917. The official newspaper of this group was the *Grain Growers Guide*. In 1907 a businessman named Thomas Crerar was elected president and director of the Company, which was a farmers' joint stock company. Crerar had begun as a Liberal and remained president of the UGG until 1930. He remained a Liberal all his life and in his position as leader of the farmers' movement, did it considerable damage.

Some farmers were mistrustful of the large centralized grain company and formed local co-ops of their own. These

. . . local societies represented, in the best co-operative tradition, a desire on the part of the local farmers (and, in some instances, urban workers) to control their economy. (Trofimenkoff, 1972: 51)

There were a great many producer and consumer societies formed. In all cases, not only in the early 1900's but later as well, these co-ops failed because they were taken over by businessmen. It can hardly be otherwise in a capitalist society. For a long time, farmers formed new co-ops as fast as the old ones were removed from their control.

The United Farmers of Alberta was formed in Edmonton in 1909 through a union of the Alberta Farmers' Association and the Canadian Society of Equity. There were probably few Ukrainians involved in the early stages. Later, of course, Ukrainians ran the local organizations in

Ukrainians districts, but there were never any in leadership positions, and Ukrainian candidates ran only in Ukrainian districts.

Ukrainians in Alberta opened their own cooperative store in Vegreville in 1910. It was called the National Cooperative Company and was run mainly by Petro Svarich and Pavlo Rudyk. Ukrainians were becoming less poor by this time and, therefore, more respectable. Wilfred Laurier himself laid a cornerstone of the new Catholic church in Mundare in 1910.

The value of Ukrainians as settlers was no longer in doubt and only die-hard bigots, of whom there were many, demanded an end to them.

In 1909 James S. Woodsworth published a book called *Strangers Within Our Gates*. Woodsworth was an eminent humanitarian, catapulted to fame during the Winnipeg General Strike; he was also a Member of Parliament for many years where he often fought single-handedly against reaction. During the First World War he left the Methodist Church because of its support of the war. In the 1930's, he led the newly-formed CCF party. In general, he was an educated, liberal, Christian man of the times. His opinions, therefore, tell us more about the times than about Mr. Woodsworth.

Woodsworth thought immigrants should be assimilated and that those like the Chinese, who were considered unassimilable, should not be allowed into Canada. He also complained about the poor of England being allowed in. He said that 35 per cent of Londoners were considered poor, that they lived like savages, and knew nothing of civilization. (p. 51) He wasn't very charitable about the children from English workhouses brought to Canada.

Children from such surroundings with inherited tendencies to evil are a very doubtful acquisition to Canada. (p. 54)

The Germans he considered to be good immigrants because they were acceptable for assimilation, "civilized," and had not been influenced by their Russian environment. (p. 82)

When it came to Slavs, Woodsworth was in a quandary about whether or not they should be allowed in. He was certain they should not be given citizenship rights because he thought they didn't understand democracy. (p. 239) He seemed surprisingly certain that Czechs from Bohemia were the most intelligent of the Slavs (p. 108) and that Bukovinians were even worse than people from Halychina. (p. 110)

It is difficult to determine if Woodsworth thought the differences he saw between people were biological or cultural. His condemnation of the poor of London seems to suggest the latter; on the other hand, he seemed to think the peasants' lack of education was passed on to their children through heredity. He made it sound as if generations of Anglo-Saxon civilization was necessary to change the "bad blood" of other groups.

In many other ways Woodsworth was far in advance of his times. In



terms of racism, however, he appears to have been much like everyone else. When even a liberal humanitarian preached these views, what chance did ordinary people have?

Ordinary people were then, as now, bombarded with advertisements such as "Spring Blood is Bad Blood." Dr. Williams' Pink Pills cured everyone of spring blood in the early 1900's. This was civilization.

Reverend W.D. Reid of Montreal, a Presbyterian, was upset by the fact that so many non-Anglos weren't pure Christians.

In many cases they bring with them a sort of atheistic socialism which casts a blight of death over any country where it takes root. Often they underbid the labour market, driving out the white men. They raise vexing municipal questions, they strain our charitable organizations sometimes to the breaking point, they expose healthy people to disease, and often herd themselves together in certain localities of the cities, constituting a real problem of the slums. Yet . . . God is in this movement. They have been brought here for a purpose, *viz*, that they should come under the quickening, renewing, uplifting influences of pure Christianity. (*Confederation to 1949*, 1966: 83)

The Methodists built a hospital in Lamont, their second in the Ukrainian area, in 1912. It was still under the control of Reverend Lawford, but Lawford was losing confidence in the ability of Methodism to save Ukrainians. He saw them as threatened and debilitated by two opposing forces—Catholicism and atheistic socialism, both of which he appeared to consider equally reprehensible.

The Roman Catholics were also losing faith in their ability to control Ukrainians and finally conceded defeat. More Uniate (Greek Catholic) priests were sent to Canada, and in 1912, Bishop Budka arrived to rule the flock.

With the coming of Bishop Budka in 1912, the Greek Catholic Church attempted to regulated the entire life of the Ukrainians in Canada. Despite failure to achieve the goal, the attitude is maintained to the present time. (Yuzyk, 1953: 82)

Within a year of his arrival, Bishop Budka had established the "Ruthenian Greek Catholic Episcopal Corporation of Canada," which was incorporated by the Dominion government. Until that time, local church societies controlled their own property, but Bishop Budka told them all churches, institutes and other property must now belong to the corporation. People were incensed about this but there was no immediate rebellion.

The businessmen especially played an important role in building churches. It was not so much that they cared about the souls of the



immigrants, but that it was to their material advantage; they made commissions on securing of materials and at the same time profited in making business connections. (Lysenko, 1947: 101)

In spite of all the difficulties, the country was getting populated by the correct people. The census of 1911 revealed that of the 7,206,643 Canadians, 54 per cent originated in the British Isles. Another 25.5 per cent were French-speaking. That left only about 20 per cent of everybody else, including the Indians, so it can be seen that the desired goals were being achieved.

In 1911, the population of Alberta was 374,000. Eighty-five per cent of Ukrainians in Canada were agricultural. Those who had been in Canada for some decades were now beginning to participate in the market economy. With roads and railways being built, those who had cleared land and developed stock herds could expect cash sales and no longer needed to provide their own subsistence.

In spite of regular setbacks; the country was getting rich. In 1891, 30 million bushels of wheat had been grown on the prairies; by 1911, 194 million bushels.

. . . That the opening to the plough of these western lands had been one of the most potent factors in the ever increasing prosperity of the country during the last decade, should be considered as the strongest possible ground for persecuting with vigor the land and immigration policy to which the satisfactory results now reported are chiefly attributable. (*Sessional Papers*. Department of the Interior for 1905-1906. p. ix.)

## Ukrainians Enter Politics: 1913

In 1913, Ukrainians from the electoral districts of Pakan, Victoria, Vermilion, Vegreville, held a convention.

The avowed purpose of the Ruthenians is to organize into a political party strictly as a nationality, with a view to impressing the government of the day with their particular views and requests. . . . The evident feeling is that for years the Ruthenian vote has been exploited by both the Liberals and Conservatives and their organization proposes to put a stop to this practice. (Vegreville *Observer*, January 15, 1913)

Among the names of the heavies at this meeting can be found the members of the fledgling Ukrainian middle class—Paul Rudyk, P. Svarich, Micheal Gowda, Roman Kremar, A.S. Shandro, and others.

It is doubtful that Ukrainians really thought they could or should form their own political party. They were too few in number. Most probably they were simply announcing their presence. The announcement aroused a furor in the newspapers, and columnists warned of the "Ruthenian peril."

When the election was called, instead of forming their own party, the aspiring Ukrainian politicians attended both conventions. According to Czumer, Ukrainians never saw much difference between the parties, saying that one was 18 and the other 20 minus 2.

At the Liberal nominating convention, Ukrainians sneaked in a nomination, which was eliminated on the first ballot. The Conservative convention made no such pretence at democracy. They had an appointed nominating committee which presented only one nominee. Ukrainians were very angered by this as they had expected that they would be allowed to put forward a candidate. A fistfight began. Ukrainians went away mad and decided that Peter Svarich should run as an independent for Vegreville. He was defeated.

In the meantime, Andrew S. Shandro had been treated more kindly by the Liberals at Whitford and was nominated as the Ukrainian Liberal candidate. But Paul Rudyk was also running and there was also to be an English-speaking Liberal.

Premier A.L. Sifton was re-elected with the Liberals getting 36 seats and the Conservatives 18. Both parties had indulged in the usual tactics of bribery, stuffing ballot boxes, losing the boxes and so on. In addition, it is said that throughout the Ukrainians' early history, citizenship papers were granted only to people who would vote for the party in power.

There was a mystery in Clearwater in 1913, but it didn't seem to bother anyone unduly. There were only 80 voters in Clearwater, but 103 voted and elected a Liberal. (MacGregor, 1972: 216)

In Whitford the results were as follows: Andrew S. Shandro, Ukrainian Liberal, 470; Paul Rudyk, Independent Liberal, 301; D.F. Connolly, English Liberal, 148; R.L. Hughson, Conservative, 134. (*Vegreville Observer*, April 23, 1913)

Paul Rudyk then appealed the election, claiming that he had been slandered by Shandro and that Shandro had used bribery and other dishonest methods to win the election.

In the Whitford constituency Andrew was opposed by Paul Rudyk, who felt on the strength of a letter he had received from a major official in the Liberal organization, that he should have been the official candidate from the Liberal ranks, and now ran as an independent. Andrew countered by causing Rudyk to be arrested on a charge of false pretences. Though he was elected in 1913 he had to face a court action initiated by Rudyk on two counts, a claim for

damages and a judgment declaring the election null and void.  
(*Ukrainian Pioneers*, p. 43)

Andrew S. Shandro was born in Bukovina on April 13, 1886. His father, Stefan Shandro, and Nikon Shandro and their families arrived in Edmonton on Victoria Day, 1899. They went down the Victoria Trail to Star and settled near people they knew. In 1900 they were joined by another brother, Sidor, and a nephew, Wasyl, and their families. Others arrived. By 1901 nearly all the homesteads in the area were taken.

In 1902 the town of Shandro was named. By 1905 the community was fairly well established and Nikon and Andrew Shandro set up a school district. The new school opened on April 1, 1907. It had an English schoolteacher, so teacher and pupils just sat around looking at each other, unable to communicate.

The first four Shandros had 48 children. Stefan Shandro married twice and had 20 children. Andrew, Stefan's eldest son, learned to speak English and became the postmaster. He also started a ferry across the river at Shandro. He was among the earliest translators along with Peter Svarich and Theodore Nemirsky. He sold machinery in the Ukrainian district as an agent for International Harvester, and was a director of the National Co-operative Company in Vegreville. At the time of the election, he wasn't yet 30 years old, but was well on his way. However, the election was nullified in 1914 after a court case.

On Tuesday Justice Scott handed down his judgment in the case of Rudyk vs. Shandro, which was a sort of aftermath of the election campaign in Whitford constituency. The case involved a letter which Rudyk at a Ruthenian meeting claimed he had received from Hon. C.W. Cross. The effect and intent of the letter was the "official" recognition of Rudyk as Government candidate in Whitford. A.S. Shandro had of course the nomination of the party in the district. Mr. Shandro caused Rudyk's arrest and detention on a charge of forging the name of the Attorney General to the letter.

After the election Rudyk brought action against Shandro claiming heavy damages, and Justice Scott's summing up of the case was strongly in favour of Rudyk's contentions. Judgment was accordingly given for Rudyk for \$1,200 damages and also the cost of the action. (*Vegreville Observer*. November 11, 1914)

Shandro was also found guilty of violations of the Election Act and his election of April, 1913 was declared null and void. In addition, he was not to run for election or vote for eight years. He appealed to the Supreme Court which upheld the loss of the seat, but threw out the eight year disqualification.

The media, for once, was sympathetic to a Ukrainian. By fixing his election, Shandro had presumably proved he was as good as any other

capitalist. He stood stalwartly against bilingual schools. Everyone, pointed out Horton of the *Observer*, bribed voters and fixed elections and it was unfair to single out Shandro for punishment. The *Edmonton Bulletin* claimed everyone ignored the Elections Act, and it was only enforced in cases of personal spite. (January 20, 1915)

A by-election for Whitford was held in March, 1915. Rudyk did not run again because his wife was sick. Roman Kremar ran against Shandro and was narrowly defeated. Finally, Alberta had its first Ukrainian MLA. Shandro sat in the Legislature until 1921, having been returned automatically in 1917 by a war-time rule that all sitting members could remain in office.

## Schools

The first concern of our pioneer-colonists was safeguarding of themselves and their families from death by hunger, then they worried about church-religious matters. But there was always in their mind one more important and urgent matter, and this was schools for their growing youth. (Czumer, 1942: 69. Translated from Ukrainian.)

Organization of a school district required knowledge of English and knowledge of school laws. By 1907, a number of schools had been organized in the Ukrainian districts in Alberta with the help of Peter Svarich, Paul Rudyk, Theodore Nemirsky. By 1912 there were 90 elementary schools in Ukrainian districts in Alberta; by 1914 there were 130.

In Manitoba the government hired bilingual school organizers but in Alberta no officials concerned themselves about schools for Ukrainian children. People thought education for their children was very important, therefore they organized their own school districts when they were able to obtain information on how to do it. After the organization, the community banded together to provide the materials and build the school. Then there was the upkeep of the school and the teacher's salary.

The immigrants had not yet had a chance to learn English. Therefore, the teachers had no way to communicate with their pupils and could teach them nothing. A qualified teacher had to speak both languages. Other groups of immigrants brought their own teachers with them, but the Ukrainian immigrants were entirely peasants and had no teachers.

The BNA Act placed schools under provincial jurisdiction. The Act which made Manitoba a province included the right of separate schools for Catholics and French schools for French Canadians. In 1890, the

Manitoba Legislature passed a new school act closing the separate schools. Thus disappeared another one of the safeguards the Metis had gained for the people of Manitoba during the Riel Rebellion. There still remained the issue of bilingualism, which was formalized as Section 258 of the Public Schools Act. If ten or more pupils spoke French or any other language, they could be taught in their own language as well as in English. These bilingual schools existed until a law was passed against them on March 8, 1916.

Since there were no teachers qualified to teach in both English and Ukrainian, the Manitoba government was petitioned to open a training school. The Ruthenian Training School for Teachers opened in Winnipeg on February 3, 1905. In the fall of 1908, it was moved to Brandon because the government was afraid the student teachers were engaging in politics in Winnipeg, the main city for central Europeans. The training school had an English principal and vice-principal, but there was always at least one Ukrainian teacher. Between 1905 and 1916, when it was closed, this school turned out 150 bilingual teachers.

These teachers didn't care only about school children. They were missionaries in the wider community. They taught children during the day and adults in the evening. They changed the schools into centres of learning, put in libraries, gave lectures, put on concerts and plays. These schools with those teachers awakened national interests and continued cultural work. Those teachers walked through mud, bush, snow, tens of miles to visit each other, so that they could help each other in their work with the older settlers. (Stechishin, 1953: 13. Translated from Ukrainian.)

Neither Saskatchewan nor Alberta laws mentioned bilingual schools one way or another. Most people assumed that these provinces would follow the example of Manitoba.

In 1909 the English School for Foreigners opened in Regina to train bilingual school teachers. Although it was open to all nationalities, almost all the student teachers were Ukrainian. It was not as popular as the Manitoba school because there was no Ukrainian teacher on staff. About 80 teachers graduated.

For the people in Alberta, there was no help at all in educational matters. If education was to be available, it was up to the homesteaders themselves to provide it. They did the best they could.

School ran only in the summer because most children didn't have the proper footwear for winter. They had to walk through swamp and bush, for lack of roads. In spring and summer, the older children had too much work to be able to attend. In school they were taught competitive sports such as they'd never experienced before. Most of the time they couldn't understand what the teachers said.

People complained bitterly to the government that they paid school taxes and got nothing in return. In 1913 they petitioned the minister for education for an official school organizer who was familiar with the Ukrainian language and culture. They also wanted the School Act printed in Ukrainian and a school to train Ukrainian teachers.

Teachers didn't like going to the Ukrainian districts. They were paid \$35 to \$40 a month and while this was a large sum for the homesteaders to pay, it wasn't much for the teachers to receive. They had to stay with farmers in one or two room houses, there being no houses of any other size. In addition, contempt for Ukrainians prevented most "self-respecting" teachers from wanting to work in the Ukrainian districts. The teachers who did go were mostly of the permit category and none of them stayed any longer than they had to. In 1912 there was an acute shortage of teachers and some schools in Ukrainian districts stayed closed all year for this reason.

Whenever possible, school boards in the Ukrainian districts of Alberta hired bilingual teachers from Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Although there weren't many of them in Alberta, these teachers were important to the communities. As well as being good teachers, they assisted in the process of self-education of adults, which the people had begun.

The more those teachers encouraged community affairs, the more they generated the mistrust of the foreign rulers. (Stechishin, 1953: 13. Translated from Ukrainian.)

The school boards as well as the teachers were worrying the foreign rulers.

In obedience to the school Ordinance, they elected their school trustees, but were loath to delegate them with any real authority. Therefore, at each school board meeting, a majority of electors in the district would present themselves and participate in the meeting as freely and with as much influence on the board's decision as did the trustees themselves. (*Alberta Historical Review*. Winter 1968: 19-20)

This is, quite properly, no longer allowed. Democracy if not nipped in the bud is liable to sweep the country.

Suddenly the government acquired an interest in schools for Ukrainian children. They decided to get rid of the bilingual teachers. Exactly why is unclear. It may be because in the 1913 election, some of the teachers had campaigned for independent candidates, and Ukrainians did not follow their usual pattern of voting entirely Liberal. Or it may have been a nation-wide plot. In the same year, the Ontario Department of Education passed Regulation 17 prohibiting bilingual schools in that province. This was aimed at French Canadians.

Honourable J.R. Boyle continued as minister of education after the Alberta election of April 21, 1913. Within a month he began cancelling

the permits of Ukrainian teachers. The issue is presented historically as one of qualification; at the time, there was no such waffling and the purpose was repeatedly stated as doing away with bilingual schools.

Hon. J.R. Boyle, Minister of Education, has made an important announcement with respect to the so-called "Ruthenian" public school districts. Mr. Boyle has stated in unmistakeable terms that there shall be no bilingual schools established in Alberta. The mistake of Manitoba must not be repeated in this province. (*Vegreville Observer*, August 27, 1913)

In October, 1913, the Legislature added Section 149 to the School Ordinance. It stated that teachers in Alberta must have a certificate and that anyone else teaching in public schools would be fined or imprisoned. This outlawed the bilingual teachers who had only permits. They could still, however, teach in Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

There was a media campaign in favour of Boyle, whipping up anti-Ukrainian feeling. The school boards which didn't immediately comply with the regulations were subject to fines and imprisonment.

Ukrainian school boards angrily refused to fire Ukrainian teachers. R. Fletcher, the government's Supervisor of Schools Among Foreigners, threatened the school boards at Oleskow, Podola, Molodia, Zawale, Spring Creek, Paraskawa, and Stanislaw into dismissing their bilingual teachers. Vladymir, near Mundare, refused. Mr. Fletcher got himself appointed as official trustee without the knowledge of the school board and fired the teacher himself. The same thing happened at Kolomea, near Mundare, and Lwiw school, near Lamont. In some cases the school boards fired Mr. Fletcher's teachers and re-hired their own. Then Mr. Fletcher personally brought and installed unilingual teachers. School trustees at Kolomea were dismissed for "obstruction."

Eventually everyone but the people at the Bukovina school near Vegreville gave in. Wasyl Czumer was the teacher there. Mr. Fletcher ordered him fired and on July 15, brought another teacher to replace him. The ratepayers gathered to protest and used "unparliamentary" language. One trustee was fined \$5 and costs for "disturbance." Mr. Armstrong, a unilingual teacher was installed at the school.

Parents refused to send their children to school, whereupon Mr. Fletcher announced that the Truancy Act would be used against them.

It was, Mr. Fletcher declared, an English province. It was not, retorted the Ukrainians, it was a Canadian province.

The people then built a private school across the road from the public one. Attendance at the private school: 30; attendance at the public school: 0. Furthermore, although Mr. Armstrong sat in his empty classroom every day, the community refused to pay his salary. They

collected the school taxes and used the money to pay Wasyl Czumer.

Mr. Fletcher accused the people of having formed some kind of organization "composed of certain, well-known agitators, who had ulterior motives to serve, but who, to conceal their personal desires, took advantage of the natural and praiseworthy love the Ruthenian people have for their mother tongue . . ." (Quoted by Skwarok, 1958: 96) He did not say what he thought the ulterior motives were. On December 15, with the aid of the ever-helpful RNWMP, Mr. Fletcher seized a horse each from five taxpayers.

An order-in-council making the private school at Bukovina illegal was rushed through a special session of the provincial Cabinet. Orders-in-council are legal, but they are not used to make new laws except in wartime.

By Christmas, 1913, Wasyl Czumer was forced to leave the Bukovina district and the private school was closed. The community was too poor to take any more punishment from Mr. Fletcher.

When Mr. Armstrong, the English schoolteacher, returned from his holidays, a group of people visited him, asking him to go away and cease making trouble. He told them the education of their children was none of their business and tried to push them out. They refused to be pushed. Mr. Armstrong left the district that evening and never returned. Maria Kapitska was charged with assault and sentenced to two months in the women's prison at Macleod. She was allowed to take her 18-month-old child with her.

The ex-treasurer of the school board was fined \$98.50 and costs for paying Wasyl Czumer's salary, which was called "misuse of funds."

The situation was considerably muddled by the presence of Russophiles among the Ukrainians. Andrew S. Shandro was one of them and he made public statements opposing bilingual schools. Russophiles were Russians and Ukrainians who scorned the Ukrainian language and culture while praising everything Russian. Although these people were small in number and negligible in influence, the government befriended them. The school laws were printed in a language which was an unreadable mixture of Ukrainian, Russian, and unknown elements. Peter Svarich later said that Shandro and three other men prepared this hodge-podge and were paid \$2,000. (Skwarok, 1958: 107-108) Shandro withdrew his allegiance from the Russophiles in a public statement two years later.

In response to the requests from Ukrainians, the English School for Foreigners was opened on February 3, 1913. Ukrainians had understood that this school would allow the graduates a teaching permit. The government said the purpose of the school was only to prepare students to write departmental high school exams. This would qualify them for entry into the Provincial Normal School to train as teachers.



The principal was overly authoritarian, which also caused problems. The students were adults but because they were called foreigners, the school rules were more rigid than those in most primary schools. As a result, the students went on strike in December, 1913. Three students were expelled and the remainder required to sign a promise that they would follow the rules. The school was not a success and the dropout rate was high. It closed in 1916.

In 1915, 25 per cent of the schools in Alberta were closed for lack of teachers. Not until 1916 was the first Ukrainian Canadian teacher graduated from Normal School in Alberta.

Ukrainian was not again permitted in the public school system in Alberta until it was certain that most people had forgotten it. In 1950 a non-credit evening course in Ukrainian was taught at the University of Alberta. From 1959, Ukrainian has been allowed as an optional language course in high schools in Alberta.

The strangest part of the school story is that Ukrainian parents had no objection whatsoever to their children learning in English. They did not want the children to forget Ukrainian, but since most of the immigrants spoke three or more languages, they saw no reason why their children couldn't be fluent in both English and Ukrainian. They also knew back then what has been confirmed many times: that their children would learn English faster if they also knew Ukrainian well.

. . . evidence started rolling that showed children do best in English who learn to read and write in their native tongue first. Nancy Modian did her Maya highlands study in 1966, showing that children first taught to read in their native Tzeltal and Tzotzil did better in Spanish than those taught only in Spanish.

In 1968, Maurice Kaufman reported from New York City that Puerto Rican immigrants taught to read Spanish improved in English more readily than those taught only in English. (*This Magazine*, August, 1973: 10)

Peter Svarich and others pleaded this case in 1913 and were ignored. In Alberta in 1914 there wasn't one person of Ukrainian origin at the university, and there was only one in high school—as contrasted with the situation in Manitoba, where there were hundreds. About 50 per cent of the immigrants arriving between 1891 and 1914 arrived illiterate. By 1921, 40 per cent of Ukrainians aged 10 and over in Alberta were still illiterate. The bilingual teachers had taught for too short a time. But by 1915, Fletcher reported that he was pleased with the way Ukrainian electors were learning to "rely on individual judgment and delegate authority." (Quoted by MacGregor, 1969)

In retrospect, it is obvious that the purpose of the schools was cultural and hence, political annihilation. If taught in both languages the children

learned English more quickly and were not made contemptuous of their parents' culture. If taught only in English they didn't learn much and their pride was destroyed. The total destruction of Ukrainian schools ended the Ukrainian "problem" as such. Thereafter, it would arise only as the communist/agitator problem.

## 1914: Unemployment

Disillusion with U.S. business unionism and with factionalism among the various socialist parties helped give rise to syndicalism. (This was an anti-capitalist movement of workers who considered the union struggle to be their top priority. The word derives from the French word for union.) Socialists like Tim Buck, who became the leader of the Communist Party, called the syndicalists "sectarian" and said they should have been working inside the craft unions.

The International Workers of the World (IWW) is the best known of the syndicalist organizations. It began in the U.S. and found its way across the border where it was greeted enthusiastically by workers in western Canada. By 1911, it had 10,000 members. But the vehemence of attack from both right and left destroyed the IWW. In 1913, it had 1,000 members in Canada and in 1914, only 465.

In 1914 an acute unemployment problem gave rise to what may have been the last gasp of the IWW in Canada. There were masses of unemployed across the country. In February, 1914, Edmonton had 4,000 unemployed men. (Nobody counted the number of unemployed women until decades later.)

Six hundred of the unemployed in Edmonton, 80 per cent of whom were said to be Russian, Polish, or Ukrainian, held a parade in May, organized by the IWW. Addresses were made to the crowd in foreign languages.

A committee of the unemployed asked the mayor for work. One proposal was to cut city employees to a six hour day. The mayor replied it was a nation-wide problem and the city couldn't solve it alone. He suggested that the unemployed could work for farmers for their food, but the unemployed pointed out they needed clothing too.

Among other charges, the unemployed committee claimed that the employment agencies were cheating the people they were supposed to help. The agencies admitted there was truth in these charges. They thought the problem could be solved if the IWW was banned from the city as had been done in Los Angeles, Seattle, and other cities. This would eliminate complaints since anyone who complained about agency swindles or unemployment would be banished as an IWW'er.

The IWW supposedly threatened to blow things up. Even more sinister, they gave more speeches in foreign languages. They also marched on the Legislature where the acting Premier told them to go away. Another demonstration was held during which the demonstrators said in foreign languages that they wanted work and made other such inflammatory demands.

Thirteen "foreigners" were arrested for eating a cafe meal and then refusing to pay for it. Two of them were also charged with causing a disturbance. Even worse, two of them had money on their persons when they were arrested, one the princely sum of \$2.00 and the other \$1.45. These two were sentenced to two months imprisonment with hard labour. The two who were supposed to have caused a disturbance were sentenced to \$20 or 30 days, and the remainder, \$10 or 15 days.

It should be noted that while the rank-and-file of the IWW in Edmonton were mostly Slavs, the leaders were entirely English and Irish—a condition which hindered communication between the leaders and followers.

During the protest (May, 1914), it was discovered that the entire police force in Edmonton was crawling with corruption. The Chief and others were fired for accepting bribes and protection money. However, there were no further IWW insurrections in Edmonton. There is a most peculiar story involved in this.

A man named Frank Hiram Johnson, who had gone homesteading near Lac la Biche, wrote to his friends James Rowan and Ernest Barrett, of the executive of the Edmonton IWW, that his life was in danger. In July they went to see him. When they arrived, they found him dead. After they walked to Lac la Biche to report what they had found, they were charged with vagrancy and sentenced to six months in prison. While in jail they were also charged with murder.

Labour organizations in Edmonton formed a "Rowan and Barrett Defence Fund." A speaker identified as "Comrade Macdonald" charged in a public speech that the Metis living around Johnson's homestead killed him. No evidence was offered and one must regretfully conclude that this was simply a racist slur. The same man also said it was all a plot by the railways to get rid of the IWW. (Edmonton *Bulletin*. August 17, 1914)

While awaiting trial on the murder charge, James Rowan appealed his vagrancy conviction. He had come to Lac la Biche to get work on the Alberta and Great Waterways Railway.

Among the witnesses was the secretary of the IWW branch at Edmonton who admitted being the author of an extraordinary letter which he wrote to the murdered man and in which he characterized the Roman Catholics in almost unprintable language. (Edmonton *Bulletin*. October 29, 1914)

What this had to do with anything is not explained. The judge found in Rowan's favour, then Rowan was conducted back to Fort Saskatchewan to await his trial for murder.

This case had nothing but surprises and none of them has any explanation. In January, 1915, the Crown dropped the murder charges against Rowan and Barrett.

By this time, the war had begun and the case was no longer news. It seems obvious that the murder and vagrancy charges were made in order to discredit the IWW. But then, who killed Johnson? No further demonstrations or demands were heard from the IWW in Edmonton.

The IWW died out in Canada when it was banned in 1918 along with many other political and labour groups. Anyone continuing membership was subject to one to five years imprisonment.

Working conditions remained bad. The number of deaths in coal mines in Canada was higher than in any other country. The high was reached in 1910 when 13.2 deaths occurred per 100 men employed. The average for the period from 1900 to 1910 was 4.79 for every 100 employed. The deaths for the same period in the U.S. were 3.43. In 1910 a gas explosion killed 31 men in the Bellevue mine. There was, as an average in Canada, one dead man for every 100,000 tons of coal mined.

We lived near the mine. When my father went underground we all worried, hoping that nothing would happen to him and he would return to us alive and healthy after a day's work. And when the alarm signalled that there had been an accident, we all went faint, wondering who had been sacrificed today. (Maria Shpikula. *Life and Word*. July 24, 1972. Translated from Ukrainian.)

In June, 1914, there was another mine disaster. One hundred and eighty-nine men were killed at the Hillcrest mine; 29 of these were Ukrainians. One hundred and fifty bodies were found; they were buried on June 21 in a common grave. Most of the miners were killed not in the explosion but by suffocation after the explosion. The cause of this was inadequate ventilation in the mine. However, an inquiry found no one responsible.

When there was work, miners worked ten hours a day, six days a week. The pay was about \$3 a day. There were few safety regulations and many men were injured. There was no compensation. If he could move and retained most of his limbs, the injured man had to find another job. Otherwise, relatives or friends had to look after him.

There was no proper accommodation. Most miners lived in sod or tarpaper shacks. Anyone with a proper house would have any number of men rooming with them in one or two rooms. There were many more men than women. A chronic problem was the incessant drinking, gambling and fighting of the men, who were completely demoralized and had nothing

better to do. The only salvation from despair was drama and singing groups, and socialist and union organizing.

In 1914, there were in Alberta: 3,600 miles of railway, 2,000 schools, 6,000 Indian people, 136 towns, 6 cities, a population of about 500,000, of which Edmonton and Calgary had about 72,000 each.

The last spike of the Grand Trunk Pacific was pounded in April 7, 1914. The National Transcontinental was finished in March, 1915, at \$40,000,000 more than the estimates. Up to 1914, the Canadian government had given \$598,000,000 of the people's money to railway companies in the form of direct subsidies, advances, guarantees, as well as 31,800,000 acres of land. (Krawchuk, 1958: 101)

Until 1914 only three years residence was required before one could apply for citizenship. Later, this changed to five years. For about ten years after 1914, no Ukrainians were allowed citizenship.

Because Ukrainians were called so many names—Russians, Poles, Austrians, Galicians, Bukovinians, Ruthenians—it is not possible to give any correct figures for the number of Ukrainians who immigrated to Canada in the first wave, which ended with WW I. Many different sources concur with the estimate of 170,000 people.

## Narration of a Ukrainian Pioneer\*

Ephraim Maksemenko was born January 28, 1893, in Kiev province in the Ukraine in the village of Odaypil.

I, said Ephraim Maksemenko, do not know an easy life. From boyhood and almost all my life I had to work and live under difficult conditions. In our family there were five boys and two girls, among whom I was the eldest. I only went to school one winter and had no opportunity to continue because I had to look after my younger brothers and sisters at home. When I got older I had to work at home and hire on to a landlord, or work by the day for richer peasants.

When I was 14, my father went to the USA, and I had to take over responsibility for the household.

My father stayed two years in the United States and returned home. In two years he earned so much money that he was able to buy a straw-cutter, with which I went around cutting straw for people and thus earned some money, and summers I continued going to the landlord for day labour.

Thus, a difficult life and years went by in poverty. Soon they were to call me into the army, in which one must serve a full three years without

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\*(Written by Peter Kyforuk. *Life and Word*. July 4, 1966. Translated from Ukrainian.)

pay. At that time, my uncle Simon Khudobenko was already in Canada. He helped me get to Canada. In 1914, I arrived at his farm near Voysteev, Alberta.

At my uncle's farm also lived his younger brother, Pilip. At that time the economic crisis was beginning, some jobs were closing down, and there wasn't anything for the two of us to do on the farm, so we had to look for some kind of work. But where to find it, we did not know ourselves.

Someone told us that farther north a new road was being built from Lac la Biche. Pilip and I took some bread in a bag, a pot and pan, and went north through the bush to Lac la Biche. Along the way we caught fish in rivers and lakes, baked them and were thus nourished. We spent three nights in the bush. With great difficulty, exhausted after three days and three nights, we arrived in Lac la Biche. Here to our great disappointment, we learned that we couldn't get jobs because the contractors already had enough workers. We stayed overnight, and the next day we went farther in the hope that maybe one of the contractors along the road would need workers and we would be lucky—he would hire us. Thus we walked four days, but we got no jobs. We were so tired we barely made it back to my uncle's farm.

We rested for a time at my uncle's and then decided to walk to Edmonton. We got to Pakan, and here we had to cross the North Saskatchewan River. The ferry wasn't running because the river was too high and very swift and too dangerous for the ferry. With difficulty we persuaded the people who ran the ferry to take the risk and take us across. We arrived in Lamont the next day. From Lamont to Edmonton we took the train. In Edmonton we spent several days looking for work. What money we had, disappeared; we were hungry, but jobs we could not find. With that we returned to my uncle's farm once again. And so I worked there for room and board. It was already almost harvest time when Yurko Skoreyko met me and proposed that I work for him for 50 cents a day. In eight months I earned \$5. This, one might say, was my first payday in Canada.

In 1915, there was general unemployment. There was no social welfare, no one knew what social security was, or unemployment insurance. In order not to go hungry, some unemployed joined the army and others worked on farms for room and board. Fifteen Ukrainians arrived at Hrehory Suka's at Voysteev. Here they collectively built a large house from wood, made wooden beds, and lived collectively. Whenever possible and for whatever possible, they bought food from farmers which they cooked for themselves.

The next year, Hrehory Bondarenko took over a contract for constructing one mile of new road. Altogether, 16 workers, all acquaintances, went to work here for which we got paid 18 cents per cubic yard of moss excavated, and 22 cents per cubic yard of earth. And since

there was nowhere to live, we quickly built a primitive sort of building, made an oven outside and ate whatever we could cook there. Every Sunday we got together and went ten miles on foot to the nearest town to buy provisions for the week. Everything we bought, we carried on our back. Thus every week. And it was necessary to work from sunup to sundown. Still, we earned \$50 a month.

After three months, having finished that contract, we went to Edmonton, where we got work building a new road to St. Paul, Alberta. We worked between Osetno and Warspite. Here we also worked three months and earned \$50 a month, and all of us felt considerably better, because we had a few dollars put by for a dark hour.

With the coming of winter, I went to Edmonton. Here in the employment bureau they charged us \$1 each and signed us up to work at \$40 a month for a farmer at High Prairie, Alberta. Thirty-seven of us workers arrived in High Prairie, and there people laughed at us. They said there were no farmers there who hired workers. And because it was wartime, the police, seeing us, came and ordered us to leave town. There was nothing we could do. An order is an order, and we left town, walking and not knowing where or what for. For nothing had we paid our fare here, for not only was there no work, but they were throwing us out of town. But on reconsideration, the police caught up with us on the road and returned us to town, where we slept and ate before being told to leave again.

What were we to do? We discussed it with our uncle and decided to go to Lethbridge, Alberta, because we heard there was a coal mine operating two days a week. We never reached the mine. We were told we could get work painting a bridge. So much the better, we thought. We went to look at this bridge, but the police arrested us. We were set free but had no desire to look for work there any longer. From Lethbridge we went to Calgary, where we signed up for work on the railroad. We worked ten hours. The next day we were laid off, because some friends of the foreman had arrived in our place.

We were given free tickets for Drumheller, but we didn't have much hope of getting a job there, so we climbed into a carriage filled with coal and went to Saskatoon, where we again happened on work on a railway. We worked for four months. When the job here also ended we returned to Calgary, and from Calgary went to harvest, where we worked to October 15. After that we returned to Lethbridge, where we worked in the mines, and in the spring the miners went on strike. In ten years of work, we were on strike five times.

In 1920, I returned to my uncle's farm, and here I met Malanea Kosoy, whom I married that same year in the autumn. Together we went to Lethbridge, where I worked until 1926. After this we went to a farm at Bellis, Alberta. We lived there until 1930, but fortune, as they say, did

not smile on us. We sold our farm and went to share a hardware store with F. Boychuk in the town of Bellis. Thus we became merchants and remained so until 1936. There wasn't any reason to continue. We left the store and moved to Smoky Lake. Here we bought a share in a mill, which we held until 1945. After this we moved to Edmonton.





**3**

**The First World War:  
1914 - 1918**



# The War: 1914

For years Europe had been dividing itself into two hostile camps—the Triple Alliance (the bad guys) and the Triple Entente (the good guys)—in preparation for war. The war was mainly about imports and exports and control of trade routes, but diplomats had to think up better reasons in order to make the raising of armies possible. Although it was Germany at war with England, the fighting began in a very roundabout fashion, with Austria first attacking Serbia. Neither England nor Canada were immediately involved.

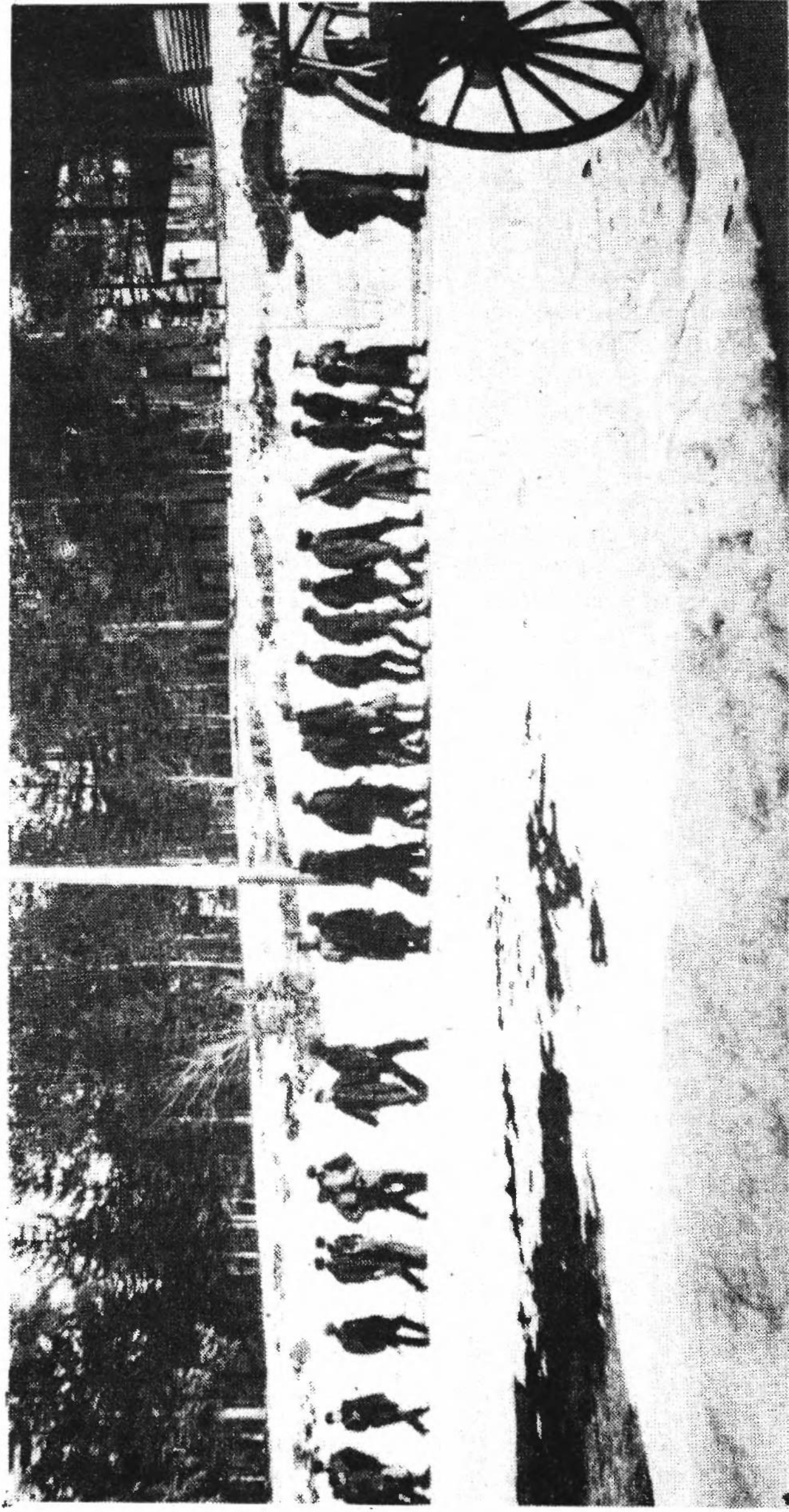
The Ukrainians in Canada had come mainly from the Austrian-dominated provinces. In July 1914, the Austrian vice-consul in Canada announced that 150,000 "Austrians" were living in western Canada and that they were required to report to the Austrian army.

Someone who claimed to be a spokesman for 2,000 Ukrainians working around Edmonton replied that they would all go at once and join the army—but it would be the Serbian, not the Austrian army, since Serbs were Slavs, and Slavic people had fought against Austria for 400 years. The Austrian vice-consul persisted nevertheless, and an announcement of a partial mobilization was put in the *Ukrainian Voice* in Winnipeg. Austria promised to pay travelling expenses for soldiers and to grant amnesty to former draft dodgers. Nobody went.

Just before England declared war, the Greek Catholic Bishop Budka told his Canadian flock to go and join the Austrian army. Nobody went.

On August 4, 1914, about a month after Austro-Hungary attacked Serbia, Britain declared war on Germany. Canada was then a colony of Britain, so on August 7, the *Canada Gazette* declared that Canada was also in a state of war. Most Canadians were prepared for it by the time this war was declared. English Canadians held patriotic demonstrations and enlisted in the army as quickly as possible.

Among the demands of farmers for the previous decade had been peace and disarmament. During the 1910 naval debates, farmers and the *Grain Growers' Guide* were opposed to Canada's spending any money on armaments. The paper held out for a week after the war began, then, like all other farm journals, became terribly loyal to England's war. Rank-and-file farmers continued to be indifferent to the war. Organized labour in western Canada opposed the war. The WCTU (Women's Christian Temperance Union) and the National Council of Women had also been for disarmament until the war began; then they became either neutral or loyal. They advocated a league of the allied nations to keep the



"Austrian" prisoners of war in a national park during WW I. (Glenbow-Alberta Institute photo)

peace—that way there were still being patriotic. The only parliamentarian to oppose the war was J.S. Woodsworth.

The Canadian parliament voted \$50 million for the war and the government under Sir Robert Borden brought in the War Measures Act on August 22, 1914, with no dissenting votes. The Act allows for government by order-in-council. Thereafter, the Cabinet could and did pass any laws it wanted without justifying them to Parliament. Since the Cabinet is picked by the Prime Minister, and anyone who disagrees with him gets fired, Canada was put under a dictatorship.

Among the first orders under the War Measures Act was a Proclamation issued by the Department of State to the effect that Germans were not to be disturbed so long as they pursued their ordinary avocations. They were not to be allowed to leave Canada to join the German army. It seems odd that anyone would think they would want to, since few of them were actually from Germany.

"Ruthenian Orator Talks High Treason," announced the *Bulletin* of August 18, 1914. It was a fine headline, but the story was written by a very confused reporter. He thought the meeting in question was made up of Ukrainians at a hall on Kinistino Avenue, which may have been Rudyk's hall. Someone named either Paul Turneuko or Paul Krat spoke, either in Russian or Ukrainian. The writer was quite certain, however, that the speech urged people against enlistment.

The truth turned out to be quite different. There was no need to discourage Ukrainians from enlisting in the Canadian army, since they weren't going to be allowed to in any case. What the orator, Paul Krat, had been speaking against was enlistment of Ukrainians in the Austrian army. He was also denouncing Bishop Budka.

Budka was a creature typical of his position. Being a bishop, he was prepared to toady—his problem in Canada being to decide who was boss. Up to a week before England declared war, the worthy Bishop sang the praises of the most holy and venerable Franz-Josef, the Habsburg monarch, and supported every one of the Austro-Hungarian repressive laws. The socialist orator, Paul Krat, speaking at the meeting referred to in the *Bulletin*, soundly denounced the Bishop, to the pleasure of those present. Far from being treasonous, the speech was as anti-Austrian as anything the *Bulletin* might compose. But the media's duty was to find an enemy and they did not apologize.

In August also, the *Canada Gazette* issued a proclamation saying that Austrians, like Germans, should not be disturbed. All official proclamations about Ukrainians called them "Austrians" until a few years after the war. The stage was being set for persecution.

"Thrill of Patriotism Sweeps Over Great Britain," announced the *Edmonton Bulletin* of September 4, 1914. By this time, Britain had enough repressive laws that if people weren't thrilled, they had better

be. It was the last of the thrilling wars. A war provided every man the opportunity to be a hero. Because of poor communication and rigid censorship, nobody thought of the war in terms of blood and pain and lice and diarrhoea and the smell of excrement and rotting corpses.

For the people at home there was the Patriotic Relief Fund to provide for the families of soldiers. It seems laudable, but in fact, like that thrill of patriotism, people had to contribute or else. The newspapers listed the names of contributors and the amounts of the contributions. It proved you were loyal and untreasonable.

Atrocity stories were printed as a way of whipping up enthusiasm for the war. It was regrettable, but necessary.

The Germans, be it remembered, are our cousins. Britain came into this war in defence of a principle, and to vindicate that principle, it is necessary to defeat German armies and establish peace upon the clear recognition of the inviolable rights of nations and the sanctity of treaties. (Edmonton *Bulletin*. September 17, 1914.)

Whether anyone believed such nonsense was irrelevant so long as they pretended to believe it. When Knox Magee, editor of the *Saturday Post* in Winnipeg was arrested for being critical of a militia colonel, editor Horton of the *Vegreville Observer* wrote:

...it would seem that Mr. Magee brought it on himself. The present is not the time for criticism; all that sort of mud can be stirred up when the war is over. (*Vegreville Observer*. September 23, 1914)

Not being satisfied with accusing Paul Krat of treason the *Bulletin* next reported that "Crath" was organizing an independent Ukraine in western Canada. Krat wrote to tell them not to be so ignorant—he was talking about the *Ukraine*. Whereupon the editor of the *Bulletin* reported that Krat was, by implication, criticizing Russia, an ally of His Majesty, and one could not criticize an ally while "British liberty" was being threatened. (September 28, 1914) Editor Horton of the *Vegreville Observer* wrote that asking for an independent Ukraine was treason.

Probably the reports of anti-Russian sentiment among Ukrainians in Alberta were exaggerated. Ukrainians were against either Russia's or Austria's control of the Ukraine, so there was little for them to choose from in this war. After the initial excitement, most of them returned to the difficult task of simple survival.

Repression gradually intensified. A federal order-in-council on September 3, 1914 ordered all Germans and "Austrians" in Canada to surrender their firearms. No hostility was expected from these people, but enemies are enemies. This regulation doesn't sound so bad until it is remembered that most Ukrainians were homesteading in conditions of isolation and poverty, and a gun was necessary for protection from wild

animals and for supplementing the food supply.

. . . I hold that civilization finds its best exemplification in the civilization which we see in the British Empire and in the other countries of northern Europe. I hold that it is the sacred trust of the Anglo-Saxon and kindred people to hold that civilization and cherish it. (H.H. Stevens. *Debates*, 1914. Vol. CXV)

Unemployment increased to massive proportions, especially for Ukrainians and Germans. Those who had jobs lost them when the war began, with employers reacting to government-inspired hysteria.

Then came the announcement of the concentration camps by order-in-council on October 28, 1914. If Germany had done it, it would have been another atrocity story, but this was the British Empire.

Registration offices will be opened by the Dominion Police in the East and by the Northwest Mounted Police in the west, where all the Germans and Austrians will present themselves. Those under or over military age, or otherwise unfit for service may be permitted to leave the country. Of the others, those who can maintain themselves and are believed to be well disposed may be allowed their liberty, only being required to report regularly.

Those who are destitute and those who it is considered should be kept under surveillance will be held in places of detention as prisoners of war. They will be in the charge of the military authorities and work will be provided for them. These latter plans have not been definitely worked out as yet. An effort will be made to find work which will not be unduly in competition with Canadian labour. The Austrians and Germans detained in the west, for instance, may be put at the cleaning up of the national parks of dead or fallen leaves. (Edmonton *Bulletin*. October 29, 1914)

There wasn't much protest following this announcement. It is probable that because of their isolation many Ukrainians didn't hear about it until they were actually interned. The media approved because they loved His Majesty so much and because they would have been closed down if they didn't. Everyone knew Ukrainians weren't Austrian, and the media had ample evidence of the hostility of Ukrainians toward Austria, but they chose to ignore it. The Germans were largely indifferent to the outcome of the war—it had been quite of number of generations since many of them had been Germans.

Members of the Ukrainian middle-class who had heretofore considered themselves the official spokesmen for their people were strangely silent on the matter. Perhaps they weren't about to endanger their own freedom. Only the destitute were imprisoned with forced labour, and these people were too powerless to protest.



In November, military authorities in Regina, Calgary, Edmonton and Winnipeg were ordered by Ottawa to tell ethnic newspapers they would be suppressed if they "incited feelings against Great Britain."

There had been considerable complaint as to the nature of the matter in several papers, and it was claimed it was tending to keep the Germans and Austrians in a state of unrest. The government hesitated about taking such a summary action until it was seen to be imperative. (*Edmonton Bulletin*. November 5, 1914)

The restraint was admirable! Before the concentration camps could be efficiently organized, all possible avenues of protest had to be taken away.

To add to the Ukrainians' problems, about half the coal mines in Lethbridge and the southern districts were temporarily shut down because there was no demand for coal. This increased the already massive unemployment. Unemployment was worse in the west than in the east. The *Edmonton Bulletin* of November 26, 1914 gave the following figures for the number of unemployed: Winnipeg, 3,600; Saskatoon and Moose Jaw, 900; Regina, 1,500; Edmonton, 4,000; Vancouver, 8,000; Victoria, 3,000.

Most of the unemployed were Ukrainians and Germans. The Germans had come over with more money and more goods than the Ukrainians and were less likely to find themselves in conditions of destitution. The desperate and sick and demoralized and broken people were sent to concentration camps. In the east they cleared timber and in the west, worked in Dominion Parks.

"It comes as a great surprise to Austrians to learn that they are enemies of the British Empire," said one of the officials who is dealing with them. "The Germans know all right, they are against us, but the Austrians seem to think that they are still our friends and are greatly shocked at being arrested as prisoners of war." (*Edmonton Bulletin*. November 28, 1914)

The Ukrainians were too busy blaming each other to protest. Most people agreed it was Bishop Budka's fault for urging Ukrainians to enlist in the Austrian army. Peter Krawchuk, all these decades and wars later, still says that the reactionary government of Sir Robert Borden declared Ukrainians to be enemy aliens because of Budka's letter. (1958: 117) Neither he nor others can explain why then Budka wasn't interned.

Others, of course, blame the socialists, and even socialists themselves thought they might be to blame.

Timofey Koreychuk, before the first World War, went to Canada and was an organizer of the Ukrainian Social Democratic Party, for which, at the time of the first imperialist war, he was sent to a

concentration camp in British Columbia where he died. He was buried in Vernon. (*Life and Word*, June 5, 1972. Translated from Ukrainian)

Marunchak feels that the government was mistakenly convinced by Russophiles that Ukrainians were Austrians. (p. 319) Others minimize the repression:

In the hysteria that followed the outbreak of the First World War, the Ukrainians, being classified as Austrians and hostile to the Allies, were subjected to unjust, discriminatory treatment *verging on persecution*. Thousands were dismissed from work, and thousands rounded up by the police and interned. (Yuzyk, 1953: 187. My emphasis.)

Probably the Ukrainians did not wish to admit even to themselves the nature of their adopted country. They could not go home, so they convinced themselves it was better than where they came from. Would the highest civilization in the world imprison people who are innocent? Would Anglo-Saxons imprison people only to whip up a national racist frenzy? So they reviled each other and indulged in vicious factional disputes.

The destitute, in prison, were too powerless to protest. Women were not taken seriously enough to be considered dangerous and, therefore, the entire 9,000 or so internees were male.

In the end, all that can be said for those concentration camps was that, so long as they existed, Ukrainians could not be conscripted. So in the tradition of long-suffering people, they simply waited and endured.

## The War: 1915-1916

By February 10, 1915, 1,904 Canadians had been interned in Canada as prisoners of war. Five hundred and sixty-four were at Petawawa, which had both a military training camp under the Militia department, and a camp for "prisoners of war" under the Justice Department. It cost 29 cents a day to feed the prisoners.

There were soon concentration camps at Halifax, Quebec, Montreal, Toronto, Kingston, Petawawa, Spirit Lake (Quebec), Kapuskasing, Brandon, Lethbridge, Vernon, Nanaimo, Port Arthur, and Amherst. The numbers of internees as of March 30, 1915 were given to Parliament as follows: Petawawa, 573; Spirit Lake, 683; Kapuskasing, 438; Brandon, 246; Lethbridge, 120; Vernon, 68; Nanaimo, 97. In addition to the Canadians, 500 prisoners of war were sent to Canada from Jamaica, for a total of 2,752 internees (*Debates*, 1915, Vol. CXIX)

In 1915 the Mounties reported that in western Canada, where they had jurisdiction, they had investigated 2,309 "enemy aliens." Of these, 396 were interned and 326 paroled. Three hundred and ten of those interned were Ukrainians and 83 Germans. In 1916, 1,955 "aliens" in western Canada were investigated and 162 interned, of whom 123 were Ukrainians and 36 Germans.

The courts and the government assured everyone that the aliens retained their rights to hold property and sue for injury. However, a B.C. Supreme Court ruled that "enemy aliens" in B.C. could not be beneficiaries of a will. The object was to whip up hatred, and the government was successful.

In June, 1915, British and Italian miners at Fernie and Hillcrest went on strike to protest the retention of German and Austrian miners. (The latter group included Ukrainians.) They did not return to work until the enemy aliens were interned. In 1916 most of those interned were released and allowed to return to the mines since a labour shortage had developed. (Palmer, 1972: 78-79)

There were a great number of murders and cases of assault among Ukrainians during the war years as can be expected when a group is powerless, poor and vilified. After one Elia Pauluk was acquitted of murder because he had acted in self-defence, the *Vegreville Observer* demanded blood:

So long as our foreign-born settlers carry with them the idea that if they engage good counsel they can kill whoever they like, just that long will the slaughter continue. If, however, they are taught by example that every killing is followed by a hanging (and that speedily, without reference to specious claims of self-defence) there would be in time a very much greater deference paid to Canadian law than is now the case. (*Vegreville Observer*, October 11, 1916)

In spite of the object lesson presented by harassing Ukrainians and Germans, workers continued to remain unenthusiastic about the war. A man in Calgary, named John Reid, was sentenced to 15 months hard labour for sedition. He was a socialist who had said in public that it was a capitalist war and that the British army as well as the Germans were committing atrocities. He was released after protest from the Trades and Labour Congress.

There were no protests from organized labour on behalf of the "enemy aliens." Some were released from internment camps if they agreed to work in the mines, which were now short of workers. Supt. Pennefeather reported from Lethbridge that although about half the miners there were "Austrians," there was no trouble in the district.

In spite of their indifference to the war, Ukrainians continued to be

imprisoned. There were now three concentration camps in the national parks, with about 200 inmates each in Jasper, Banff and Field, B.C. They were doing forced labour at 25 cents a day.

Mr. Oliver: It strikes me as a very serious problem. These people have not committed any crime against the laws of this country, and, while I can appreciate the desirability of interning them and offering them the opportunity of employment, when it comes down to compulsory employment at 25 cents a day, I am afraid that that involves principles which we cannot all ascribe to.

Mr. Roche: In view of the manner in which the British prisoners of war in Germany are being treated, I do not think there will be any international implications. (*Debates*, 1916. Vol. CXXII)

With everybody chasing "enemy aliens" and being fed atrocity stories and glorious deeds, it was a great time for war profiteers. The war years were a time of rivalry between British and American capital in Canada, and, at the same time, Canadian capitalists were getting stronger. There was also the centralization of capital and financial institutions. In 1902, there were 36 banks with 747 branches; by 1916, there were 22 banks with 3,198 branches. (Lipton, 1966: 153)

The soldiers were just cannon fodder—a vehicle by which to make money.

The first contingent were equipped with shoddy, substandard boots and it had taken a special committee of the House of Commons to get to the root of the matter and start setting it right. Of the first 8,500 horses bought by the Army, nearly one out of four had proved unfit for use. There had been public charges of profiteering in drugs, in binoculars, in trucks, in field dressings, in bicycles, and even in jam. (Allen, 1961: 92)

The Minister of Militia and National Defence in Sir Robert Borden's government was Colonel Sam Hughes. Most historians attribute his gross corruption to stupidity. He was also insane, but only moderately so. Why was such a man put in charge of the department? He administered the military budget of about \$11 million. Among other things, he bought the Ross rifle. This rifle was good for single shots, but when fired in rapid succession, the barrel heated up, jammed, and sometimes exploded. Canadian soldiers died because of this rifle; the manufacturer made millions of dollars. Hughes was not made to resign until November 11, 1916, after which he was knighted by the King.

And thus, except for a few minor postscripts, there ended one of the most bizarre and astounding public careers in all of Canadian history. For three of its most momentous and critical years the country's energy and resources had lain to a very considerable

degree under the command of a man who would have had the utmost difficulty in passing a standard medical test for sanity. (Allen, 1961: 110)

Was it not convenient for profiteers to have such a man throwing around large sums of money? There was a plethora of businessmen appointed to work within the department. Businessmen were also given honorary war titles and many were knighted. Profiteering and corruption both at home and overseas had become a national scandal. But the government moved only to suppress criticism of it through the use of the War Measures Act.

The population of Edmonton dropped from 72,516 in 1914 to 53,846 in 1916. The grave unemployment had forced a back-to-the-land movement. The farmers were having it a bit better. Yields were good all through the war, and in 1916, wheat sold for about \$1.30 a bushel for the highest grade.

For decades, women in England and the U.S. had been carrying on an intense campaign for the right to vote, and a less intense campaign was conducted in Canada. In Canada, anti-women sentiment mainly took the form of ridicule, whereas in England, women were beaten and jailed and killed.

In 1914 the "Edmonton Equal Franchise League" and the Local Council of Women presented a suffrage petition to the Alberta Legislature. It contained 12,000 signatures. The demands for women's rights were supported by the farmers' organizations. The United Farmers of Alberta (UFA) went on record as supporting women's suffrage, the second political group after the socialists to do so. The UFA also supported prohibition.

Prohibition was voted in in Alberta in 1915. Only 14 of the 53 constituencies voted wet. This may or may not have been due to the pressure of women's groups opposed to alcoholism, notably the WCTU. Alberta had always been partially dry and liquor was not allowed along railway construction lines. Ukrainians never believed in or practiced prohibition, but even when the sale of booze was legal, they didn't have the money, so many made their own.

The UFA was by this time becoming a strong organization with a rapid increase in membership between 1909 and 1916. The annual convention of January, 1914 had granted full membership rights to women. The 1915 convention formed the Women's Auxiliary, later named the United Farm Women of Alberta (UFWA). There were many women's organizations by this time so the UFWA has no unusual historical significance. Myrtle Roper at the 1915 convention moved that an amendment be made to the criminal code repealing the laws against contraception.

Apart from their stand on women's rights, the UFA were the same as everyone else. They gathered money for the Patriotic Fund, and urged

farmers to increase efficiency in order to help win the war. In other words, they were timid and did what was expected and approved. The first proposal for a farmers' strike was turned down as "morally indefensible."

Women in Alberta won the right to vote by an Act of the provincial Legislature passed April 19, 1916. Some of the women who had done the required pressuring were: Nellie McClung, Louise McKinney, Henrietta Muir Edwards, Irene Parlby. Women in Manitoba got the right to vote earlier in the same year. Saskatchewan and British Columbia followed suit. Women in Ontario won the franchise in 1917; Nova Scotia, 1918; New Brunswick, 1919; Prince Edward Island, 1922; Quebec, 1940.

Some of the supporters of votes for women believed that women were somehow intrinsically pure and that politics would be cleaned up by women voters. Nobody explained how women were supposed to accomplish this feat. Women were able to bring in prohibition, but then it was repealed. They did succeed in some legislation improving the welfare of women and children. Otherwise, women voters made no change in capitalist politics.

Neither the suffragettes nor the prohibitionists were representatives of working class women. Working class women were being driven onto the labour market as a result of the men's being slaughtered overseas. Women had to work long hours for low wages in factories. Most of the suffragettes were middle-class Anglo-Saxon, while the women working in the urban industries were almost entirely immigrants. This may be one of the reasons why the suffragettes were not interested in the problems of working women. Some were even opposed to trade unions. Nevertheless, any improvement in the position of rich women has some effect on the lives of all women.

In 1916, Emily Murphy was appointed magistrate in the city of Edmonton, the first such appointment in the British Empire. On her first day in court, a lawyer for the defence challenged her right to judge, pointing out that she wasn't a "person" under the definition of the BNA Act. Murphy overruled him.

## The War in the Ukraine

For Ukrainians, the war was a tragedy of tremendous proportions—the reverberations are still being felt all these decades and wars later. Many of the factional disputes later arising among Ukrainians in Canada had their roots in the situation in the Ukraine during the war. It began in an indirect way.

Serbia, freed from the Turks after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire,

was independent for a short time and greatly coveted by the Austro-Hungarian empire. For reasons having to do with trade routes, the Triple Entente (Britain, France, Russia) were equally covetous and guaranteed Serbia's independence. After minor forays into Serbia, Austro-Hungary declared war on July 28, 1914.

The Austro-Hungarian armies, composed mainly of the minority nationalities ruled by the Empire, felt no strong desire to sacrifice themselves for Emperor Franz Josef. So German help was required. England and Russia—mouthing platitudes about treaties—declared war on Germany and Austro-Hungary.

The Germans soundly defeated the Russian army at Tannenburg in Prussia. The Russians had initial success in Ukraine and Poland but eventually were pushed back across Halychina and forced to abandon Warsaw. For a long time Ukraine and Belorussia were in the front lines, with armies moving back and forth. When the Russian armies retreated, about 100,000 Halychan refugees went with them. In western Ukraine and Belorussia, peasants were ordered to leave and masses of refugees fled eastward. Many got tangled up in the front lines (my mother and her family among them), while the armies tried desperately to get them out of the way. It was a confusing and bloody war.

The Austrians instituted a reign of terror in Halychina because of the insubordination of Slavic soldiers and peasants. Seven hundred thousand to 800,000 Ukrainians were made prisoners. Sixty thousand peasants were executed and over 100,000 died in concentration camps. (Krawchuk, 1958: 49).

Russian army losses were in the millions. The people were brutally treated by both armies. They suffered and starved and died of disease. Near the end of the war the lack of sanitary facilities and social chaos resulted in fearful epidemics of cholera and typhus.

In the winter of 1915-1916, Serbia and Poland were overrun by the Austrians, with the Germans and Bulgarians joining them. Emperor Franz Josef died in November, 1916. With the death of this "incarnation of dynastic absolutism," it was expected the Austro-Hungarian empire would fall apart, but it lasted a few more years.

It is difficult to sort out the chronology of events—each region in the Slavic countries had a different sequence of events and most sequences were repeated several times. And through it all, people were killed, died of disease, starved. In 1917 the Russian army at the front collapsed. The soldiers simply drifted away.

With the collapse of the two empires—Russia and Austro-Hungary—the colonial peoples were freed for a short time. There were revolutions and attempted revolutions in most countries. They were not primarily nationalist—the people wanted an end to war and they wanted agrarian reform.

In Belorussia there was some organization of bourgeois nationalists who wanted independence but not economic reform. They got little support from the peasants who hated landlords worse than they hated the Germans. The Bolshevik Party, primarily Russian soldiers who had little contact with Belorussians, organized a Belorussian section in Minsk in June, 1917, with the support of those peasants who heard about it. The February revolution in Russia was greeted with enthusiasm in Belorussia. A temporary government under the Germans who brutalized the people and stole their food was replaced January 1, 1919 by the Belorussian Soviet Republic.

In the Ukraine, matters were more complicated and considerably bloodier. In March 1917, the Central Ukrainian Rada was formed with M. Hrushevsky as president. This was a coalition of social democrats and others and was primarily nationalist. It did not acquire political power immediately. In June 1917, an "autonomous Ukrainian republic" was declared by this Rada, now under Volodimir Vinnichenko. In November 1917, a Ukrainian People's Republic was proclaimed after an alliance between the Rada and Simon Petlyura, who had raised an army to fight for an independent Ukraine. Vinnichenko was prime minister and Petlyura was secretary of military affairs.

But this government had little popular support and controlled only a part of the country. It planned to rule with the help of foreign armies—France promised moral and material help. In January 1918, the Rada declared itself a free and independent Ukrainian Republic which was recognized by the Germans ten days later. The Germans were aware that the Rada had no popular support but they needed supplies and planned to get them at the expense of the Ukrainians. The German army began expropriating grain, resulting in peasant revolts against the Germans and the Rada.

The Soviet Army entered Kiev in February, 1918, defeated the Rada, and installed a Ukrainian Soviet Government. It lasted less than three weeks and was replaced by the German army March 2, 1918. The Rada forces under Petlyura returned to Kiev. At the end of April, the Germans dismissed the Rada as being insufficiently sympathetic and installed Hetman Pavlo Skoropadsky.

Skoropadsky was *Hetman* for seven and a half months and the Germans got the supplies they were after by stealing the last of the peasants' food. Eventually the Germans shot Skoropadsky as he only caused trouble by being so unpopular. During this period, the guerrilla armies of the anarchist, Nestor Makhno, were formed. They liberated some regions from the *Hetman* and his German allies. The German army collapsed in November, 1918.

Some of the old Rada returned to Kiev to form a "Ukrainian Directorate" under Vinnichenko and Petlyura, who had now revealed



himself to be nothing more than a petty dictator. In January 1919, this "directorate" declared war on Moscow and was defeated. In February, the Soviets were back in Kiev, but once again they didn't last long. In July, White Army supporters of the Czar under General Denikin advanced north. First Petlyura, then Denikin, took Kiev.

There was chaos, famine, and anti-semitism. Petlyura's armies killed some 17,000 Jews between 1917 and 1921. Peasants fled from everybody. If forced to fight, they changed sides frequently. There were about three or four sides, all of them bad, and nobody knew what was happening. They only knew hunger and disease and torture and death.

A number of independent peasant armies appeared, most of them simply bands of starving people looking for food. Others, of whom Makhno's army was the most influential, were an organized military unit carrying out a peasant revolution that failed.

The Czarist generals, Denikin and Wrangel, fought against the Bolsheviks for some years with Allied help. In Russia, there was Admiral Kolchak and Udenich, who were also trying to re-impose the monarchy. It was a bloody war and in all of what is now the USSR, more lives were lost than in the world war. Thirteen million people were shot, died of disease, or starved. Allied assistance to the Czarist generals prolonged the bloodshed.

In the meantime, the glorious Allies established a belt of independent countries between Germany and Russia. Austria and Hungary were two of the new countries formed. Since Austria was no longer a power, propaganda in Britain minimized Austria's responsibility for the war in order to create more anti-German and anti-Russian feeling.

The other new countries were called "Succession States"—Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Rumania, Poland, Italy. Yugoslavia was formed by combining Croatia-Slovenia, Dalmatia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Slovenia, Serbia, Montenegro.

Rumania was made up of Regat, Transylvania, Crisina, Maramuresh, part of the Banat. It was given the Ukrainian provinces of Bukovina and Bessarabia. The Ukrainian province of Carpathian Rus was given to Czechoslovakia. The Poles were told they could take Halychina and that British and American military might was available if needed.

The people were not consulted. The tone of the Peace Conference was set in Paris in January 1919.

Clemenceau was chosen President of the conference and his attitude to the minor allies was not cordial, but harsh and bullying, as was unpleasantly evident at the second plenary session when he told them bluntly that the conference was chiefly the concern of the Great Powers, who had invited them to participate more as an act of grace than anything else. (Machray, 1970: 90-91)

The Belgian representative reminded them that all through the war they had said it was a war to protect the sanctity of treaties and rights of small nations. This kind of nonsense was not considered worthy of reply.

With all due solemnity, a Treaty of the Minorities was signed, guaranteeing the rights of non-Polish people in the Polish empire. There was to be no attempt to enforce it.

While the Poles had been given 5,000,000 Ukrainians and 5,000,000 Belorussians by the generous Powers, they didn't have them yet. In March 1919, the Polish army under the dictator, Marshall Pilsudski, advanced into Lithuania, Belorussia, and Ukraine. Vilna was taken April 19, and Pilsudski promised autonomy to Belorussia. Promises are cheaper than bullets. In the same month, General Haller's army was sent from France to assist Pilsudski. In August, Polish was declared the official language in all occupied lands. People were arrested and tortured and entire villages burned. So much for promises. Poland considered itself the apostle of liberty bringing "civilization" to the "barbaric" east.

The peasants rebelled against the Poles and against General Denikin's army which tried to put back the landlords in the regions of the Ukraine which it overran. Kiev was finally retaken by the Red Army in December, 1919.

In the meantime, Petlyura, spurned by Denikin and defeated by the Bolsheviks, turned to the Poles for help, promising them East Halychina. In May and June of 1920, Polish armies occupied Kiev for six weeks before they were defeated by the Red Army. The Poles were chased back across Ukraine and Belorussia. The Red Army paused at the Polish border before deciding to advance on Warsaw. But the army didn't have sufficient supplies and was defeated, retreating in disarray back across Ukraine. (A great-uncle of mine helped some soldiers escape the Poles by leading them through the Priapet marshes and for this he was made mayor of some town in Russia.) Both armies expropriated food from the peasants and in the winter of 1920-21, it is estimated that three million Ukrainians died of famine and typhus.

The Treaty of Riga, signed March 18, 1921, divided Ukraine and Belorussia between Poland and Russia. A conference of ambassadors of the Allies in Paris approved the treaty. No Belorussian representative was present when Poland was given more than one-third of Belorussia.

Ukraine was divided into four parts. In 1937, of 38,000,000 Ukrainians, 31,000,000 were in the Soviet Ukraine and 5,000,000 in Polish occupied lands. The remainder belonged to Rumania and Czechoslovakia.

Ukrainian peasants continued occasional battles against the Red Army for about another year after the Treaty of Riga. This ended when Makhno fled into Rumania in August, 1921.

## Hysteria: 1917

The war was to have lasted only a few months, then all the glorious shining heroes were to come marching home in glorious victory to national rejoicing. But years went by and the grim and determined slaughter continued. Those who found the war so thrilling and exciting and glorious in its initial stages no longer had quite the enthusiasm although the laws forced them to continue the pretence.

Young men were killed, mutilated, went mad. At home, people suffered from fatigue and a surfeit of thrills, atrocities, and profiteering. Toronto munitions plants increased the hours of work per day from 13 to 14. Some women munitions workers worked 70 hours or more a week. (It should be noted that women are only considered too weak to do heavy work when there is hardly any heavy work to do.)

There were still the newspaper stories about thrilling victories. Headlines also screamed about the "blood-thirsty Huns" in Europe but a surfeit of atrocity stories indicated that the war was more gore and slaughter than glorious victories. The government and provinces quibbled about who was supposed to look after all those shell-shocked soldiers. It was necessary to whip up more hysteria about the enemies at home. The media and the veterans' associations were in the forefront of a hate campaign against the local "enemy aliens."

There were already concentration camps. Naturalization for "enemy aliens" had been unobtainable since 1914. It was rumoured that Ukrainians were holding anti-conscription meetings. There were demands that Ukrainians be disenfranchised and their property taken away from them. It should be noted that Ukrainians and Germans were the enemy only in the west; in the east it was all the fault of the French-Canadians who earned the enmity of English Canadians by being indifferent about who won the war.

Those Ukrainians from Russian Ukraine and those who had their citizenship long before the war began were allowed to enlist in the army. It is noted with regret that about 10,000 did so. In their defence, it should be remembered that there was a very high rate of unemployment.

Farm prices were good and farmers' sons were not conscripted so Ukrainians who had been farming for some time and were citizens were temporarily well off and just wanted to be left alone. Only the destitute and desperate were interned.

Veterans and the media suggested that if Ukrainians supported conscription, maybe their property wouldn't be taken away from them. Bishop Budka went around making speeches in which he frantically

begged his parishioners to be good and loyal and support the war and support conscription and support whatever else they were told to support lest they all be punished together for some crime none of them understood.

Dr. Lawford, the Methodist missionary in Pagan, said that the surliness of Ukrainians was all the work of agitators, and if it weren't for those agitators, Ukrainians would accept repression, unemployment, internment and poverty with equanimity. The Methodists supported the war, conscription, the War Times Elections Act. Even pacifism was deemed anti-christian. J.S. Woodsworth left the church in protest of this policy. The pro-war stance of the church pleased the ruling class and thereby gained it money and power in the community.

The capitalists never had it so good. The National Transcontinental Railway was supposed to be run by the Grand Trunk Pacific, but the latter refused to carry out its commitment. The government decided against suing the Grand Trunk and began operating the railway themselves. They also gave the Grand Trunk another \$31,000,000 of the people's money. In 1916, both the Grand Trunk and Canadian Northern railways declared they were bankrupt.

The federal government took time off from orders-in-council to buy the Canadian Northern Railway from Mackenzie and Mann in 1917, although it already owned all the railway as collateral for loans which were never repaid.

Now, from his huge castle overlooking Toronto Bay, Mackenzie pleaded bankruptcy. With the same stunned complacency with which Canadian statesmen have nearly always responded to the cries of wealthy mendicants, Borden quickly put through a bill to pay off another \$25,000,000 of the Canadian Northern's debts and though the country held it in trust, to buy the railway's stock for a further \$10,000,000. (Allen, 1961: 186)

This was designed, not only to assist the wealthy railway owners but to assist the Commerce and Royal banks who were also creditors.

After the government bought the railway it already owned, the track west of Edmonton was ripped up and sent to France. Corruption and waste on this scale boggles the mind, but they are standard features of capitalism.

The Grand Trunk railway owners immediately complained of favouritism. If the government would buy one bankrupt railway, why not another? The government agreed to give another \$7,500,000 of the people's money to the Grand Trunk Pacific. This was at a time when people were being asked to make all kinds of sacrifices for the war effort. Prices of everything spiralled—accompanied by profits, but not by wages.

The Alberta provincial election was held June, 1917. Arthur L. Sifton and the Liberals won again. Eleven incumbents (among them Andrew Shandro) were automatically returned to the Legislature under Chapter 38 of the Wartime Electoral Act. Sifton then resigned as premier and went to join the Union government in Ottawa. He was replaced by Charles Stewart.

This was a momentous election for several reasons. Louise C. McKinney became the first woman parliamentarian in the British Empire when she was elected to represent the Non-Partisan League in Claresholm. Nursing Sister Roberta McAdams was elected for the armed services but for some reason she isn't mentioned by anyone as being historically important.

The second momentous aspect of this election was the entry of the Non-Partisan League, which was a farmers' party. For this humble beginning, Alberta farmers were to go on to bigger and better things.

The Military Service Act bringing in conscription was introduced June 11, 1917 and passed August 28, 1917. Quebec was strictly opposed and all French-Canadian M.P.'s voted against it.

There were to be severe penalties for "agitators against the proper operation of conscription." The government announced that it would "stop forthwith the extreme latitude which has been allowed to fomentors of internal strife." (*Edmonton Bulletin*. August 29, 1917)

The Mounted Police were relieved of their provincial duties after a provincial police force was organized in Alberta. The Mounties were still to carry out federal laws including those passed under the authority of the War Measures Act. They patrolled the border searching for IWW'ers, they harassed anyone who complained about conscription, and they harassed Germans and Ukrainians.

Many investigations are being made every day of their alleged activities, and although the results are usually negative, they are beneficial, in that they know that they are subject to a close watch. (*Sessional Papers*. Report of the Northwest Mounted Police for the year ended September 30, 1917. p. 9)

In other words—the people aren't causing any trouble but we are harassing them anyway.

## War Time Elections Act

The government did not expect that conscription would be brought in without protest. But, unlike Ukrainians, they understood democracy. The Military Service Act was passed in August. In September, the War Time

Elections Act was passed. It withdrew the right to vote from some of those who opposed conscription and gave it to supporters. It's called representative government—if the people claim you don't represent them, don't let them vote.

The bill was introduced by the Honourable Arthur Meighan, secretary of state. His explanation of it can be paraphrased as follows:

The Military Voter's Bill already allowed soldiers to vote but it was difficult to get ballot boxes to the trenches and some were prisoners of war. During a war, soldiers should vote. The best way to represent these non-voting soldiers was to let some women vote. Therefore, the vote would be given to wives, widows, mothers, sisters, daughters of overseas soldiers. The vote would be taken away from Germans, Ukrainians, Turks, who were not naturalized or had become Canadian citizens after March 31, 1902. They weren't bad people, explained Honourable Meighan, and that wasn't why their right to vote was being taken away. It was being taken away because their right to enlist in the army had previously been taken away. An exception was made of Armenians and Syrians who, although they had come to Canada as Turkish subjects, were known to be entirely out of sympathy with Turkey. (Meighan ignored the fact that Ukrainians were in exactly the same position in regard to Austria.) Also disqualified from voting were conscientious objectors. In addition, women in those provinces (all of the west), where they had the right to vote would not be allowed to vote unless they were relatives of overseas soldiers. (*Debates*, 1917. Volume CXXVI, September 6, 1917. p. 5415)

The law was so appalling that even politicians objected to it, albeit ineffectively. Frank Oliver pointed out that Ukrainians were not in sympathy with either Austria or Russia. Further, the Germans in Canada had mostly come from Halychina in the Ukraine and most of them had never seen Germany. He said these people were only being disqualified because they were likely to vote Liberal. (It is regrettably probable that Frank Oliver made this protest on behalf of Germans and Ukrainians because they were likely to vote Liberal.) There were even a few protests on behalf of the disenfranchised women of the western provinces.

The government couldn't disenfranchise Quebec without a civil war so they had done the next best thing, which was to outnumber them. The effect of the War Times Elections Act was to take away the right to vote of anyone outside Quebec who was against conscription. Besides taking away the right to vote from Ukrainians and others, other methods were used. For example, an unexplainable ballot shortage occurred in Falher, Alberta and polling places were inaccessible so that hardly anyone in Falher got to vote. Falher is populated mostly by French Canadians.

The Union Government was formed in October and "elected" on December 17, 1917. It was a combination of Conservatives and English-speaking Liberals—that is, all of those M.P.'s who had voted for

conscription. It consisted of 115 Conservatives and 38 Liberals. The prime minister was Sir Robert Borden.

The Union Government had begun wooing the individual opponents of conscription before the election. Gideon Robertson was named Minister of Labour. Robertson was an international vice-president of the Commercial Telegraphers Union of the AFL. At the beginning of the war the federal labour organization of AFL unions, the Trades and Labour Congress (TLC) said it was a capitalist war, but changed its stand about 1916. Workers were getting angry and did not go along with their union leaders. Organized labour in the west continued to be strongly opposed to conscription but organized labour in Alberta made up only 2 per cent of the population. Robertson was a useful tool later when the ruling class set out to destroy the OBU, as well as helping the Union government and conscription.

Most farmers were also opposed to Union government and conscription. The government therefore asked T.A. Crerar of the Progressive Party and Henry Wise Wood of the UFA to come to Ottawa, where they were offered cabinet posts. Henry Wise Wood refused. T.A. Crerar became Minister of Agriculture. Crerar's power base came from the fact that he was president of the United Grain Grower's Limited (UGG), formed in 1917 when the Alberta Farmers Co-operative Elevator Company and the Grain Grower's Grain Company amalgamated. In late November, the government promised farmers exemption from conscription so Crerar was elected in December. The following year farmers were conscripted anyway.

## Repression: 1918

About half the soldiers conscripted in Montreal did not obey the call. An attempt was made to take them by force. The people fought back and three were killed in three days of rioting in Montreal.

The war went on and on. Nobody won, but young men were killed and crippled and driven mad. At home, capitalists made huge profits and grew fat on young men's blood. Prices rose to about four times what they had been before the war. Wages stayed about the same. Workers and farmers in western Canada had consistently opposed conscription. More repressive laws were required.

Because laws are always made for the benefit of capitalists, and because there was a labour shortage, another anti-people order-in-council was passed on April 4. It stated that "every male person residing in the Dominion of Canada shall be regularly engaged in some useful occupation." If a male person was found by a policeman and a judge not

to be usefully occupied, he would be fined \$100 or sent to jail for six months.

The Chief of Police in Edmonton was pleased and reckoned this law would help him rid the city of undesireables but he did not, as one would expect, immediately expel all politicians and capitalists. Others did not like the law and protested vociferously:

The Government has an anti-loafer law. What penalty does it provide? One hundred dollars and costs, or in default, 6 months imprisonment with hard labour. Such a penalty might be all right for men of British birth, but it is not all right for the type of men who work in the mines and on the railways of British Columbia. These men have been taught from earliest infancy that only by force can they get what they want, and I submit that they should be controlled by force. (Mr. R.C. Cooper. *Debates*, 1918. Vol. CXXXII. p. 977)

Further orders-in-council tightened up the provisions of conscription and then increased censorship to prevent criticism of the war and conscription. If the Secretary of State thought a newspaper didn't like him, he could send the police to smash the press and destroy the newspaper.

Far from protesting on behalf of democracy, the politicians slavered after more repression. R.C. Cooper, M.P. for Vancouver, claimed it was reprehensible that aliens were allowed to earn a living while soldiers fought overseas. Mr. Nicholson of Algoma East suggested that 50,000 Chinese men could be imported to ease the temporary labour shortage. When they were no longer needed, they could be forcibly shipped away. This caused J.C. McIntosh of Nanaimo to object hysterically. They used to stay in their place, he whined, but now they competed with white men for jobs. (Edmonton *Bulletin*. April 23, 1918)

Personally I see no reason why every alien enemy in the Dominion should not be conscripted and placed at work doing something for the State, instead of being allowed to run at large as disloyal aliens and pro-Germans are now doing to the disadvantage of Canada. .... If time permitted I could give the House absolute evidence of instances in which agitators have appeared and, when questioned about their nationality, claimed to be Russians or Italians, when as a matter of fact they were Austrians. (H.S. Clements. *Debates*, 1918. p. 974)

As a matter of fact, they were Ukrainians. Some of them, agitators or otherwise, did deny they were Ukrainians. Some changed their names in order to get a job.

Lemieux defended Ukrainians to Parliament, pointing out that they had been unwilling subjects of the Austrian empire. J.A. Simcoe and M.R. Blake of Winnipeg also defended Ukrainians, saying they were not



aggressive people and tried to follow the law. (*Debates*, 1918. p. 980)

But there were so many laws it wasn't possible to follow all of them. The Chairman of the Food Board, Henry B. Thomson, proposed to do a cross-country tour speaking about food rationing.

To evade the object and spirit of the food regulations is little less than treachery to our troops and allies. (*Edmonton Bulletin*. May 14, 1918)

Housewives in Winnipeg complained that the Food Board was causing rising food prices. Since it was now illegal to criticize Cabinet Ministers, and the Food Board was under the control of one such, the housewives were speaking treason and subject to imprisonment. (*Edmonton Bulletin*. July 1, 1918)

Changes in conscription laws meant that farmers' sons could now be conscripted, so in addition to paying high tariffs and high freight rates, farmers were now required to send their sons to be butchered. In May, 1918, farmers marched on Ottawa in protest.

In Vegreville, some 200 disenfranchised farmers held a protest meeting and decided to send a delegation to Edmonton. Shandro and Svarich spoke, telling everyone how loyal and patriotic they were. As well as going to Edmonton, Shandro and others journeyed to Ottawa to call upon the prime minister, Sir Robert Borden. They asked for the right of Ukrainians to be treated as neutrals. The prime minister refused but said it was not the government's intention to confiscate the property of Ukrainians. He also assured them that the government's only motive in setting up concentration camps was pure and good and merciful and overflowing with the milk of human kindness.

The government will do its best to keep the Ukrainians on an equal basis with other Canadian citizens; that it was not the intention of the Government to intern Ukrainians just because they were of Austrian birth; it was done rather as an act of mercy as many employers through a mistaken idea of patriotism had discharged their men leaving them in a helpless and destitute condition, so that internment seemed to be the best way of dealing with the matter. (*Vegreville Observer*. March 6, 1918)

The effectiveness of the propaganda can be gauged by the fact that a rumour spread through Alberta that "enemy aliens" had placed poison in the formaldehyde with which farmers were to treat their seed grain, so the grain would not germinate. After exhaustive tests by provincial government agents, no adulteration was found and the seeds germinated just fine.

In 1918, women were granted the right to vote in federal elections. According to the *Edmonton Bulletin* (April 13, 1918) they were granted it

because there was not going to be a federal election for some years. Mrs. L.C. McKinney, MLA, said that graft and patronage were wrecking the "sacred trust" of franchise and now that women had the vote, it was their job to purify politics while the men were away at war. (*Edmonton Bulletin*. April 16, 1918) She did not say how this was to be done since people can only vote during an election and there was no election. Although by itself, suffrage accomplished nothing, it is a basic liberty that all people must have and a necessary prelude to further demands.

The labour troubles in Drumheller did not begin until late in the year. There had been a strike of 600 miners in the Drumheller coal fields in 1917 but this was just a strike and did not yet take on the character of a class struggle. Nor did the strike of 1918, although it was a most peculiar strike.

It occurred at the Rosedale mine which had been founded in 1912 by Frank Moodie, in partnership with Mackenzie and Mann and others. Moodie sold out in 1925 to become involved in the oil exploitation at Turner Valley.

In 1918, the employees at the mine asked the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) to send organizers to their mine. When the organizers arrived, they were met by Frank Moodie and other persons who were armed. The organizers were beaten and driven away. Upon hearing this, the Rosedale miners stopped work. Frank Moodie called the RNWMP who sent 14 of their horsemen and a machine gun. The machine gun was set up on the mine site.

Other miners went on a sympathy strike and soon there were 2,000 striking miners, of whom the *Edmonton Bulletin* (February 4, 1918) reported that 70 per cent were aliens and 40 per cent were enemy aliens. All mines in Drumheller were closed and the miners said they would stay closed until Frank Moodie recognized a union shop.

Frank Moodie said he would never have a union in the Rosedale mine and that, having lost a brother fighting "the huns" in France, he would not negotiate with any miners' committee of whom 90 per cent were aliens. The miners replied that there would be no negotiations in any case until the police and their machine gun left the mine. They swore that the committee to meet with Moodie were all British-born except for one who was a naturalized citizen.

Under the War Measures Act, the coal mines were all under the jurisdiction of the Coal Commissioner, W.H. Armstrong, in Ottawa. On February 11, this commission met with President Biggs of the UMWA but there were no immediate results.

The Alberta government thought the provincial police and not the RNWMP should have been consulted first. Attorney-General Cross spoke to Commissioner Perry of the RNWMP about it. The machine gun was taken away but the Mounties stayed.

Districts 18 of the UMWA laid a charge of assault against Frank Moodie and the officials who had pointed a gun at and assaulted the two UMWA organizers. The union was permitted to hire a hall for the trial so that all those interested could attend. Five hundred or so miners were present and it is reported they went away satisfied. Frank Moodie was fined \$50 and costs. Alexander Pierie and J. McLean were fined \$5. Kenneth Moodie and J. Elliott were acquitted.

The strike continued in a spirit of optimism. But then a UMWA convention in Fernie decided that all Drumheller miners except for those working in the Rosedale mine, should return to work. Vice President Christophers of the UMWA was sent to Drumheller to revoke charters if the locals did not obey.

Faced with this, the miners returned to work. Then W.H. Armstrong, director of coal operations for the federal government, said the government had issued an order-in-council placing the Rosedale mine under his jurisdiction and henceforth, wages and working conditions would be the same as in all other mines in the area. UMWA officials were well pleased and voted themselves a raise in pay.

In the meantime, Ukrainians were disagreeing among themselves about the independent Ukraine. Many opposed it because it was not independent, having been created by the Germans. The change in the status of the Ukraine caused no change in the status of Ukrainians in Canada, who continued to be persecuted as Austrians.

Bishop Budka had been arrested for sedition in 1918 but was released almost immediately. At the same time there was a rebellion in his church which was not connected with this arrest, but with the setting up of an independent Ukraine. The big split was accompanied by charges that the Bishop was forcing assimilation and colluding with Roman Catholics.

There were two main religions among Ukrainians—Greek Orthodox, the religion forced on them by Vladimir, and Greek Catholic or Uniate, the religion forced on them by Poland. The Halychane were largely Catholic and the Bukovinians, Orthodox. About five years after arrival, people began to feel lonely for their church. Since they hadn't cared so much about religion when they left, it seems most likely that their desire for a church was an expression of their feelings of isolation.

Religious warfare began about 1902 when the clergy began arriving. Czumer and Woycenko both blamed it on the Basilian father, saying that the Basilians fostered ignorance and Roman Catholicism. This was a failure as were all attempts at conversion to Protestantism. The Russian Orthodox priests disappeared after 1917 when the overthrow of the Czar cut off their funds. That left Bishop Budka, who wanted all church property to be signed over to the Greek Catholic corporation.

The strife in 1918 began over the Petro Mohyla Institute, built in Saskatoon in 1916. There were a number of these *bursas* built after the

destruction of bilingual schools. They were to teach the Canadian-born about Ukrainian language and culture. But all of them were beset by internal strife because of the priests' demanding financial and political control, and most of them quickly disappeared.

The rebellion against Bishop Budka's demand for Greek Catholic control of the Petro Mohyla Institute was carried out in the name of nationalism and orthodoxy. The rebels denounced the Uniate church as the creation of the alien Poles and opposed the Church Slavonic in which the Catholic services were held. The leaders of the split were Wasyl Swystun and Michael Stechishin, who in July, 1918, organized the Ukrainian Greek Orthodox church which they thought would have ties with the independent Ukraine.

The struggle between the two churches was bitter and lengthy. There were polemics, fights, lawsuits, denunciations, at least one burned church. It went on until after 1927 when Bishop Budka left Canada.

The characteristics of the new church were mainly to do with being more truly Ukrainian, but there were some positive aspects as well. Laity meetings were to decide church politics. There was to be no Patriarch. The Eastern Greek rite was to be retained, but Ukrainian was to replace Church Slavonic as the language of worship. Celibacy was condemned. The Orthodox church retained the Byzantine cross which the Catholics had discarded.

Thereafter it was possible to find in any Ukrainian community the two churches side by side, and often with a third church nearby since there were disagreements within each religion. It seems surprising that while people were losing their jobs because of their name, while men were doing forced labour in concentration camps because they were poor, the aspiring middle class was carrying on religious warfare. But that's how it was.

## More 1918

In June 1918, there were 2,087 "enemy aliens" interned and 79,057 on parole. In 1917 and 1918, 3,895 people were arrested for anti-conscription activities.

The spate of orders-in-council continued. The one of September, 1916 had required registration of all "enemy aliens" with no permanent address. On August 5, 1918 this was expanded to include everyone over 16.

In the autumn of 1918 Borden named C.H. Cahan, a Montreal lawyer, Director of the Public Safety Branch of the Department of Justice and charged him to look into labour unrest. Cahan reported that Slavs were particularly suffering "mental unrest" due to socialist propaganda.

A new order-in-council was passed to include Russians, Finns and Russian Ukrainians as "enemy aliens," and every one of these over 16 was required to register with the police. There were about 200,000 people on the prairies classified as "enemy aliens."

Another order-in-council was passed on September 27, 1918 banning 14 more organizations: the IWW, Russian Social Democratic Party, Russian Social Revolutionaries, the Russian Revolutionary Group, Russian Workers' Union, Ukrainian Revolutionary Group, Ukrainian Social Democratic Party, Social Democratic Party, Social Labour Party, the Group of Social Democrats of Bolsheviki, Group of Social Democrats of Anarchists, Workers International Industrial Union, Chinese Nationalist League, Chinese Labour Association. On October 29, 1918 the Social Democratic Party was removed from the list and the Finnish Social Democratic Party and Revolutionary Party of North America were added.

On October 25, 1918 an order-in-council suppressed all newspapers in 14 languages and prohibited meetings in these languages. In actual fact, the ban didn't stop publication or meetings, but it made everybody mad, particularly since for Ukrainians it meant that religious and nationalist newspapers were soon allowed to publish again and only socialist newspapers and meetings were banned.

The Ukrainian wing was the largest of the Social Democratic Party of Canada. It was first called the Federation of Ukrainian Social Democrats, then the Ukrainian Socialist Party of Canada. Socialism was at first a response to the rapacity and authoritarianism of the churches. The priests preached that there was a god in heaven and landlords on earth and that peasants should be humble and obedient to the earthly counterpart of god. Clergy usually preached against peasant revolutions, so that to some degree, religion of all kinds became confused with private property. There were, however, also religious socialists.

The socialist movement among Ukrainians in Canada began in 1904-1905 in Winnipeg. Early socialists included Cyril Genik, M. Stechishin, T.D. Ferley, Paul Krat. In 1907, there were three Ukrainian branches of the Social Democratic Party: Winnipeg, Portage la Prairie, Nanaimo. The newspaper *Red Flag* was begun by Wasyl Holowatsky, Paul Krat, Myroslav Stechishin. After this paper folded, *Working People* (*Rabochy Narod*) was begun by Krat, Stechishin, Holowatsky, Slipchenko, Ferley. From 1909 to 1919, this paper was the official organ of the Ukrainian social democrats. In 1911, there was a factional struggle which the left wing won. At this time Krat left the party; later he became an important man in the Protestant church. The new leaders emerging from this power struggle were Matthew Popowich, Ivan Naviziwsky, William Kolesnik, John Hnyda.

Roman Kremar began a new paper called the *New Citizen* in Edmonton in 1911, with which *Working People* carried on a factional dispute. *New*

*Citizen* folded in 1912. Stechishin was replaced by Ivan Naviziwsky as editor of *Working People*. Stechishin remained in the party a while longer; the paper and the party conducted a factional struggle which the paper won, the leaders of the winning faction being Matthew Popowich, Naviziwsky, Kolesnik. In 1914, the party was re-formed as the Ukrainian Social Democratic Party and by 1919, had 1,500 members. The leadership and ideology of the socialists was entirely male and, in general, the theory and practice had no relevance to women; this would, in part, account for the failure of the party to do anything significant.

At first *Working People* supported an independent Ukraine but soon decided this was an anti-Marxist position. A factional struggle in 1917 and 1918 led to a split in the ranks over this issue. Those who supported an independent Ukraine left the party. The remainder formed the Ukrainian Labour Temple Association (ULTA). At a meeting in Winnipeg in 1918, a branch of the Ukrainian Social Democratic Party and the V. Vinnichenko Drama Society held a meeting at which \$5,000 in cash and pledges were collected. This went towards building the first People's Home in Winnipeg. Soon the ULTA was building more of these. The halls were primarily for the purpose of putting on concerts and plays and providing a meeting place for people. Later, they played an important political function.

By 1918 almost everything was illegal. A man named Joe Terliski went to the fair in Edmonton and he didn't take along his marriage certificate. The police arrested him and took him to Calgary where he was able to produce proof of his exemption from immediate conscription. The miners' union at Coalhurst made a formal protest about the number of times miners were seized and detained because they didn't carry all their papers on their person.

The RNWMP and private detectives constantly searched all over western Canada for any trace of the IWW.

The hysteria culminated with the order-in-council which forbade strikes and lockouts for the duration of the war. The punishment was to be a fine of \$1,000 or six months imprisonment plus drafting of men of military age.

The CPR freight-handlers in Calgary were already on strike when this order-in-council was issued. Twelve hundred other CPR employees walked out in sympathy. Persecutions began under the new order-in-council. The street railwaymen went out in sympathy with CPR employees and so there were 1,800 people on strike in Calgary. Labour unions from all over Canada expressed their sympathy with the strikers. The government replied by threatening to draft everyone. For a few days, it seemed there would be a general strike in the city.

Finally the freight handlers dispute was settled and the sympathy strikes were called off. Everyone returned to work except for 25 men who

were sent to the war board to be drafted as punishment for striking. After more threats from labour, all prosecutions and punishments of the workers were dropped. The war ended soon after and the no-strike order was repealed.

Before the war ended, the flu epidemic began. It was the most virulent and widespread ever known. Millions of people all over the world died of it. In Alberta, it began on October 4 and ended November 11—30,000 people were sick, of whom 3,259 died. On October 18, all schools, churches, theatres and public meetings were closed. Everyone was required to wear a mask outside their own home.

Turkey surrendered unconditionally on November 1, 1918. A few days later, Austria signed an armistice agreement. On November 11, Germany accepted the terms of an armistice agreement.

In the midst of the peace celebrations, the RNWMP continued enforcing conscription.

Hostilities having ceased, the further enforcement of the Act was not to secure reinforcements but to punish draft evaders. (*Sessional Papers*. Report of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police for the year ended September 30, 1919. p. 13)

The war was over and there would be no more butchery of young men for a while. But at home, nothing changed. Censorship, concentration camps, conscription, arrests for walking down the street—all these continued as before.

The Minister of Justice reported to parliament that there had been 7,000 or 8,000 interned aliens. He said this might seem like a large number but many of them had been interned for "compassionate" reasons. The cost of the internment had been \$1,500,000 per year. He said that since everyone knew "Austrians" weren't hostile, most of them had been sent out to work and there were only 2,000 or 3,000 men left in the camps at war's end, most of them Germans. (C.J. Doherty. *Debates*, 1918. Volume CXXXII. p. 1018)

The numbers of prisoners as of December 9, 1918 were given as follows: Munson, 63; Vernon, 388; Kapuskasing, 1,007; Amherst, 764—for a total of 2,222.

Of these, 1,700 were Germans, 800 of them sent by Britain from the West Indies, leaving 900 German Canadians. There were 489 "Austrians," 11 Turks, 7 Bulgarians, and 15 miscellaneous. Of the Canadian Germans, it was said that 80 per cent were interned because they were "hostile, dangerous, or undesirable." The "Austrians" were jailed because they were unemployed. (*Debates*, 1919. Volume CXXXIV.)

## Lives: War Years

### Senefta Kizima—Calgary\*

I came from the village of Shypintsi in Bukovina. My girlhood name was Senefta Ribka. I was born in 1898. My parents were poor peasants—they had a house, three-quarters of a *morg* of land, domestic fowl. We had no horses. Our family was made up of five persons. One child died in infancy.

Father went to work in Rumania, Moldavia, Bessarabia. As well, he made boots and thus earned money for the household bread-salt. From these earnings we lived.

I went to school and finished five grades. Father twice went to Canada to earn money and then returned home. The third time he took the whole family with him. This was in 1912. We went from Antwerp and arrived in Montreal in April. We were brought on a cargo ship—one which normally transported cattle. The emigrants were poorly fed.

I shall never forget the moment we left our dear village, when Mother stood on the step crying bitterly that she was leaving her native land, parting from her people, going to an unknown foreign land. Father comforted her, saying there were many of our villagers in Canada.

Father had taken out a homestead there before his third trip home.

We arrived in Calgary and were to change trains there for Edmonton. At the station an acquaintance of my father's, who was a foreman on a railway construction project, began persuading him not to go to the homestead but to remain in the city. Father heeded his advice, and we stayed in Calgary. Here he worked at various city jobs.

That foreman built a house where about thirty workers boarded, and it was necessary to cook for them. Mother and I worked for him for a year. I was then 14 years old. Later, Father bought a house on time. Our brother, who was the youngest, injured his foot on a rusty nail while running around on the street, got blood poisoning, and died. This was a great tragedy for us. He was not quite seven years old.

I began to work as a domestic labourer for rich people for \$10 a month.

In 1915 at the time of the First World War, I got a job washing dishes in a restaurant. One time some drunk soldiers broke into the restaurant and demanded that the owner fire "Austrians" because they were "enemies." The owner, afraid the drunk soldiers would break windows, had to fire us. Because of his "Austrianness," my father also lost his job.

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\*(From *Life and Word*, July 31, 1972. Translated from Ukrainian.)



Someone began rounding up workers for a coal mine in the area near Canmore. Father had once worked in a mine. He hired on at Georgetown.

One time Father was almost taken to a concentration camp over nonsense. We had an empty tobacco can on which were some German *cherbi* or little flags, because the tobacco had been imported from Europe. One of us had covered a window with this box. A policeman passing by had seen this and thought it must be to demonstrate our "pro-German" sympathies. One day soldiers broke into the house to take my father to the camp. Mother cried and pleaded that the children would perish if they took him away. The soldiers took pity on us and left Father at home. After this he sustained a serious injury in the mine—his leg was crushed and he was an invalid for the rest of his life.

At that time there was no compensation; once you were injured you had no reason to live, so go to the streets, hold out your hand and beg from passersby!

We returned to Calgary to our house which had stood empty for a year. I got a job in a restaurant as a waitress. I was paid \$7 a week. One time two people came into the restaurant and asked me how many hours I worked and how much I earned. They were organizing restaurant workers into a union. This was 1916 or 1917. Having organized the workers, they called a strike in restaurants and hotels in Calgary.

At the time of the strike I understood many things, experienced injustice, and saw great dishonesty among people. The results of this struggle were higher wages for restaurant workers.

Therefore, to the Ukrainian progressive movement I came, because of the union, because of the strike battle.

One time Dennis Moysiuk came to the restaurant where I worked and ordered dinner.

Do you read anything?

Among us, I say, there are people who read *Ukrainian Voice*.

Eh, girl, look, here's *Working People*. Read it!

From that time I read *Working People*. I can't say that I understood very much of it, but I knew this was the workers' paper, which defended workers' interests.

In 1918 I met Hrehory Kizima, who came to Calgary from Canmore where he worked as a miner. He came from our village—Shypyntsi. The same year we were married. He was already a member of the Ukrainian Social Democratic Party. He took me with him to Canmore.

## Yuri Bruce—Moose Jaw\*

I was born in the village of Rashkiv, Horodenskoho county of Stanislavschina in 1886. When I was seven my father died, and we were left in the care of my eldest brother. My eldest brother went to Canada in 1903—to Winnipeg. In 1906 my mother died. We were left complete orphans. I was already 20 years old. My brother gave me money for the fare and I went to Canada.

I journeyed through Viden to Trieste. I had a ticket to Winnipeg. We were kept three weeks in Trieste by the agent Veishtok. There were many of our people, some from Serafintsiv, Horodenskoho county. They were going to Copper Cliff. In Trieste the agent exacted from us some money, because he said he had heavy expenses because of us. Therefore we didn't have enough money to get to Winnipeg and had to get off the train in Sudbury.

We arrived in Sudbury on a Sunday. Here some people greeted us and asked us to stay at Copper Cliff. One man, named Kharuk, who had come to Canada in 1901, proposed that we look for work here. He said it was already May and warm, so we could go on foot to Sudbury and after that, wander down the main road and find work somewhere.

We started out on the road and got as far as Cartier. There we rested and again went down the road—20 miles to Chapleau. There along the road were sectionmen's huts. We stayed overnight there.

In Chapleau we got work cleaning a yard. After that we took *genok*. We dug six feet and cleaned the track for the laying of rails. Here I worked three months.

When my brother learned where I was, he wrote me to join him in Winnipeg without fail, because he had work for me. But the boss didn't want me to go, saying I was a good worker and could have a steady job. I waited for three days for him to release me so I could go to Winnipeg.

But I didn't go directly to Winnipeg, but stopped at Fort William and worked there between Ignace and Kenora. Again I worked three months. My brother wrote from Winnipeg that he had suffered enough in Canada and was returning to the Old Country.

It was already September when I got to Winnipeg. I earned a bit of money at various jobs and in 1908 sponsored my younger brother Wasyl. This was a difficult year. There were no jobs. Months went by, and people wandered around without a job. I was really worried: how could I keep myself and my brother? I found a bakery on Stella Avenue and left my brother to work there—for \$100 a year! I told him: It's good that you'll have bread, because then you won't starve. At that time, women worked for rich men and looked after gardens to feed their husbands and

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\*(From *Life and Word*, October 18, 1971. Translated from Ukrainian.)

children.

In Winnipeg, Main Street was being built, and they were paving it. I thought I might get work there, but they told me to leave town immediately, because there was no hope of getting a job.

I went from place to place, cut hay for a farmer, to survive somehow, to keep from starving. On Barber Street in Winnipeg people were dying of hunger. Many were returned home to Europe.

We used to go to the CPR office in Winnipeg. A clerk would come out and take one or two—and that's all. Then the police would appear from all directions and thrash the immigrants with clubs, scattering them from around the office.

They were signing people up for work in Moose Jaw. About 35 of us signed up. They brought us by train and uncoupled the car. In the morning we were given breakfast and told to go to work. It turned out that a strike had begun, and we had been brought as strike-breakers. We hesitated to go to work. The boss said that we had got breakfast, but if we didn't work, we wouldn't get dinner. We answered: We may die of hunger, but we won't be strike-breakers. And not one of us went to be a scab. From there we all went in different directions.

Later I got a job in B.C. and spent all of 1909 there. Ivan Boychuk from Edmonton organized us into a branch of the Ukrainian Social Democratic Party. This was in Bains Lake.

In 1910 I returned to the Old Country. They punished me with a two-day jail sentence, because they said I hadn't registered for the draft soon enough. Immediately they put me in the 58th regiment, infantry, 4th battalion. It belonged to Bosnia-Herzegovina. All of 1910 I served in the army. We were drilled and told: Before you die, you must kill seven Russians!

I thought to myself, I was in Canada and saw different people, a different world, and must I die for the Emperor if the war begins? As soon as I was out of the army, I bought a ticket and in 1912 came to B.C., where I had previously worked. I worked there all of 1913. Then we were laid off. When I first arrived in B.C., I was followed by a registered letter in which I was ordered to return without delay—not to the village, but straight to Bosnia-Herzegovina to the 58th regiment, 4th battalion. I sent the letter back and didn't obey the will of the Emperor.

Came the year 1914—no work. I returned to Moose Jaw. People didn't have jobs and had no way to make a living. I give one a deuce, another a five . . . and I was giving away all my money to help them. But then I saw there would be nothing left for myself. In a word—trouble.

Somehow I weathered the trouble on farms and, in 1915, returned to town. I went to the CPR office because I thought something might turn up for me, but the company police drove us away with clubs. Some people were badly beaten on their backs.

We then gathered to look for jobs in other places. When we left Moose Jaw, the police stopped us and asked for registration cards. We said we had none, because no one in Moose Jaw had told us anything about it. They arrested us and took us to Estevan, from there to Weyburn, then to Brandon. We were kept in Brandon for 12 months. We were kept in huge barracks under army guard—we were regarded as “enemies” because we came from Halychina which was under Austro-Hungary and fought against Canada. There were 1,200 of us.

Among us were people who already belonged to the progressive movement. They read to us and even organized schools. I understood a lot there, and therefore, after leaving the camp in 1916, I became even more strongly attached to the progressive movement and now belong to the Workers Benevolent Association and the Association of United Ukrainian Canadians. As well, I have been a lifelong subscriber to *Life and Word*.

## Paraska Holik—Coleman, Alberta\*

My single name was Paraska Bilyav. I was born in 1896 in the village of Slobodia-Banilev in Bukovina. My parents were peasants. My family was made up of my parents and eight children. I went to school for three years. I was the oldest in the family and raised all my brothers and sisters. I was a “maid” for my own family.

I wasn’t quite 17 when in 1913 I went to Canada to seek my “fortune.” I came with a girl from my village to Calgary, where she was going to her father, though my father was in Canada, working in Ontario. When he found out I had arrived, he quickly returned home, but I hadn’t the money for the fare.

I began working in the Palace Hotel—washing floors. I worked twelve hours a day for \$1. I even had to go to work on Sundays. There was no day off. Often I had to work at night. When I learned a bit of English, I got a job washing dishes in a restaurant. After some time, I was married.

At the time of the First World War, my husband was interned by the authorities, who sent him to a concentration camp in Brandon. After 12 months he and other interned people were moved to Calgary. Later they were sent to the concentration camp in Banff. I was left with a six-week old child. I had nothing to eat and nothing with which to buy clothing. My cousin sent me a ticket, and I went to his farm in Manitoba. At that time a coal company in Michel, B.C., needed miners. My husband in the camp signed up as a miner and this helped him regain his freedom. He sent me

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\*(From *Life and Word*, October 23, 1972. Translated from Ukrainian.)

a ticket and the child and I joined him in Michel. The child was already nine months old.

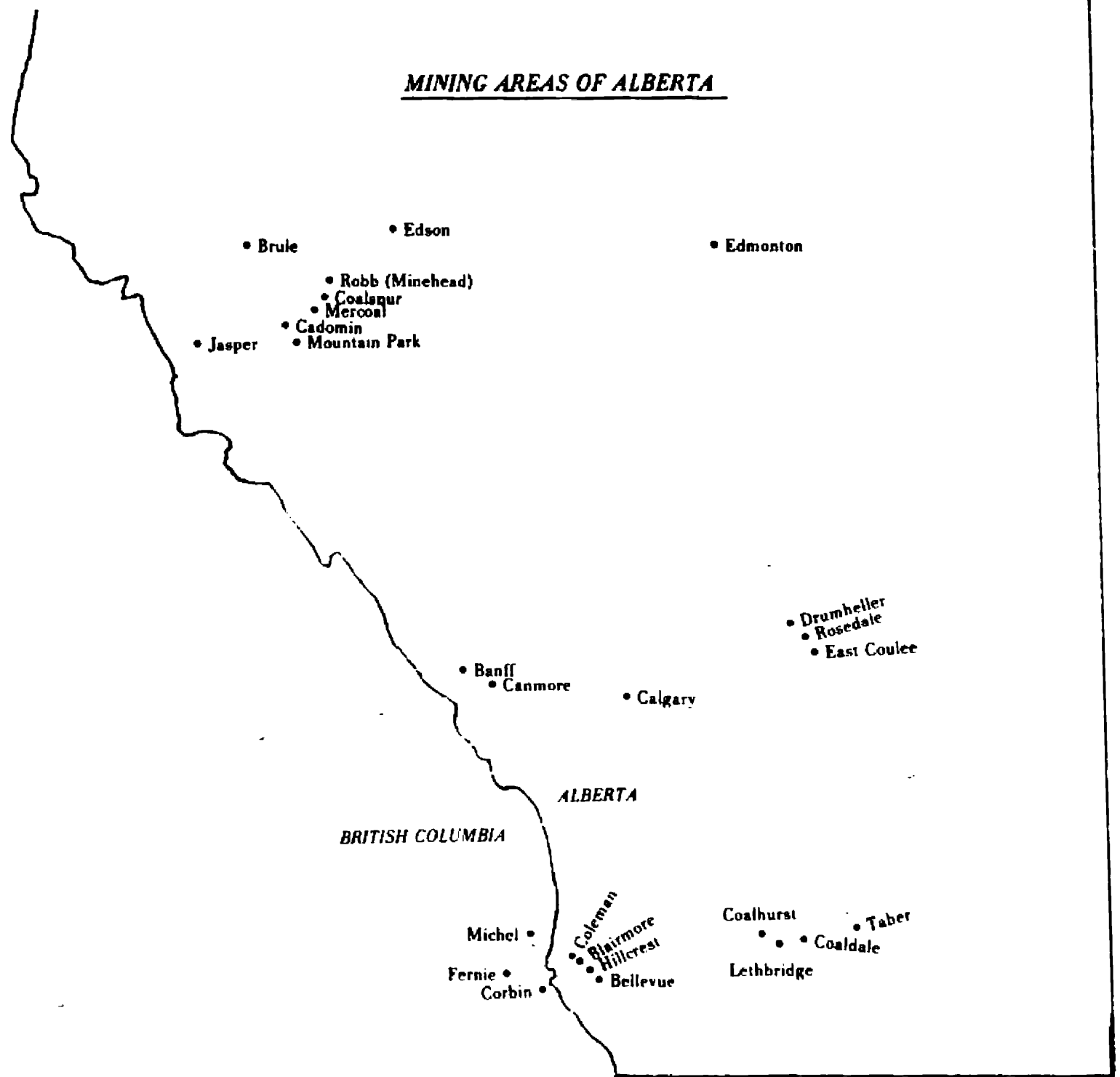
When I arrived in Michel in 1916 there was already a Ukrainian Social Democratic Party to which all the prisoners from the concentration camp belonged. We were visited by organizers, among them, Matvey Shatulsky. I also joined the party. In a year, my husband died in the mine. I was only 21 years old at the time. I baked bread and washed clothes for single miners, because I had to make a living somehow for myself and the baby. I decided to return to the farm because in Michel there was no way to live. My "income" was insufficient. I still couldn't speak English very well, and I had no family there.

In the meantime, a miner from Coleman, Hrehory Febrey, proposed that I should marry him. After a great deal of thought I agreed to be his wife. He came from Knyashoho, in the district of Sniatyn, Ivano-Frankivsk province. We daydreamed about returning to the Old Country. We lived together only seven months—at the time of the great flu epidemic, he died. He was also a member of the Ukrainian Social Democratic Party.

**4**

**The Rise and Fall  
of the O.B.U**

# MINING AREAS OF ALBERTA



# The Ardent Agitator

The war was over but martial law continued. Of the 8,000 or 9,000 interned people in the prisoner of war camps, 2,117 were still there in April, 1919, six months after the war ended. They were made to work on railways for 20 cents an hour, for farmers at 50 cents a day, or in the camp for 25 cents a day. (*Debates*, 1919. p. 1611 and 1946)

Honourable Arthur Meighan, acting Minister of Justice, denied there had ever been any British subjects in the camps. H.S. Clements said the interned aliens should be deported immediately, even the British subjects. If there were no ships, cattle ships would be good enough for them, he said. He also demanded that photographs be put on naturalization papers because all foreigners looked the same to him. (*Debates*, 1919: p. 753)

These aliens had proved, in the eyes of the police, unforgiveably ungrateful for the compassion with which they had been treated during the war.

During the course of the war the enemy aliens gave no cause for anxiety and a comparatively small number were interned. Before the war, many had been employed in railway construction which ceased when the war broke out, and these people sought employment in the large industrial centres and filled the places of our fighting men. They, as well as all foreigners, received the most considerate treatment as long as they obeyed the laws of the country and pursued their ordinary avocations. The returned soldiers found them filling their jobs and enjoying prosperity. In Winnipeg, Calgary, Medicine Hat and other points, the resentment of the soldiers found expression in small disturbances provoked by the indiscreet acts and words of these people, who, as a body, have shown little appreciation of the just and fair treatment meted out to them by the people of this country. They have shown themselves ready to follow and support the extremists who play upon their ignorance and appeal to their national prejudices and sympathy for the central powers. Bolshevism finds a fertile field among them and is assiduously cultivated by the ardent agitator. (*Sessional Papers*. Report of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police for the year ended September 30, 1918. p. 14)

The soldiers returned to ruling-class hysteria, repression, prohibition, unemployment, labour unrest. Censorship rules were still in effect, and it continued to be illegal to walk down the street without an explanation. The Food Board ceased operation, causing the cynical to remark that now



food prices would go down, which they did. The schools, closed because of the flu, did not open until January 1919.

Unemployment rose rapidly once again, and once again, workers didn't take it quietly. There were either 298 (Edmonton *Bulletin*, April 10, 1920) or 336 (Lipton, 1966) strikes and lockouts in Canada in 1919. Whichever number it was, it was not to be surpassed until 1946.

In Alberta the only organized workers were miners, railroad workers, civic employees, plumbers, carpenters, steamfitters, hotel and restaurant employees—only a small proportion of the population. Nevertheless, they had strikes which the police claimed had a "...sinister purpose although probably not realized by many who took part." (*Sessional Papers*. Report of the Northwest Mounted Police for the year ended September 30, 1919. Commissioner Perry to N.R. Rowell. p. 11)

The police have historically held the view that all agitation has an external cause. It is basically a contemptuous view of people; supposing they must be led and are easily duped. After several tantrums and one resignation, Commissioner Perry got permission to take the police to Russia and get the agitator in his place of origin.

A brigade of Canadian artillery had been sent to Archangel two months before the armistice. There were 4,000 Allied troops at Vladivostock and other small Allied contingents around Murmansk. In all, there were half a million foreign troops in Russia. The Canadian government eventually admitted that they were fighting against the Red Army.

On October 1, 1918, the RNWMP transferred 184 men, 6 officers and 181 horses to the Canadian Expeditionary Force to be sent to Siberia. About half of them came down with the flu before leaving and five died of it, but the rest went off, reportedly in good spirits. They returned July 7, 1919 without having seen any active service. Protests from all over the world resulted in withdrawal of Allied troops.

At home, things were bad, but:

If the men will not defend us from the Bosheviki doctrine, the lately enfranchised women will save the country from it. (William Foster Cockshutt. Official Report of the *Debates of the House of Commons* of the Dominion of Canada, 1919. p. 128)

Somebody had to save the country. The Edmonton *Bulletin* discovered that Communist literature wasn't illegal as long as it wasn't seditious or treasonous or defeatist or any of those other things, and waxed more indignant about allowing Communist literature than about the banning of other literature. (January 24, 1919)

A miner from Diamond City named Thomas Shannon was arrested and sent to jail for having in his possession a copy of *The Defender*, and IWW literature. The UMWA sent an ultimatum and the Alberta Federation of Labour demanded his release. The Edmonton Trades and Labour Council

held a mass meeting on Sunday, January 19 at the Empire Theatre at which they demanded the release of all political prisoners. They pointed out that banned literature was available in libraries, but if you had some in your home or on your person, you went to jail. A man named Dean MacPherson was arrested in the same year for having the *Western Clarion*, the social democratic newspaper from B.C., on his premises. He was also released due to organized agitation on his behalf.

The farmers were also becoming increasingly hostile towards authority. Freight rates were high and their sons had been conscripted. In 1918 a representative of the UFA was elected in a by-election but the UFA claimed it wasn't about to become a political party. The other farmers organization at the time was the Non-Partisan League. It had begun in the U.S. and in December, 1916 an independent Non-Partisan League was organized in Alberta. Louise C. McKinney and James Weir were elected to the provincial legislature in June, 1917.

While others were organizing, the Great War Veterans and other veterans associations desperately chased after enemies. The leadership of the veterans and of the country encouraged this because there were not enough jobs for the returned soldiers and if they weren't given an immediate enemy they, too, might fall prey to the ardent agitator. Mobs in Winnipeg demanded that all aliens be fired, and wrecked places that didn't comply. Sam Blumenberg's press and laundry were wrecked.

The Edmonton veterans said they deplored violence but demanded that aliens and slackers be fired forthwith and their jobs be given to returned soldiers.

The government encouraged them by passing more orders-in-council under the War Measures Act. It was decreed that in certain localities, any judge would imprison as a prisoner of war any person in the area who was of an inappropriate nationality. Anyone could form a lynch mob and present their accusations to the judge. The accused was not allowed counsel and action could proceed in his absence and without his having been notified. The first the Ukrainian, German, or Bulgarian might know about it was the arrival of police to drag him off for an indefinite sentence in an internment camp.

About 1,000 Ukrainians held a meeting in Edmonton demanding that the government either provide jobs or allow them to go to some other country—they were still not permitted to travel. Part of this petition, sent to the acting Prime Minister, Sir Thomas White, reads:

Whereas we are now being thrown out of employment so that the jobs may be given to the veterans who have returned from France, and

Whereas we acknowledge the full rights of the veterans, but we also desire to live, and to do so we must have jobs or else we will perish from hunger,

Therefore be it resolved that the Ukrainians unanimously appeal to the Dominion government of Canada to give us means to live or else open up the lines and give us a chance to go to some other country where we will be able to get work that we may live.

We would also remind the Canadian government that we were invited to come to this country, being promised the same rights as extended to other people. (*The Soviet*. March 6, 1919)

The document was reported to be signed by S. Moloschuk, chairman, and J. Kbybanousky, secretary (the latter is likely a misspelling).

Members of the National Co-operative Company in Vegreville demanded the return of their citizenship. They had wished to put on a play but were forbidden to do so because the play was in Ukrainian.

Between November, 1918 and May, 1919 all left-wing newspapers had to be printed in both English and Ukrainian and each issue censored. *Working People* was banned. On March 22, 1919 the first issue of *Ukrainian Labour News* was put out by Ivan Naviziwsky and Danylo Lobay. It was printed in Ukrainian and English and was officially sponsored by the Winnipeg Trades and Labour Council to get around all those orders-in-council.

In February 1919, a group of people including John Boychuk and Florence Custance met in Toronto to discuss the formation of an International Workers Association. The participants were all arrested. Joan and Arthur Ewert were deported to Germany. Tom Bell and John Boychuk had previously been given suspended sentences for possessing "seditious" literature in Vegreville in August, 1918. Now they were sentenced to two years. Custance was released.

Western labour delegates to the TLC conference thought that body was ineffectual so they held their own Western Labour Conference on March 13, 1919. The organizers planned to form a left-wing caucus of the trade union movement but the majority decision was to withdraw from the AFL and TLC unions and form another group based on a Marxist analysis of society which would unite all Canadian workers.

The One Big Union (OBU) is often described as the Canadian counterpart of the IWW but in fact, the IWW refused to work with the OBU in 1919-1920 and continued to organize on its own without success.

The OBU organizers saw themselves as a class movement based on working class hostility to capitalism. At the Calgary conference, the delegates pledged themselves to organize industrial and geographic unions as opposed to craft unions. They wanted a six hour day and a 30 hour week. They demanded freedom of speech and release of all political prisoners. They demanded withdrawal of Canadian forces from Russia and sent messages of solidarity to the Soviet government.

One of the resolutions called for a general strike June 1 if these demands weren't met. In the meantime, it was decided to hold a

referendum on the OBU position in trade unions and see how people felt about a general strike. But the Winnipeg General Strike intervened.

The Regina Trades and Labour Council voted for the OBU at a meeting at which women were allowed to vote for the first time. Mostly, however, the established trade unions were thrown into a tizzy. The Edmonton Trades and Labor Council declared vacant the seats of the 16 delegates who had voted for the OBU. These delegates decided to form their own labour party and by April, there was a *One Big Union Bulletin* in Edmonton.

The capitalists were carrying on business as usual. In 1919 the Grand Trunk Pacific refused to pay interest on debentures or stock and the government was forced to put them into receivership in February under the authority of the War Measures Act. The railway executives, including the president, Smithers, came out of this deal with their pockets bulging.

The government was next persuaded to take over the rest of the Grand Trunk. It already owned the whole of the railway and then some, as collateral on unpaid loans, but the company demanded payment anyway. The court cases lasted until 1921. Out of the Canadian Northern and the Grand Trunk, the government created the present Canadian National Railway (CNR).

Sir Wilfred Laurier died in 1919 and was replaced by Mackenzie King as head of the Liberal Party. King had acquired a reputation as a negotiator when he was Deputy Minister of Labour. In 1908, he was elected for Waterloo North and became Minister of Labour until his defeat in 1911. After a period of unemployment, he was hired by Rockefeller.

Rockefeller was famous for cruelty, and was a symbol for workers of the reactionary nature of capitalism. In 1914 Rockefeller ordered the Ludlow massacre during a strike at his Colorado Coal Company. The militia shot six miners and burned the strikers' tent colony, burning to death two women and 11 children. There was bitter reaction to this revolting crime and Rockefeller felt obliged to start some charities. He also hired the manipulator, Mackenzie King, as a labour expert at \$12,000 a year. Mackenzie King was successful in arranging a company union with no provision for collective bargaining.

In 1918 Mackenzie King was an industrial consultant for Standard Oil of New Jersey, Bethlehem Steel, General Electric, and others, for about \$1,000 a week plus expenses. In 1919, he returned to Canada as the Liberal Party thought his manipulating abilities were necessary.

"Dr. Chase's Nerve Food For Shell-Shocked Soldiers," read a newspaper ad.

They sure could have done with something. Enemies, enemies all around and not a job to be had. In Winnipeg the GVWA brought three

Ukrainians to court and ordered the judge to deport them, but the judge said he could only imprison them, which he did. Veterans were sent to Brule from Edmonton to break a strike in the Blue Diamond Coal Company mine. This mine was begun by Mackenzie and Mann in 1912 to provide coal for the Canadian Northern. In 1920 they sold it to the Blue Diamond Coal Company for \$500,000. The mine was abandoned after 1928 when the high-grade seam ran out.

The Calgary executive of the GVWA demanded that the provincial government disenfranchise aliens for at least 20 years. Premier Stewart replied that:

He would assure the house and the veterans that he would weigh the entire matter carefully, and give a reply, and he could say with honest conviction that he had never yet gone back on a promise. It was a serious time as everyone would agree and everything possible must be done to preserve the peace and do the decent and honest thing by everybody. (Edmonton *Bulletin*. April 29, 1919)

A postal employee in Saskatoon named Lewis who had been imprisoned for having "seditious" literature was released upon threat of a general strike and reinstated in his job. The Calgary GVWA demanded that he be fired forthwith. They also demanded arrest, imprisonment, and deportation of Bishop Budka. The Winnipeg GVWA demanded internment and deportation of all "enemy aliens" and the turning over of their property to veterans' widows and children.

Prime Minister Borden, who was in Europe at the time, was sent a telegram by the acting prime minister, Sir Thomas White, on April 11, 1919, requesting Borden to send a British cruiser to Vancouver for May and June because he thought there might be a revolution in B.C. Borden replied that the RNWMP should be used.

The War Measures Act remained in effect for years after the war ended. The reason given in 1919 was that no armistice had yet been signed with Turkey and Bulgaria. Most of the orders-in-council passed under the War Measures Act were nullified at the end of 1919, but the Act itself continued. The concentration camps remained in operation.

## Reverberations from the Winnipeg General Strike

The strike in Winnipeg is regarded by labour historians as the culmination of post-war labour rebellions. Workers were bitter about low wages, unemployment, conscription, and war profiteering. Farmers

were angry about conscription and high tariffs. Soldiers were appalled at unemployment. But, primarily, the Winnipeg strike was for union recognition. Even craft unions were being treated with disdain by employers.

There were two strikes in Winnipeg in May, 1919. The Builders Exchange wouldn't recognize the Building Trades Council. It would bargain with individual craft unions but not with the Council which was coordinating their demands. Similarly, the Metal Trades Contractors refused to bargain with the Metal Trades Council. The disagreement was thus mainly about the rights of workers to bargain through the structures of their choice.

The OBU had not yet completed its organization and the general strike was begun by defiant TLC locals. These unions were opposed by their head offices in the U.S. who did all they could to break the strike and stop sympathy strikes. But only 300 out of 17,000 members of the Winnipeg Trades and Labour Council voted against a sympathy strike. The Women's Labour League of Winnipeg supported the strike. About 20,000 of the strikers weren't in any union.

The Edmonton Trades and Labour Council voted to begin a sympathy strike at 11 a.m., May 26, 1919. No street cars operated and it was difficult to get a meal in a restaurant but the strike, which lasted until June 11, was never complete. Many stores, the police, firemen, continued working.

By May 28, the 8,000 miners of the District 18 UMW A were on strike. A strike in Calgary lasted until June 4, and there was also a sympathy strike in Lethbridge. The returned soldiers were used as scabs. On May 31, there was a fight in Lethbridge as men, women, and children tried to prevent the scabs from working. In Drumheller, the Rosedale mine was running with scab labour. Ukrainians stayed away from work but English people went broke sooner and had to return to work.

It has been estimated that there were 75,000 to 90,000 people on strike in western Canada. There were hysterical reports of a soviet government being set up in Winnipeg and Arthur Meighan was convinced the revolution had begun.

"Is Union Jack or Red Flag to Fly in Canada?" asked a headline in the *Edmonton Bulletin* of June 12. There were rumours of money from Moscow supporting the strike.

Some supporters thought the general strike was a far more powerful weapon than it turned out to be:

The General Strike, by paralyzing industry, paralyzes government. The Strike Committee is forced to rule the cities, to "exempt" certain industries and services in order to provide for elementary human needs; they must police the cities themselves. Willy-nilly this "production for use and not profit" is undertaken for the benefit of

the workers. It displaces the capitalist government which operates for the benefit of the bourgeoisie. (*The Soviet*. June 20, 1919)

But this was merely romanticism of the left. The general strike caused only a quiver. The strike was, unfortunately, not a revolution, nor even an attempted revolution.

Their demands were for the recognition of the right to organize and the establishment of a living wage and *there were no other demands*. (*Winnipeg*, 1919, 1973: 45)

A committee of 1,000 was formed in Winnipeg by people who had money and power. All the power of the federal government were thrown behind them, and the army was made available. The federal Cabinet went into a hysterical state of terror, thinking that Bolsheviks might appear out of filing cabinets any moment and take over. Sifton, who was held responsible for having allowed aliens in, panicked. His paper, the *Winnipeg Free Press*, ran ads demanding the deportation of all foreigners, a cry taken up by others.

The Strike Committee did not protest the treatment of aliens, only pointed out that it was the businessmen who imported them, and that all strike leaders were Anglo-saxons.

There were, of course, Ukrainians and others involved: they thought it was for their benefit too. But the anti-alien feeling and the laws against meetings for Ukrainians under the War Measures Act meant they could not hold public meetings. They got no recognition, only imprisonment, deportation and—for two of them—death.

Jacob Penner, a Russian Jew, spoke to the Russian and Jewish communities and Ivan Naviziwsky and Matthew Popowich did the same among Ukrainians. Krawchuk (1963: 21) says that Naviziwsky and Popowich were members of the Strike Committee, and afterwards had to hide with Ukrainian farmers at Gimli. But most labour historians do not list any Ukrainians among the strike leaders and the leaders disclaim any knowledge of the Ukrainians who were interned and deported.

A lot of people, including J.S. Woodsworth, were arrested. On Bloody Sunday—June 21, 1919—police and militia fired upon strikers killing one man immediately. Another died later in hospital.

There was no strike pay for anyone. They had nothing to live on. After the harassments and after the arrests there was a weakening of spirits. People started slowly drifting back to their jobs. (Fred Tipping. *Canadian Dimension*. May, 1973. p.16)

Were the murders, then, only harassments?

There seems to have been a certain amount of embarrassment about the men who were killed. The strikers' own history does not record their names. Masters (1950: 86 and 107) writes that Mike Sokolowski died on



June 21 and Steve Scherurbanowes died of wounds later. Lorne and Caroline Brown (1973: 43) say their names were Mike Sokolowski and Steve Schezerbanower. Mary Jordan (1975: 138) calls them E. Scherbanowicz and Mike Sokolowski. Krawchuk, writing in Ukrainian (1958: 138), says they were Mikhailo Sokolowski and Ya. Scherbanowich, but there are several possible ways these names could be spelled in English.

Farmers were, at best, neutral about the strike. Most rural newspapers condemned it. Even the normally pro-labour UFA remained neutral. The strikers made little or no attempt to get the support of the farmers and so they were left to the hysteria of the capitalist media and the "Citizen's Committee" and the police, who did propaganda in the rural areas.

When the strike was over, the RNWMP made raids all over—in Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Montreal, aiming primarily at Socialists, labour leaders and Ukrainians.

Brule mines in the neighbourhood of which live many alien workers who participated in the recent strike and who have caused to be issued much seditious literature, were also swooped upon by the police who seized all publications and documents. (Edmonton *Bulletin*, July 2, 1919)

At the Edmonton Trades and Labour Council office, the Council reported that nothing had been found but "clean" trade union literature.

Homes of various Ukrainians were also raided by the police as well as socialist headquarters and dens where leaders of socialist propaganda congregate. (Edmonton *Bulletin*, July 3, 1919)

Honourable Meighan rushed through an order-in-council on July 17, 1919, which later became Section 98 of the Criminal Code. It defined an unlawful association as one which sought to overthrow the government by violence or threats or propaganda. Anyone belonging to such an organization or distributing literature for it, or even just attending a meeting, was subject to up to twenty years imprisonment.

Five men were arrested in Winnipeg who sounded like foreigners. Ukrainians were deported but no one knows who they were, or how many there were. The strike leaders felt no responsibility for them, denying that any foreigners had been in positions of leadership. The only non-English people who were known about by the public were those arrested at the same time as the Anglo-saxons. They were denied jury trials and denied bail, so they languished in jail while the English prisoners were out on bail raising money and support.

Alderman A. A. Heaps and Fred Dixon, MLA, were acquitted. Charges against J. S. Woodsworth were dropped. R. E. Bray got six months and R. B. (Bob) Russell, two years. W. A. Pritchard, Rev. W. Ivens, George



Armstrong, R. J. Johns, and John Queen were sentenced to one year. And that, as far as labour historians are concerned, was that. They were concerned about Section 98 because it meant that the laws against English Canadians were to be almost as severe as those against aliens.

But there were others arrested. At least thirteen non-leaders were jailed for unlawful assembly.

In addition to those who were given the benefit of trial, a number of aliens arrested in connection with the strike were interned at Kapuskasing, Ontario, and some were probably deported. (Masters, 1950: 127)

The report to Parliament in 1918 said there had been 7,000 or 8,000 people interned as prisoners of war. In 1919, the figure given to Parliament was 8,000 or 9,000. The extra 1,000 or so must have been people arrested long after the war was over. Mike Sokolowski and Steve Scherbanowich were dead.

Of the five non-English men arrested publicly, Sam Blumenberg escaped to the U.S. It is difficult to discover what happened to the rest because their names are spelled in such a variety of ways. Matthew Charitonoff and Moses Almazoff were probably released.

Masters writes that a B. Devyatkin was arrested. But the strikers' history reports that Devyatkin wasn't home when the police arrived, so they arrested the man sleeping there, presumably because they thought one Ukrainian was much like another. This man was probably named Verenchuk, although the strikers' history also refers to an M. Berenczat. He was a returned soldier who was looking after Devyatkin's property in his absence. The government couldn't deport him because he was a veteran. Instead they claimed he was insane so they could lock him up without trial. When protestors demanded a trial, he was released. Oscar Choppelrel, or S. Choppelrei, also a veteran, was deported.

A Royal Commission under H. A. Robson found the causes of the strike to be: refusal of collective bargaining, the high cost of living, low wages, profiteering. The strike convinced those in power that it was expedient to concede partial victories to workers. Mackenzie King was subsequently chosen head of the Liberal Party. The right wing of the Liberals was led by Clifford Sifton, representative of big business, and his candidate was defeated. Mackenzie King thought that controlling workers by mild reform, combined with lies and coercion if necessary, worked better than straight out lies and coercion. This was considered "liberal" at the time and still is. Some writers credit the defeat of the Conservatives in 1921 to the strike, but it would undoubtedly have happened anyway.

For many reasons labour historians prefer to say the OBU was smashed at Winnipeg even though this was not accomplished until later. In general, the effect of the strike was to draw workers away from revolution

and towards reform.

The Defence Committee, formed to raise funds on behalf of those arrested, concluded that they should urge a return to parliamentary politics, ignoring the fact that governments in capitalist countries are always capitalist agents to a greater or lesser degree. J. S. Woodsworth and others lectured on political action as the only cure for state intervention in workers' struggles.

Queen, Pritchard and Woodsworth were to be elected to various political offices. Russell had a school named after him. There were, for a time, more labour representatives in provincial legislatures. It can be said, with a great deal of bitterness and a certain amount of accuracy, that for the strike leaders, the strike was a success.

## Drumheller: 1919

The organization of the OBU was put aside during the Winnipeg strike but the choice of executive was completed at a Calgary conference in June: W. A. Pritchard, V. R. Midgley, R. J. Johns, J. R. Knight, J. Naylor.

On May 24 all the miners of the UMWA District 18, except those at Rosedale, struck in sympathy with the Winnipeg strikers. The B.C. miners also had a beef of their own with Coal Commissioner W. H. Armstrong. British Columbia had passed a law about an eight-hour day and the miners wanted the same pay for eight hours as they had received for nine to eleven hours. Armstrong said the demand was ridiculous because there had been no change of hours or wages in Alberta and the wage reductions affected only about 25 men in B.C.

While this dispute and the sympathy strike was going on, OBU organizers were busy all over District 18. The Rosedale mine was staffed by veterans and the OBU did not make much headway with veterans but almost everyone else signed up. The official organizer and secretary of the Drumheller branch was Jack Sullivan. But he could hardly have done all the work by himself. Ukrainians were active in organization but got no positions of leadership and, as in the UMWA, a large proportion of the rank and file were Slavs while the leadership were entirely English.

The sympathy strike involved 41 firms and 6,100 employees. Although 90 per cent of them signed up with the OBU, the Western Coal Operators Association refused to recognize the OBU or to bargain with them.

When the Winnipeg strike ended in July, the miners voted to continue their strike for recognition of the OBU as their union. Some veterans returned to work and the UMWA told the miners to go back to work but most miners held firm.

Mine owners were given permission by the government to hire special constables to "protect" their property. Thugs were hired to force miners back to work, at which time they were forced to join the UMWA.

Playing on the veterans' resentment against aliens, the companies set out to hire a sufficient number of unemployed servicemen as "protectors of mining property" knowing it would be an important factor in the veterans' dealings with the strikers. The companies paid them \$10 a day and let many of them become plied with liquor. Then they gave them pick handles, crowbars and brass knuckles before they sent them out in company cars to round up the strikers for work. Several old miners who took part in the Drumheller strike of 1919 recall the events that led to the terror that stalked through the Drumheller valley that summer. One of these men, Nick Gill, had left Drumheller to work on the railroad after the mines closed down in late May. When word reached him that mines were to open again, he returned the first week in August to find the strike still in progress.

Daily, fresh news came of individual miners being picked up for work by force. If they offered no resistance, all was well. They were sent into the mine to work and nothing more was said. But if a striker showed resistance, he was driven out into the country 30 or 40 miles away, beaten and left on the prairies as an example to others.

With each passing day, the atmosphere in the Valley grew more tense. The striking miners had to be on the alert at all times. During the day they roamed in packs as there was safety in numbers. At night they slept with one eye open. Living in their small shiplap and tar-paper shacks staggered along the river banks, they soon learned by the grapevine of any happening and in turn, passed it along. (Woywitka. *Alberta Historical Review*. Winter, 1973. p. 2)

The people stood fast. On Saturday night, August 9, there was a concerted attack on the strikers. People took refuge in the hills following the night of terror by the forces of law and order. At one point, some veterans went to Mike Babyn's house. He wasn't home but Mrs. Babyn fired a warning shot from a .22 and they dispersed. No veterans or special police were even reprimanded but, later, Mike Babyn went to jail for three months for being an alien in possession of a firearm.

Among those captured that day was a man named Thompson. He was taken to a barn at Midland mine, strung up by his feet and offered horse urine to drink. ... In another instance two other men, Gulka and Malowany were assaulted and strung, feet up, in the same barn. Gulka, who was almost totally deaf, was presumed to be

stubborn and uncooperative and treated accordingly. (Woywitka, p. 6)

The group trapped in the hills had to come back eventually and some returned to the mines.

As for the remaining strikers who stayed behind in the hills, it was suggested that they all be run out of the valley. The veterans went to their homes with the message that OBU men had the alternative of signing up with UMWA or clearing out. On Wednesday, the companies decreed that "preference will be given first, to returned soldiers, next, white men who had mining experience and last, the alien element." (Woywitka, p. 7)

By August 12, Drumheller mines were operating at about a quarter of their normal capacity, but no Ukrainians were back at work yet. Veterans were appealed to, to come and be miners.

The mine owners and Coal Commissioner Armstrong declared that the OBU was illegal because it was an offence under the War Measures Act to support a movement whose purpose was to overthrow the government.

The strike ended about August 21 when OBU representatives Sullivan and Roberts were beaten and taken out of town by veterans. Mine owners, the Coal Commissioner, and the UMWA gleefully reported that the strike had been broken. UMWA representatives were busy signing everybody up. One hundred veterans went from Edmonton to Drumheller to replace "Bolsheviks" who couldn't or wouldn't return to work.

By August 26, 80 per cent of the mines were back in operation. Ed Browne of the OBU handed over the books to the UMWA. The OBU was reported to be smashed. There was a series of deportations from Vancouver of members of the Russian Workers Party. All of this ought to have stricken terror into every heart. But human nature is stubborn and resilient and it's never that easy. In November, the terror campaign was still going on.

Without any semblance of legality, homes have been broken into and British citizens compelled at the point of the gun to leave the district. In some cases, there were acts of brutality but, fortunately these were rare and were minimized because of the fact that the men attacked saw the folly of attempted resistance against such overwhelming odds. (*The Searchlight*. November 14, 1919)

*The Searchlight*, put out by the OBU in Calgary, reacted to the charges that OBU members were mostly aliens and therefore not worthy of consideration, not by defending them, but by doing some smearing of its own.

We find that among the most active of those engaging in the

"clean-up" of the valley, such men as Sam Drumheller, who could easily converse with the Kaiser in their mother tongue. We find a man named Switzer, another named Gazgo, another named Himmelman, another named Nostren, another named Toshak, and still others of alien birth.

Among the exiles who came to Calgary and with whom we talked, were McDonald, Sullivan, Thompson, Kent, a young Belgian who had his discharge from the Canadian Forces, and two Italians.

We publish these names without further comment on nationality and with only a reminder that at a later date we will tell of one of the mine owners actively involved in the "clean-up" who not long ago fired his Scottish mine manager and put a German in his place.

We are not saying this in reflection on any race or nationality, but merely to show the returned boys the folly of being carried off their feet by the "alien enemy" cry. (*The Searchlight*. November 14, 1919)

In a later issue, there was an apology to Sam Drumheller, saying he hadn't been involved in the "clean-up" after all.

There was trouble in Drumheller even after many of the men had been beaten back to work or driven out of town. All the mines suffered a labour shortage in spite of high unemployment throughout the province. At some mines, demands for OBU recognition continued.

In December 1919, District No. 1 of the Mining Department of the OBU was formed. P.M. Christophers was the miners' representative to the OBU central committee.

Near the end of 1919 the Coal Commissioner, the Alberta government, Senator Gideon Robertson who was the federal minister of labour and an ex-executive of a TLC union, and the UMWA worked out an agreement which was probably the worst sell-out in the history of American unions. The miners who were at work or would return to work, would get a 14 per cent wage increase provided they signed up as members of the UMWA. The mine owners were to cooperate in an automatic dues check-off. Dues would be sent by the mine owners directly to the UMWA's central organization in the U.S. instead of being collected individually by the union local. This agreement was later made into law by Order No. 141, issued under the War Measures Act by Coal Commissioner Armstrong. He had been given the right to pass such laws by an order of a committee of the Privy Council under the War Measures Act.

The OBU pointed out that the mine owners were making deals with an "alien" organization which had no Canadian organizers at the mines. They also said the UMWA gave away either a turkey or \$5 on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day to miners who signed up. (*The Searchlight*. January 2, 1920)

## Drumheller: 1920

The OBU had grown in a remarkably short time. The convention in Winnipeg in January 1920 was attended by delegates representing about 40,000 workers. Among other business, they had to elect a new secretary-treasurer to replace Bob Russell who was in jail because of the Winnipeg strike. However, of the 41,500 members claimed, only \$5,200 in per capita dues had been collected in 1919. There was little support for the OBU in Alberta outside of the mining districts.

Early in January, the OBU mining district held a meeting in Calgary and informed the minister of labour they would accept the 14 per cent wage increase pending further negotiations. They opposed the order making all miners UMWA members. The meeting claimed a membership of 8,000 in the former District 18. The UMWA, of course, disputed these figures and said the OBU only represented two mines—Monarch and Hamilton. The OBU exaggerated their membership figures; yet it seems obvious that in spite of the terrorism the majority of miners supported the OBU.

Besides the terrorism and the lack of funds, the miners also faced the problems of distance and isolation. The mines of Drumheller, Lethbridge, the Crow's Nest Pass, and the Coal Branch were miles and mountains apart.

The mine owners were, of course, adamant on the necessity of destroying the OBU but they didn't want any union at all, not even the wishy-washy UMWA. However, after some grumbling, they fell into line. Nearly all Lethbridge miners signed the UMWA check-off. But at Fernie, Michel, Taber, Coalhurst, Monarch (Drumheller), Brule, Nordegg, Cadomin, 5,000 miners refused to sign the check-off, yet everybody got the wage increase. UMWA officials screamed bloody murder. They pointed out that Order 141, Clause 5 stated that all miners must join the American union. The owners replied that the UMWA should go and sign up the miners. The UMWA insisted they weren't obligated to do anything but sit around and collect their money; it was up to the mine owners to make the miners join the union, and to fire them if they didn't. Only Mountain Park miners were locked out; everywhere else UMWA membership became a dead issue.

The Director (Coal Commissioner W.H. Armstrong) was not pleased with this disregard of his order on the part of the operators but it was pointed out to him by President Whitesides and others that had they done otherwise there would have been a serious lock-out and a

serious stoppage of coal production. (*The Searchlight*, January 30, 1920)

Pushed by the government, mine owners began refusing employment to men who refused to sign the check-off. With the help of special police to beat on workers, and veterans to scab, Mountain Park Mine began operating again. UMWA organizers from the U.S. tried to sign people up. They also decided to ask for another 13 per cent raise. The miners were to be whipped and bribed back into line.

In February, Canmore and Brule mines locked out OBU workers. In March, the West Canadian Collieries at Blairmore said the miners either joined the UMWA or were locked out. Owners at Bellevue followed suit and both mines there closed down, as did the mines at Canmore, Colem and Carbondale. The government continued pressuring owners to make the lockout general. However many mines continued operating.

Under financial duress, Canmore, Bellevue, Blairmore and Hillcrest miners signed the UMWA check-off. By May 5, 4,000-5,000 miners had been forced to sign the check-off. An agreement was signed between the mine owners and UMWA for a total 27 per cent wage increase. But there were still a number of mines in the OBU.

In a burst of enthusiasm on Victoria Day, Drumheller was christened the "One Big Union Valley." Although by the summer of 1920, most miners had signed the check-off, *The Searchlight* claimed that 100 per cent of them were against the UMWA and 90 per cent for the OBU. (August 6, 1920)

OBU miners held a conference in September. The press was excluded but rumours were that members spent a lot of time discussing finances since they now had a deficit of \$11,000. The striking miners at Wayne were told the OBU could give them no financial support. The editor of *The Searchlight* asked for money but was told there was none. Nevertheless, the OBU called a general strike in the mines throughout the province. Organizers were sent out. Henry Beard was re-elected chairman and Arthur Evans, general secretary.

A circular was sent among miners advising that it was a good time to strike because there was a coal shortage. OBU members had for some time, been meeting incoming trains and persuading aspiring miners not to work there, thus intensifying the labour shortage.

Senator Gideon Robertson, minister of labour, rushed to Drumheller to help the owners. He held a press conference in Edmonton first to announce that the OBU was making a mistake if it thought it could take advantage of the coal shortage.

The strike began October 1, 1920. On the weekend, about half the men in the Drumheller Valley were on strike. Those in the Crow's Nest Pass were to go out on Monday. Robertson was trying to persuade the mine owners to grant the raise requested by the UMWA in order to kill the

OBU.

Joseph Naylor and V. R. Midgley went to Edmonton to gather support for the OBU. Naylor said they were simply trying to get a better deal for miners. Midgley said there was a lot of bad-mouthing of the OBU, but it was not an anarchist organization and that members didn't go around armed with guns and clubs.

UMWA officials had a list purporting to show that 70 per cent of the miners were working. F. E. Harrison, assistant to Coal Commissioner Armstrong, said 60 per cent of the miners were working and only three or four mines were completely idle.

According to a report from Drumheller, some of the workers of the Monarch mine, who were foreigners, Friday morning began waving the red flag. This created some disturbance, and a number of returned veterans promptly induced them that there would be no such demonstrations. (Edmonton *Bulletin*. October 4, 1920)

Senator Gideon Robertson reported almost every day that the strike was over.

He stated tonight that he had found the majority of strikers were foreigners, members of secret societies who had been receiving literature from Russia. (Edmonton *Bulletin*. October 4, 1920)

The OBU was continuing to have serious financial difficulties. B.C. lumber workers had withdrawn in a fight over autonomy and control of funds. They wanted industrial rather than geographic unions. They stopped paying dues and were suspended, then decided by a referendum vote to abolish their connection with the OBU.

The Edmonton *Bulletin* (October 5, 1920) reported that from January to May inclusive the OBU received dues from only 19,510 of its 41,500 members. No dues at all had been received since June. Alberta miners had paid no dues since March and only 2,199 had paid in January and February. The miners were, of course, having trouble finding enough money for food and other basic necessities. The OBU was reported to have \$162.25.

But the strike went on. About 1,000 strikers were joined by another 400 miners from Michel and Fernie.

Then on October 10, the mine owners got an injunction forbidding OBU picketing. The owners claimed the OBU had contravened the Lemieux Act by not asking for arbitration before striking and that they were breaking the contract mine owners had with the UMWA. The injunction named 13 OBU members including Henry Beard, president of OBU miners unit; P.W. Lawson, editor of *The Searchlight*; George Palmer, a veteran; and P.M. Christophers, an organizer. Arthur Evans, secretary of the OBU miners, said the OBU would not go to court about the injunction,



but would simply ignore it.

The OBU did challenge the legality of Coal Commissioner Armstrong's order instituting UMW A check-off. A bunch of Justices found it was legal because it had been made into law retroactively.

But the strike was only broken when the companies decided to grant the UMW A demand of a further \$1.15 increase a day to the wages of day wage miners. This was on October 25, 1920, and was the third wage increase that year.

The miners had been on strike for most of the year and the OBU's precarious financial position meant there was no strike pay. The strike petered out over the next few weeks as miners went back to work as UMW A members, under pressure of cold and hunger. *The Searchlight* seems to have disappeared about the same time.

There was an announcement of another strike but it never materialized.

Frank Woodward, secretary of the Winnipeg Central Council of the OBU, said that the failure of the One Big Union to support Drumheller miners and lack of organization were the chief reasons for the defeat of the miners in their recent strike. (*Alberta Labor News*. October 30, 1920)

P.M. Christophers, who had been president of the UMW A District 18 before he joined the OBU, left the OBU in 1921. Arthur Evans resigned as secretary of the OBU's mining department in March 1921. In his letter of resignation, he said that the OBU wasn't really an industrial union, and that they had betrayed the miners. (*Alberta Labor News*. March 12, 1921) V. Midgley resigned as general secretary. With the Alberta miners smashed, the only membership left was in Winnipeg.

That was pretty much the end of the OBU. It was smashed by sheer, brute force of the state and ruling class. This was possible because the state had first legitimized the use of force. Both the strike at Winnipeg and the series of miners' strikes took place during a time when everyone was after the blood of aliens and the concentration camps were still in operation. Thus, the legitimation of repression and the machinery for it were available.

The ruling class successfully used racism and national chauvinism to divide the working class and destroy its organization. Even the OBU, the most progressive organization of its time, was not immune to their propaganda. Although the majority of its members were "aliens," the leadership was of British origin. Instead of defending their members, they ignored their problems, or apologized for them. Under the circumstances, they could not have done any different. It is not possible to expect a small group of people to believe something in complete opposition to popular wisdom of the times. Even if they had, there was no

reasonable action they could have taken to carry out this belief with the entire weight of the state arrayed against them.

Because of racism, from the earliest days in Canada there was a direct relationship between ethnic origin and social class. Indians were segregated; Chinese were prevented by law from working in any but a few specified jobs. For other groups, the segregation was less rigid but the effects were similar in that people of the same ethnic group tended to be in the same occupations. Thus, class conflict sometimes looked like ethnic conflict. It was in the interests of the ruling class to foster this appearance.

In the forefront of the strike-breakers in Alberta were the veterans. This is in marked contrast to Winnipeg where it is claimed that veterans supported the strike. This could be because the issue was presented somewhat differently in Alberta. Winnipeg was a working class matter and the veterans were as class conscious as anyone else. But in Alberta, the strikes were presented as the work of aliens and no one was willing to make any more than token statements on working class solidarity if it was to include Ukrainians.

Then and now, immigrants are regarded as obstacles to progress, including progress in the improvement of working conditions. Immigrants, it is said, settle for poor-paying jobs because they don't know any better. But in Canada in 1919 and 1920, and probably every other time, it was the immigrants who were unwilling to settle for what the native-born accepted.

Again and again, in Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Vancouver, it was the immigrants—Scots, English, Ukrainians, Jews, Russians—who took the lead in building the unions in the mines, lumber camps and factories. (Lipton, 1966: 125)

Immigrants were supposed to be dangerous to "white" workers because they were accustomed to a lower standard of living. But in 1919 it was their standard of living which caused them to be more militant. They could stay on strike longer, they were more difficult to bribe into scabbing, because they were accustomed to the ways of poverty. Ukrainians were able to stay out on strike longer, and many never returned to the mines. In this, the part the women played was crucial. The women supported the strike and kept the family going.

The determination of the workers meant they had to be beaten as well as starved back to work. And because of the war hysteria, there were many eager to do this beating. The OBU could not prevent the assaults on Ukrainians and Germans. The ones who defended themselves were jailed.



**5**

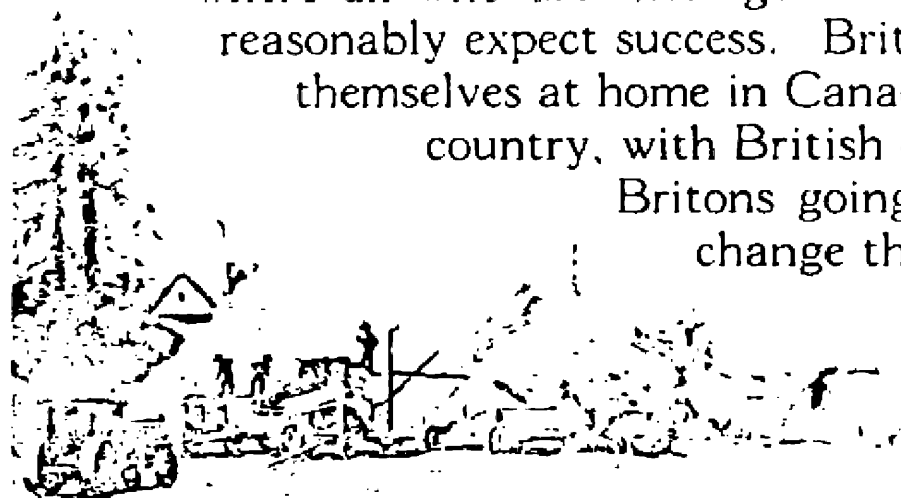
# **The Twenties**

# CANADA

## *The New Home Land.*

CANADA presents a strong appeal to all who wish to make a new home in a new land. This is especially true of its appeal to the people of Great Britain and Ireland. Canada is the nearest to the Motherland of all the great Dominions of the British Commonwealth—only a few days' journey lie between Britain and Canada. Modern ocean liners have brought the coast of Canada within five days of Liverpool.

Canada is situated mainly in the North Temperate Zone, in the latitudes in which the people of the United Kingdom have been born and brought up. The climate is particularly suited to the white race. It is a land of homes—the "New Home Land" of the British people—a land where all who are intelligent and industrious may reasonably expect success. British people soon find themselves at home in Canada. It is a British country, with British customs and ideals; Britons going to Canada do not change their allegiance; they are still under the British flag.



Immigration leaflet of the Canadian government.  
Provincial Archives of Alberta.

# Rising Expectations

Finally, the concentration camps were closed. As of March 10, 1920 all prisoners of war who had not been deported or released, were released in Canada. No figures are available on the number of deportations. The camps were closed on June 30, 1920, almost two years after the war ended. There was still confiscated property to be returned so the Internment Branch of the Secretary of State's office continued in operation for a few more months.

The Ukrainians in Canada formed and developed the Ukrainian Labor Temple Association (ULTA). This was a cultural/educational organization on a larger scale than the previous reading societies. It grew out of the Ukrainian Social Democratic Party, which was riven by factionalism, and banned.

The organization provided community, a meeting place, education, and an opportunity to sing and dance which everyone loves to do. But the leadership of the Ukrainian left did not consider such an organization to be worthy in itself and showed a certain contempt for the membership. Perhaps at the time, the organization was formed for its own sake, but in writing of the matter later, Ukrainian leftists say that many Ukrainians were not ripe for politics and had to be drawn in gradually through singing and dancing.

Ukrainians were becoming more aware of their rights and were demanding to be called Ukrainians. But after they were no longer called "Austrians," they were once again referred to as "Galicians" or "Ruthenians." It was not until 1930 that they won the right to be called Ukrainians.

In the interests of faithfully recording all firsts, it is hereby noted that Gregory Novak graduated from McGill University in 1920 to become Canada's first Ukrainian-Canadian doctor.

Nellie McClung spoke again at the Women's Missionary Society for the Methodist church. The president of the Society said they needed a mission at Radway because there were many more Ukrainians there. Nellie McClung said one had to be tolerant of Ukrainians even if they weren't educated and didn't speak English. There were some Ukrainians who had been in Canada for 30 years and still couldn't read and write but it was a Christian's duty to be charitable. She said the missionaries were doing great work in spite of the difficulties and there were now church hospitals at Pakan and Lamont and mission schools at Wahstao and Kolacreeka. (Edmonton *Bulletin*, January 31, 1920)

Nellie McClung was an M.L.A. in Alberta who had been in the

forefront of the battle for the right to vote. A long-time member of the WCTU, she was mostly concerned with moral issues. She wasn't afraid of immigrants as were most people of the time because she thought they could be quickly assimilated.

News is never all bad. A New York judge decreed that the finding of a package of cigarettes in a woman's dresser drawer was not necessarily evidence of her bad character. (*Edmonton Bulletin*, January 7, 1920)

The Local Council of Women in Edmonton met for a heated discussion of equal pay for equal work. Mrs. T. Naylor, representative of the WCTU, said "...if girls were to earn a good salary, they would not want to take the responsibility of getting married and looking after a home." Hers was a minority opinion; the meeting voted for equal pay. (*Edmonton Bulletin*, June 1, 1920)

The Local Council of Women in Calgary voted for an eight hour day for domestic labourers, but made no attempt to bring it into practise. They did suggest there should be better selection of the "girls" for these jobs as they thought there was enough unrest already without domestics causing trouble.

The *Alberta Labor News* reported that working women were making progress in organizing but cited no examples. There were minimum wage hearings going on throughout the province. The minimum wage commission was made up of two representatives from labour, two from employers, with J.N. McLeod, factories inspector, as the chairman. There were no women on the commission. They recommended to the provincial government that the minimum wage for women and those under 18 be raised from \$9 to \$13 a week and that a permanent wage board be set up.

In January 1923, a Minimum Wage Board was approved by the Alberta government to replace the Factories Act under which the minimum wage for women was \$9 a week. The Minimum Wage Board established a minimum of \$14 a week, and a maximum of 48 hours a week in industry. This was in spite of the fact that \$14 a week wasn't quite enough to live on.

The new wage law was to take effect September 1, then the Board put off enforcement to November 5, then it was put back even farther. Various women's groups had been pressing for this legislation for a long time. But in December 1923, the minimum wage was reduced to \$12.50 and enforcement was again postponed. The new law was finally put into effect on April 1, 1924. In spite of how low the minimum was set and the number of workers excluded from it, 35 per cent of women workers in the province had been making less and received an increase.

Apart from scabbing in the mines, the veterans were finally settling down. Instead of chasing mythical enemies, they were realizing how badly they had been treated and were demanding land and pensions.

They also demanded the resignation of the Union Government, saying that if it had ever had a mandate, this mandate had only lasted the duration of the war. Harry Flynn, vice-president of the Grand Army of United Veterans even went so far as to say to a combined meeting of the Grand Army and the Great War Veterans Association:

If a socialist means someone who tries to put all men on an equal footing and giving them all the same chance in life, then I am a socialist; if a Bolshevik means someone who tries to relieve the downtrodden and place him in a position where he will not be oppressed, then I am a Bolshevik; if an anarchist means a person who tries to thrust a rotten, oppressive, autocratic, weak-kneed, profiteer-protecting government from power, then I plead guilty to being an anarchist. (Edmonton *Bulletin*. July 6, 1920)

## Farmers' Rebellion

By 1919, Canadian farmers were unhappy about everything, even though by 1920 top grade wheat paid over \$2 a bushel. The yields were good and the average acreage sown to wheat tripled between 1914 and 1920. The future, however, looked bleak.

In 1917 and 1918, a Board of Grain Supervisors had been appointed to buy all the wheat at a fixed price and act as a selling agent. In 1919 this became the Canadian Wheat Board. The Board was not renewed in 1920 because regulated buying and selling of wheat was instituted not to benefit farmers; it arose as a result of the demands of eastern capitalists. After 1920, they did not want the regulations so these were dropped. Farmers feared a drop in wheat prices and thought that if the price could be regulated to benefit the buyers, it could also be regulated to benefit the producers. In this, they were opposed by their "leader" Crerar. He said the farmers had to be individuals and that the Wheat Board was "Marxian socialism."

By 1920, the *Grain Grower's Guide* had 75,000 readers. The United Farmers of Ontario won the election in that province in 1919. Therefore, the Canadian Council of Agriculture called a meeting in Winnipeg in January 1920, to create a federal farmer's party. In December, the executive of this body named Crerar leader of the National Progressive Party even though he opposed such a party. The farmers' representative in parliament did not regard him as their leader.

Prices of consumer goods were dropping but they were still more than double those of 1914. Senator and Honourable Gideon Robertson, Minister of Labour, told a meeting of the Rotary Club that Canada had



almost recovered from the war and therefore, a further increase in unemployment could be expected. This seems to be a constant theme in Canadian history—that which is good for the country is bad for the people.

The United Farmers of Alberta began as a grass roots, people's movement in Alberta. It excluded Ukrainians and other minorities from its leadership as did all influential groups of the times. But as an Anglo-Saxon farmers movement, it started as the real thing. It even included women.

The life of the U.F.A. was largely the activities of the locals, established by the initiative of the farmers and farm women in each neighbourhood to be centres of community life. (Macpherson, 1953: 28)

The leaders of the UFA had never wanted it to become a political party but they were pushed by the membership. The Non-Partisan League had won farmers' support by advocating delegate democracy and constituency control of M.L.A.'s, so the UFA was persuaded to take over the principles and organization.

Apart from the fact that it was a farmers' organization the theory of the UFA was a bit fuzzy, with a good dose of religion and moralism included. They thought the purpose of democracy was to end exploitation of the masses. But the old parties were dependent on industrial and financial interests and, therefore, subservient to them. The UFA thought there should be no parties; that different classes should organize and send representatives to Parliament to form a group government and then exploitation would cease. They were against banks, emphasized class co-operation, and felt that farmers transcended the antagonism between labour and capital. Henry Wise Wood, the UFA president, was convinced the political system would change when all classes were organized and there were no parties in parliament, only occupational representatives.

In 1921, the farmers of Alberta elected a UFA government in reaction to profiteering and capitalism. The UFA had run only 44 candidates and were surprised when 38 of them were elected to form the new government. (They became 39 when Shandro lost his seat.) The election was held June 21, 1921 and the results were as follows: UFA 39, Liberals 14, Labour 4, Independent 3, Conservatives 1. The UFA got 46 per cent of the popular vote.

The first Ukrainian MLA in Alberta, Andrew S. Shandro, was once again caught doing a dirty when the UFA protested his victory by acclamation for the Liberals at Whitford.

Along with Shandro, Mike Chornohus of Desjarlais had been nominated as a candidate for the constituency. Although Chornohus did not withdraw, the returning officer did not grant a poll so Shandro was

declared elected by acclamation.

The first time Chornohus submitted his nomination papers, they did not include the addresses and occupations of his nominators. Chornohus added the information, but his name was spelled differently in different places on the papers: Chornohus, Chornohous, Czornohus, Chornohuz.

The judge who heard the case ruled this was a stupid reason to eliminate him as the different spellings were close enough that there was no doubt they referred to the same person.

The judge was rather severe in his comments on the returning officer and did not spare Mr. Shandro either. (*Vegreville Observer*, December 7, 1921)

A new election was ordered. In the by-election, Shandro ran again for the Liberals and Chornohus for the UFA. The results were 1,814 for Chornohus and 530 for Shandro. Shandro ran once more and was once again defeated. He died of a heart attack in 1942. Chornohus stayed in politics for only one term. During the Depression he lost his farm and died in poverty.

The National Co-operative Company in Vegreville went bankrupt in July 1921 and people suspected the managers, who included Shandro and Svarich, of dirty dealings although nothing was ever proved. Peter Svarich swore there was no money left.

But perhaps to assuage his grief, he made a trip to Europe immediately after the bankruptcy and upon his return, set up a large business in Vegreville. (Pylipiw tape. Translated from Ukrainian.)

In Svarich's favour, it should be noted that he often used his knowledge and connections to benefit the community, as in the matter of setting up schools. In later years, Svarich was instrumental in building the Ukrainian museum house at Elk Island Park.

The new UFA government were immediately faced with the problem of finding a premier. Henry Wise Wood declined the job. Brownlee wanted to be premier, but he was a lawyer and the membership did not want a lawyer heading the farmers' party. Herbert Greenfield was modest for a while until he got the terms he wanted, then he agreed to become premier. Irene Parlby was named minister without portfolio.

Premier Greenfield demanded and got the right to choose his own cabinet. Constituency control of MLA's meant that if an MLA displeased them, the constituency could recall him, but this recall power was never used. From the beginning a struggle for power arose between the cabinet, responsible to the premier, and the MLA's, responsible to their constituency organizations. The premier used threats of dissolution to keep everybody in line. He also stacked the provincial convention in order to retain cabinet control.

The new government was faced with the problem of the post-war depression; they did not know what to do. There were also tariffs and high freight rates. The UFA ended prohibition which had been in effect from 1915 to 1923. A drought had begun in southern Alberta. The federal government disbanded the Wheat Board and the price of wheat dropped.

The prairies, peopled by producers of grain and other primary products, were developed as an area for the profitable investment of capital, as a market for manufactured goods, and as a source of merchandising and carrying profits. (Macpherson, 1953: 7)

The Canadian economy expanded markedly during the period when the prairies were settled: 1895 to 1914. (When economists and historians and politicians say "economy," they never mean the people, they mean the capitalists, and so I mean it here.) The eastern industries expanded and multiplied in direct proportion to the development of prairie farms.

The peculiarity of the farmers' situation, in which they believed they owned their means of production, caused many to misunderstand the class nature of the problem. Farmers thought the problem was not with production, but with marketing. They thought if they got control of marketing, they would no longer be exploited. But they never even won control of wheat marketing. The best they could do was to ask the government to control it, and the government—as must be clear by now—always behaves as an agent for capitalism.

In the 1920's, local consumer societies were formed all over, and just as rapidly, lost out to big business.

Looked at in this light, the ambitions of the grain growers' companies and later the pools were just more examples of the forces marshalling in the twentieth century to destroy man's ability to control his own surroundings. (Trofimenkoff, 1972: 59)

About 75,000 farmers had joined the various marketing co-operatives. Some of the independent societies formed into the Alberta Co-operative Union in 1919. They had bought most of their goods from the United Grain Growers (UGG), but then became critical of the UGG's inefficiency.

More seriously, the Alberta societies challenged the U.G.G.'s claim to be cooperative, charging that it was a too willing participant in the nefarious Winnipeg Grain Exchange; that it did not distribute patronage dividends; that it did not limit interest on capital; and that it generally supported the open market system of selling grain. (Trofimenkoff, 1972: 55)

The UGG reacted by becoming more competitive and by 1920 the Alberta Co-operative Union lost out. This was the beginning of the "fiercely competitive co-operative movement of the 1920's." (Trofimenkoff, 1972: 58)

The Alberta Wheat Pool was begun October 28, 1923, when Aaron Sapiro arrived from the U.S. and began signing people up like a religious revivalist. The idea had first been used by fruit growers in California. The farmers contracted to sell their crop to a central selling agency which was supposed to distribute profits back to the farmers after expenses were paid. But Sapiro proved untrustworthy and overly friendly to business. The UFA took over the ideas and did the necessary organizing.

Although the wheat pools turned out to be only more big business, farmers were becoming modestly well off. The price of wheat dropped and it wasn't possible to sell enough wheat to improve life unless some measure of mechanization was introduced. Therefore the farmers began the process of indebtedness in order to buy machinery to increase cultivation and efficiency. It was expected that the increased yields would pay for the machinery and, at first, this proved to be true.

The mini-droughts began in the 1920's. The dry lands around Lethbridge had been settled by farmers in 1908 to 1918, sent there by the CPR and the government. They settled during years of high rainfall so they had invested a great deal of money and labour before the first dry spell. The provincial government promised assistance but drought moves faster than governments, and in the fall of 1924, the first trickle of farmers away from the dry lands began.

The farmers swelled the ranks of the unemployed. Unemployment had eased off somewhat during the post-war period, then was high again throughout 1924 and 1925. There was a short-lived back-to-the-land movement as there always is in times of unemployment. Some settlers went to the Peace River country to join the poor farmers from Saskatchewan, Manitoba, southern Alberta, who had been drifting north in small numbers from 1910.

In the federal election of 1921, 65 members of the National Progressive Party were elected along with 117 Liberals and 50 Conservatives. Most of the Progressives were elected from the prairies where they won 37 out of 43 seats. Although they were the second largest party in parliament, they refused to form the official opposition because they weren't interested in party politics. T.A. Crerar, who had been minister of agriculture under the Union Government, was the leader of the third party when he believed there should only be two. The prime minister, Mackenzie King, also thought there should only be two parties.

King had even less trouble than he had expected in swallowing the Progressives up. By the end of the decade hardly a trace of them was left. (Allen, 1961: 235)

Crerar resigned as leader in 1922 and replaced himself with Robert Forke. The disagreement was between Saskatchewan and Manitoba Progressives on Crerar's side and the Alberta Progressives on the other.

In spite of Crerar's threats and resignation, the Albertans insisted on constituency control and would not play party politics. Crerar tried to form a new party without Alberta but was unsuccessful. The Progressives disappeared after the 1926 election. Some had joined the Ginger Group in 1924. Robert Forke joined the Liberal cabinet in 1926 and Crerar became the Liberal minister of railways and canals in 1929.

The Dominion Labour Party was formed in Winnipeg in 1921 and was to co-operate with the Progressive Party. The interests of farmers and labour are different but they are not in opposition to each other. The Dominion Labour Party advocated unemployment insurance, nationalization of banks, direct legislation, abolition of non-elective bodies.

The greatest failure of the workers' and farmers' movements was that they never got together. They tried. There was a certain amount of co-operation in Alberta in the 1920's, and later the CCF tried to unite the two groups. The co-operation was almost always initiated by farmers with labour showing little interest. Gradually farmers came to see that labour was protecting its interests at the expense of farmers.

Henry Wise Wood remained president of the UFA for many years, elected every year at the January convention.

Speculation about who was to be the President of the U.F.A.: "Would Wood?" The answer has come: "Wood Would."  
(*Alberta Labor News*, January 19, 1924)

## Lives

### Maria Yurychuk\*

Maria Yurychuk was born in the Ukraine in 1882. Her father had only six days of school—he ran away when they tried to cut his hair. Her mother was illiterate. Maria went to school for six years. After she was married, her husband's uncle persuaded them to come to Canada. She was then 21 years old and had a baby son. They were brought over on a cattle ship in 1903. They worked terribly hard on a homestead in Manitoba, then, in 1912, her husband decided to move to Alberta.

My husband got a job on the railway—for 15 cents an hour. Then he dug ditches for water mains—for 20 cents an hour. He worked ten hours a day. In the winter he worked in a mine near Edmonton. Our family got bigger, and now we had eight children.

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\* (From *Life and Word*, April 3, 1972. Translated from Ukrainian.)

My husband met Ivan Klibanowsky, who was already one of the leaders of the Ukrainian progressive movement in Edmonton. They were Old Country neighbours. My husband was from Kranostavity; Ivan Klibanowsky from Illintsi just across the bridge. At that time there wasn't yet a Ukrainian Workers' Home, and they just rented space on 96th Street. My husband signed up for the organization, I think in 1918. He signed me up also.

He comes home one day and says:

You know, wife, I am going to belong to an organization.

What? I didn't understand anything, because I didn't read anything. On the farm there hadn't been a newspaper, nor even a calendar, nothing.

He says:

I signed you up.

And what for, me? What am I?

The office of the organization was far away, because we lived in North Edmonton, and it was necessary to walk half an hour to the streetcar. There was no one to leave the children with. My husband also went to union meetings, because all workers who worked in the mines were organized.

In 1921 there was a strike. We walked the picket line. We left at four in the morning. The police prevented us from going and pushed us with rifle butts. I was afraid. There I met other women, and we went to the Labour Temple for meetings.

One day Ivan Hawreliuk, who comes from Beleluya, came to visit us. He now lives in Rosedale. He said that he'd seen a play at the Ukrainian Workers Home.

What play? we asked him, because I had never seen a play. There wasn't anything like that on the farm.

Further, I asked him:

You take me when there's another play?

I'll take you, he answered.

Then I asked my husband:

You'll let me go to the play? He already knew about plays, but hadn't told me. And when Saturday came, I went with Ivan Hawreliuk to a play at the Ukrainian Workers' Home where he often went, and he had even helped buy building material when they were building it. They asked women to come on Monday to a meeting. They also announced a concert on Sunday.

I came home quite satisfied, described the play to my husband, and said I wanted to go to the concert.

You can go, he says, I'll stay home with the children.

He was a good man and didn't stop me from going to the organization.

The next day, on Sunday, Ivan Hawreliuk came again. I took my little girl, and we went to the concert. At this concert, Demyan Vikhristov sang, Ivan Klibanowsky, Shelest... Maria Kobiliuk again invited women to a meeting on Monday.

Arriving home, I again gave my husband a description of what I had seen and heard and told him that they had again announced the meeting tomorrow. I said to my husband:

You know, I'd like to see what kind of meeting women can make. He didn't reply.

He got up in the morning, went to work, and all day I was left with the thoughts of how I could persuade him to babysit again, because I wanted to go to the meeting. In the evening I said to him:

I'd really like to go to this meeting to see what women can do.

Then he says:

Oh well, have supper and leave the dishes for us to do. You get ready and go to the meeting. You already know the way to the hall.

I go alone... With nobody guiding me... I get to North Edmonton near Swift's, where the streetcar stops. I stand and wait. On the other side of the street was the store of Ivan Hutsulyak from Kut'yev. He was an acquaintance of ours. Seeing me, he asked:

Where are you going?

To the Ukrainian Workers' Home.

I'm closing the store, he said, I'll give you a ride.

He had an old Ford. We got to the building. I went to the basement, where chairs were already set up. There were only four women. I only recognized Maria Kobiliuk, the chairman, who had spoken at the play. They started talking among themselves, that last Monday they had a meeting and chose an executive of three: president, vice-president, and recording secretary. They still needed a financial secretary. Stroyechka, who was sitting near me, said:

Here's a new comrade, maybe she'll be a financial secretary.

She asked me if I could read and write. I replied that as much as was necessary, I could.

Can you count?

If only I had something to count! I replied.

And thus I was made financial secretary. They gave me a notebook and a pencil. They told me to come next Monday to a meeting. Ivan Hutsulyak brought me home. It was already late in the evening.

My husband wasn't asleep but waiting. He asked me how the meeting was, what was said. I showed him the notebook and pencil.

Look!

What's this?

I told him I was a financial secretary and had a meeting on Monday.

That's good, he says....

I loved the organization from the first day, when my foot first stepped into the Ukrainian Workers' Home, when I saw my first play.

The organization gave me a great deal. I knew how to read and write, but only for myself. Through the organization I saw the world. I am 90 years old. Still I read the paper *Life and Word*, a magazine from the Soviet Ukraine, and I also read books. I am curious about what's happening in the world, and that's why I don't go to bed early, but wait until the news is over on the television.

## Maria Orletsky\*

In 1922, there was a great demand for girls. Miners came with money, and there were those who already had their own farms, so parents who had several daughters wanted to marry them off as quickly as possible. There were three of us sisters.

My father said:

If I can get rid of that small one, it'll be good, because no one will want her. Then I don't have to worry about the rest.

One time a matchmaker came to us, Dmitro Kassian, from Todir Sikala, who came from Kucherov. Todir Sikala was an older man and told Dmitro Kassian he would give him \$200 when he married me. I was called from school. I was only 14.

When I looked at him, he seemed to me so large and ugly that I was gripped with fear. He was rich—had a section of land at Hilliard, a well, a house, money. My father wanted to take me out of school and marry me off to him. I ran away to a neighbour's, Wasyl Basarab, a very wise man, who still lives in Vegreville and is now 82 years old.

At that time, young women couldn't marry on their own, as the parents had to sign for them. Otherwise the priest wouldn't perform the ceremony.

The "suitor" brought whiskey, they got good and drunk, and my father said:

She must marry him.

My mother didn't want me to be married to him, but she couldn't do anything. She could only say to my father:

She's still a child! What are you doing?

My father forced me into an automobile and took me to Vegreville, because it was necessary to get a license before the marriage. The car had curtains and I covered the windows with them. When my

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\*(From *Life and Word*, May 1, 1972. Translated from Ukrainian.)



father and my suitor went to sign the license, I quickly ran from the car and went to hide at Wasyl Basarab's. He hid me in the grainery. I stayed there two days. For a few hours they looked for me in the bush but they couldn't find me. The suitor went home, and my father became frightened that I had died. And so ended the "marriage."

## The Tragic Years

In the 1920's, the ruling class set out to destroy unions. The post-war militancy had won limited rights for workers which the capitalists now proposed to take away. American unions did little to prevent this. Work was speeded up and wages dropped.

District 18 of the UMWA promised to be good and got back its autonomy from John L. Lewis, American head of the union, in June, 1921. The mine owners had granted employees three raises in order to smash the OBU. Since the OBU had ceased being a threat, the mine owners wanted to abolish UMWA check-off and to lower the miners' wages by at least 50 per cent. There was a strike in 1922 both in southern mines and those near Edmonton. At Mountain Park, there was a six month strike in 1922, at the end of which wages were lowered from \$7.90 to \$6.10. In 1924, they dropped to \$4.90.

Early in 1923, the police got to beat on picketers at a mine near Edmonton where police said there was a "small but sharp riot" caused by "trespassers." In February a special committee of the Alberta Federation of Labor reported that the police had attacked men and women with clubs and there had been guns displayed. Not until April were the miners able to persuade city council that an investigation should be held into the incident which had occurred January 4. The judge decided the police were blameless. He found that only a Mrs. Clarke had been mistreated and his opinion was that she deserved it.

There were other kinds of assaults which also went unpunished. The federal Department of Labour reported that in 1922 in Alberta, one miner died for every 170,000 tons of coal mined. Thirty-five miners had died during the year, or 4.12 for every 100 men employed. At that, it was much better than B.C. where it cost one miner's life for every 83,000 tons of coal. (*Alberta Labor News*. August 8, 1923)

The mine owners said lower wages were necessary because of the price of coal. A committee of the Alberta Federation of Labor, however, found that while Edmonton coal sold at \$6.30 a ton, the cost of labour was only \$2.69 a ton.

District 18 now consisted of 10,000 miners. In September, 1923, there was a walk-out in Drumheller over discrimination against certain men.

The UMWA condemned them as "disruptionists" and ordered the miners back to work. During a strike in the Edmonton mines the same year, the UMWA refused to pay strike pay saying there was no money left, and left the field. The miners formed the Edmonton and District Miners' Federation which the UMWA termed a scab union, but it turned out to be more militant than the UMWA. (It wasn't difficult.)

The District 18 agreement expired March 31, 1924. The mine owners were determined to lower wages and destroy the union. The UMWA did a lot of fancy talking and called for a strike beginning April 1.

It can be definitely stated that the strike will only be settled on the terms laid down by the union, namely, a renewal of the old contract for a period of three years. (*Alberta Labor News*. April 5, 1924)

John L. Lewis had been saying for years that there would not be a wage reduction for miners, no backward step. In the meantime, Samuel Gompers was re-elected president of the A.F.L. for the 41st time.

After a few months of the strike in District 18, some mines began operating with scab labour. In May, seven companies employing about 1,000 men signed an agreement on the old wage scale. On August 4, more than 200 miners marched to the Excelsior and Ideal mines at Wayne (ten miles west of Drumheller) and stopped work there. They threatened more serious trouble if work continued. The Alberta Provincial Police were called but the Wayne miners had stopped work and everything was quiet, so they didn't get to beat on anyone.

The Wayne miners were told they could go back to work at the old rates and the union agreed to this, if they contributed ten per cent of their wages to the strike fund. The men went to work but when they got paid, it was at the lower rate. Pickets were put up and all mines in Wayne closed down. Two men were fined for assault for stopping a scab. More armed police were sent to beat on people. Several more mines signed individual agreements.

Throughout the strike, maintenance men remained at work to keep the mines from deteriorating. They were to check that there was no gas in the idle mines, that roofs weren't caving in, and no water gathering. One such party in the Midland mine in Drumheller was caught in an explosion and eight men were killed.

James Murdock, minister of labour, said the government wasn't responsible for unemployment and didn't plan to do anything about it. They did, however, plan to do something about the strike, so presumably they felt responsible to the mine owners. The Minister arranged several meetings between the union and mine owners. A meeting of miners decided they would not accept a reduction in wages and gave a vote of confidence to union officials to encourage them.

Summer was a slow time in the mines and only if the strike continued

through the fall and winter could it be expected to have any effect. But the UMWA gave in. In the presence of James Murdock and Alberta's Premier Greenfield, an agreement accepting a wage reduction was signed. A three year contract for 8,000 miners was signed cutting wages by more than ten per cent. The miners were not consulted by their leaders before the signing. When told of the agreement, 3,000 miners heckled the speaker and urged against acceptance. But they were all sent back to work. John L. Lewis had spoken.

So the UMWA made the "backward step." But this didn't satisfy the bosses who wanted a 50 per cent reduction. The "Tri-State Agreement" signed by the UMWA at Jacksonville, Florida allowed for further wage decreases for miners. The UMWA in Alberta allowed the Western Colliery Managers' Association to lower wages by another 15 per cent. Throughout 1925, Alberta miners fought against the mine owners and the union to prevent wage reductions. They lost.

The Crow's Nest Pass Coal Company closed its mine at Fernie to force lower wages. Fernie miners left the UMWA, formed a company union and signed an agreement accepting a further 15 per cent wage decrease. The same thing happened at Michel, Coleman, Blairmore, Lethbridge. By the end of the year, the only UMWA field left was at Drumheller.

Some workers tried to stop this rush to company unions but they could hardly defend the UMWA. In 1924 at the Corbin mine, the English workers tried to form a company union but an organizer named Ivan Stokaliuk formed a local of the Mine Workers' Union of Canada. The company union stole the charter and there was considerable bitterness, but that time, the MWUC won out.

1923 to 1929 were for trade unions the "tragic years" when union interests were subordinated to the interests of employers and there was a great deal of class collaboration. (Lipton, 1966: 235-237) Union membership dropped. It had increased from 175,799 in 1914 to a high of 378,047 in 1919, then dropped steadily thereafter. The American unions were in complete control. They emphasized the value of conferences and commissions as the solution to labour problems. Government appointments for union leaders further separated them from the rank-and-file workers. There was no attempt to organize the unorganized. Trade union capitalism began, with union funds being invested in banks and private enterprise. The "international" unions supported American imperialism and were racist. Workers' wages dropped by a fifth.

This, according to the Communists, sharpened the class struggle and they claim that from then on all workers' struggles were led and directed by the Communist Party. (Krawchuk, 1958: 157) Most of them were lost. The Communists continued working with the T.U.E.L. and pursued their peculiar policy of trying to make people join American unions while

vilifying these unions.

There is some danger, in fact, of the developing sentiment leading to secession movements the only effects of which would be to destroy the influence of the radicals within the union concerned, thereby playing into the hands of the reactionary officialdom. (Buck, 1959: 55)

Since reactionary officialdom retained power whether the radicals were inside the union or out of it, it is difficult to see the value of this policy.

The coal miners' situation was fraught with confusion for many years. After the sellout by the UMWA, Drumheller was the only UMWA field left. Some miners formed company unions. Others joined the IWW and there was a strike in November 1925 for abolition of the UMWA check-off at one mine. Nothing came of it. Still others joined the Mine Workers' Industrial Union, another short-lived union in opposition to the UMWA, which was active in a strike in October 1928. In 1925 there were fights between the OBU and the UMWA at Newcastle (now part of Drumheller). The Alberta Provincial Police came with machine guns mounted on their car fenders. The UMWA won.

The most serious threat to the UMWA came from the Mine Workers' Union of Canada (MWUC) which was nationalist and not directly under communist control. On June 1, 1925, delegates from Bellevue, Hillcrest, Blairmore, Coleman, Corbin, and Michel met and formed the MWUC. Frank Leary of Blairmore was elected provisional president and Dan Gillis of Coleman, the provisional secretary. Dick Morgan became the president and soon locals were organized at Hillcrest and Coleman. A bitter struggle for control of miners developed. As with all radical unions, the MWUC had the support of many Ukrainian miners.

The UMWA, which had not been able to oppose the mine owners, now rallied to oppose a better union. By August, 1926, the MWUC had organized locals in Coleman, Blairmore, Lethbridge, Coalhurst, Canmore, Mountain Park and Cadomin and were trying to organize locals in the Edmonton mines. But the owners refused to recognize the MWUC and would not negotiate. The first convention was held in Calgary in September 1926, in an attempt to unite miners for the coming battle with the owners. The convention called on the UMWA to withdraw from Alberta mines because the MWUC had a larger membership.

There was a struggle throughout 1926 and 1927 for control of the Edmonton mine fields which the MWUC lost. The struggle in the south took longer but from 1929, miners started going back to the UMWA. By 1946, the UMWA was bigger than ever.

Other unions were, in the meantime, completely caught up in parliamentary politicking and government commissions, and didn't much care about workers. The only time they paid attention to workers was

when they told them to vote for labour candidates, and when they heaped abuse on the workers for not supporting them enough. Why they should be supported was never explained.

In February 1922, a convention in Toronto formed the Workers' Party of Canada, affiliated with the Comintern (Third International of 1919). Neither the OBU nor the Socialist Party could be persuaded to join the new party. The Finnish organization decided on outright affiliation. The ULTA, represented by John Boychuk, would not affiliate although they accepted Workers' Party leadership.

Because of the widespread split that had accompanied the establishment of the One Big Union, the first general task that the party set itself was to persuade radical workers to spark a "back-to-the-unions" movement. The Workers Party was built on the struggle to correct the mistaken worship of secession among Canadian radicals. (Buck, 1952: 31)

The Annual Convention of the ULTA in 1921 passed a resolution saying they should all belong to trade unions and workers' political parties. They had no advice for the majority of their people who were farmers. In belated recognition of the reality of Canadian Ukrainians, the name of the organization was changed in 1924 to ULFTA—Ukrainian Labor Farmer Temple Association.

The 1922 Convention was attended by 46 delegates representing 22 branches and 2500 members. In 1921 there had been women's committees formed and in 1922, a women's branch was begun. The women's section mostly did humanitarian things in support of "progressive and people's liberation movements" and, of course, all the required cooking and cleaning.

Also in 1922, the organization decided to set up a Workers Benevolent Association. At that time there was no such thing as Workers Compensation and companies did not feel responsible for injured employees or for the children of dead workers. Working conditions were very dangerous. In order to protect their people from disaster, the Ukrainians set up the benevolent association into which they paid, and from which they could collect in time of need.

## The Second Wave

There continued to be many people in eastern Europe wishing to emigrate to Canada. Although the League of Nations was pledged to guard the rights of minorities, they ignored the Polish atrocities in Polish occupied West Ukraine and Belorussia. None of the occupied peoples

fared well.

In Belorussia the Poles promised land reform in 1920 but when the danger from Bolshevism was over, the law regarding land reform was not used except to confiscate the land of some Orthodox landlords and transfer it to Catholics.

The result of the reform was that 37 per cent of all arable land and about 90 per cent of the forest area of West Belorussia fell into the hands of Polish landlords. (Lubachko, 1972: 133)

In 1938, 70 per cent of West Belorussians were illiterate. The average farm in 1939 was five to seven acres. There was no industry. Forced assimilation proceeded from 1930 and in 1939, even singing in Belorussian was forbidden. Between the wars, therefore, 100,000 Belorussians emigrated from the Polish occupied sections.

In Polish-occupied Halychina in 1921, 51 per cent of the peasants had an average of one hectare of land each. Ukrainian schools were gradually destroyed; the League of Nations did nothing. Poland was, after all, a bulwark against communism and a representative of the "free world." There were several famines. In 1927, Halychina was devastated by floods caused by indiscriminate destruction of forests by lumber barons.

Rebelliousness of peasants, and workers strikes, reached a peak in 1928. In 1930, Poland began a "pacification program," during which people were terrorized, tortured, and killed.

There was, therefore, another migration of Ukrainians to Canada and the U.S. They were not allowed into Canada for a time as they were named "enemy aliens." Other immigrants were, however, allowed in and immigration resumed. They were not treated kindly.

Among the many jobs of the police force was one of meeting female immigrants in Halifax and Montreal and wresting them out of the hands of pimps. Rev. Chisholm was called "Officer for the Suppression of Commercialized Vice" in Montreal; Betsy Egan performed similar duties in Halifax.

The work thus outlined has been fruitful in incidents which cast a vivid and unpleasant light upon the dangers which threatened the unescorted girl who travels, and upon the number of human beasts of prey who strive to trap her; some of the plots which Mr. Chisholm and his helpers frustrated can only be described as diabolical, and the organization has saved many women from ruin and slavery. (*Sessional Papers*. Report of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for the year ended September 30, 1922: 19)

There are no accompanying reports of arrests of these pimps; only reports of arrests and deportation of women who were their victims. Virgins are pure and good and virtuous and worthy of protection, but

once they are no longer virgins, even for a few weeks, they are beyond help—irrevocably sullied—to be pitied, but beyond rehabilitation or assistance.

As before, people could only come to Canada if they were willing to be farm or domestic slaves—oops, labourers. Many people did not follow the rules upon arrival and occasionally some were deported as examples. A man named Israel Rich refused to work 15 hours a day for a farmer; for this he was deported to England along with his wife and six children.

Clifford Sifton had gotten over his terror of aliens and was ready to blame the whole thing on the British:

Sir Clifford Sifton at Toronto stated that what this country requires is not quantity, but quality in its immigration. He is quoted as saying that the peasant of Central Europe, in his sheepskin coat, and his large and ever-growing family, is the sort of immigrant who should be induced to come to Canada, is the sort of immigrant Canada needs. He emphasized that the very last sort of immigrant who should be induced to come to Canada is the man who wants to work at a trade or occupation which is under the direct control of the radical trade-unionism of certain parts of Great Britain.

(*Vegreville Observer*. March 29, 1922)

He emphasized that Canada mainly needed farmers. The editor of the *Observer* agreed with this and agreed that radical trade-unionism was certainly not needed, but added that he didn't like the central Europeans either.

They were not Canadians, never expected to become so; in short, they really transported to Canada their undesirable European customs and habits, and, in too many cases, tried to perpetuate these in Canada. (March 29, 1922)

Ungrateful, is what they were. Many of their "undesirable" habits had been eradicated by wiping out their schools, but others persisted. Nevertheless, the need for their labour outweighed their ingratitude.

In Northern Ontario, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan, we have enormous quantities of land fit for settlement. These are not lands on which an ordinary Englishman or American will go, but they are fit for peasant settlement. (Clifford Sifton, address to the Westerners Club of Montreal, February, 1923. Quoted by Yuzyk, 1953: 40)

In 1923, Slavs were once again allowed to immigrate to Canada, although under restricted conditions. Some of them were refugee nationalists fleeing Polish oppression. They were entirely peasants but because of increasing industrialization in Canada, it is estimated that almost half settled in cities. Since there were already Ukrainians in Canada, second wave immigrants did not have so many problems of

adjustment. But they were brought over to provide cheap labour and they were subjected to the same kind of harassment and the same kind of terrible working conditions as their predecessors.

Europe was divided in half for immigration purposes. Immigrants from the "preferred" countries were looked after by the Department of Immigration. They had to be in good health, have some money, and preferably be agricultural people, but the rules were not rigidly enforced. Those immigrants from countries called "non-preferred" were handed over to the tender mercies of the railways. The Canadian government made an agreement with the CNR and CPR whereby the railways brought farm labourers, domestic labourers, and relatives of people already here from the following countries: Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia, Austria, Hungary, Romania, Russia, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, the Free State of Danzig.

The Railways Agreement applied to domestic and farm workers and was concerned only with the immigrants from non-preferred countries. Employers requiring a farm worker or domestic servant registered with their local railway agent and then immigrants were sent by the railways to where they CNR and CPR decided they should go. The immigrants were given no choice of geographic location unless they were dependents of people already here, or financially guaranteed by immediate relatives. If the immigrants refused to go where they were sent, they were locked into trains surrounded by armed guards.

One result of the Railways Agreement was lower wages for farm and domestic labourers. It lasted from 1925 to 1930, and the new immigrants were exploited even by their own people. It is said that Pylypiwski refused to pay his labourers decent wages, saying that he had worked for almost nothing when he first arrived, and the newcomers could now do the same for him.

From 1892 to 1917, the Department of the Interior had looked after immigration. From 1917, it became the concern of the Department of Immigration and Colonization. In 1919, a new branch of the Department was formed to devote itself to women's immigration and it even had a woman supervisor.

The Women's Branch of the Immigration Department sent a woman officer to meet every ship at every port where, helped by the steamship conductress, she rounded up all unaccompanied women. This officer made arrangements with the railroad companies for special cars and assigned a train conductress to look after the women. According to reports, these conductresses' jobs mainly had to do with helping women, i.e., caring for the sick, helping mothers with babies, making cups of tea, comforting people, etc.

The journey by train in Canada is long and tiresome, and women often get discouraged through fatigue and wish they had never come



to this country. (Miss M.V. Burnham, Supervisor of Women's Branch. *Sessional Papers*. Annual Report of the Department of Immigration and Colonization for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1927)

But these conductresses' duties expanded with the Railways Agreement and the extra duties seemed to take up most of their time after a while. Women from non-preferred countries were not always willing to listen to the dictates of the railways.

The foreign girls have caused a great deal of trouble in the last year. Many have endeavoured to get away from the restraint of the conductress and it is only by being very watchful that we are able to see that they reach their destination. Friends and relatives, speaking their own language, meet them at various points en route and endeavour to take them elsewhere. (Burnham, as above)

A policeman's lot is not a happy one. The lament continues into the following year.

The conductress's duties, during the past year, have been made increasingly difficult by foreign girls, some of whom refused to go to their destinations and were prepared to leave the trains with anyone speaking their language, or offering them employment. The conditions of affairs has necessitated the greatest vigilance, night and day, and is very wearing for the conductress. In order to take care of these girls effectively the department made an arrangement with the transportation companies to have the foreign girls destined for Winnipeg come out in parties of 25, so they could be sent in charge of a conductress to their destination.

One conductress reported:

"A party of 25 girls, destined for Winnipeg, kept the whole station in a state of upheaval for the entire day and until the departure of the special train. Had considerable difficulty with supposed relatives attempting to communicate with these women and trying to get them out of the station. After the girls were placed on the train several men with automobiles attempted to take these young women away, tossing clothing through the windows. The city police were employed to keep people from entering the windows to take the girls, also railroad constables on the station platform."

Another said:

"Three of my women escaped at Montreal and I found two more trying to crawl through a window about three minutes before the train left—a man told me they were planning to join others and go to Windsor. (Miss M.V. Burnham to Robert Forke. *Sessional Papers*. Annual Report of the Department of Immigration and Colonization

for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1929. p. 81)

The peak of the post-war immigration of Ukrainians was 1926-1927. In August 1930 immigration was curtailed because there was no employment for anyone. Wives and dependents could still come, however, and as many British and Americans as wanted to.

It is difficult to know exactly how many Ukrainians came to Canada in this second wave of immigration from 1923 to 1934. Estimates vary from 56,000 to 68,000.

In 1927, the Ku Klux Klan moved into Saskatchewan, disappearing again in the 30's. Its main targets were French-Canadians and Catholic immigrants. To understand why there was a Klan in Canada at this time, one must consider the social context. The following is a quote from a person who was not even a Klan member.

The Ottawa Committee recommended to parliament the nonrenewal in its present form of the existing railways' agreement expiring in 1930. But why should this western country be inflicted with another three years of these dirty, ignorant, garlic-smelling, unpreferred continentals as we have been in the last three years? Surely this country ought to be able to govern its railways rather than let the railways demoralize the population. (Letter to the ministry of the Protestant churches of the Western provinces dated June 29, 1928, from George Exton Lloyd, Bishop of Saskatchewan. Quoted by Luchkovich, 1965: 62)

This was also a time of union busting and abrogation of workers' rights, which are often the purposes of racism. American unions supported the status quo. Unions in Canada complained that immigrants wouldn't stay with farmers but were taking away workers' jobs in industry.

Dr. J.W. Gregory of the British Association for the Advancement of Science said Canada, which was composed of high-class people, should stop intermingling with low-class people. Allowing "inferior" people in would lower the standards and there were insufficient people in the British Isles to fill all the gaps. No colored or Chinese people should be allowed in, he said, nor any south or east European people, because if you mix high standard people with low standard people, the low standard will win out every time. (*Edmonton Bulletin*, September 10, 1924) That's one of the values of science—it makes things simple.

It should be noted that the differences between races and nationalities were now considered hereditary and unchangeable. It should also be noted that it has traditionally been the job of scientists and scholars to legitimize the prejudices required by the ruling class. An effect of racism is that it keeps the working class divided; its legitimation often goes along with union-busting.

Throughout the 1920's, there was anti-Chinese hysteria. In B.C.,

Oriental people were allowed to work only at agriculture, lumbering, and fishing. Later, fishing was also forbidden. There were constant complaints that they *wouldn't* assimilate, and the constant terror that they *would*. Clergy, merchants, farmers, politicians, labour unions, appear to have been uniformly bigoted.

In 1923, the Trades and Labour Congress convention in Vancouver called for continuing exclusion of Orientals from Canada. Some delegates protested but were ignored. The Canadian Labour Party convention in Calgary in 1924 did the same.

The industrial Labor movement of the Dominion of Canada has gone on record continually in favour of keeping Orientals out of this country. The political movement would be inconsistent if it attempted to take an opposite direction. (*Alberta Labor News*, April 26, 1924)

## The Growth of a Middle Class

In 1924, the Alberta and Great Waterways Railway, now under government ownership, finally reached the Athabasca River at Waterways, three miles from Fort McMurray. The government made an agreement with the CPR regarding the A and GW, which expired in 1925. The government then wanted the CNR or CPR to buy both the A and GW and the Edmonton, Dunvegan and British Columbia Railway, but they refused. The government, therefore, took over operation of both railways in 1926. The Northern Alberta Railways (NAR) was incorporated as a company under joint ownership of the CNR and CPR in January 1929.

Alberta in the 1920's was beginning to be a different looking place. It was being industrialized. Towns were getting electricity, radio stations, telephones. There was some oil development. Proper roads and more schools were being built by the settlers. Neon lights appeared in the cities and from 1927, movies could be seen. The population of cars increased rapidly to 1930. All this was supported by wheat. In 1925-26, Canada exported more wheat than all other countries combined.

The mixture of repression and prosperity had bizarre effects. In Alberta there were forty religious cults besides the traditional churches. In the fall of 1925, William Aberhart began preaching evangelism on radio station CFCN in Calgary.

There were more mini-droughts and by 1926, people were leaving the Palliser Triangle. Some moved to the Peace River Country, the last area with available homesteads. It was advertised as a Mecca throughout the remainder of the 1920's and the 1930's. Between 1927 and 1931, its

population doubled. Some of the second wave Ukrainian immigrants took homesteads around Rycroft, Highland Park, and other areas. My parents settled at Woking.

In spite of the demands for restriction of Slavic immigration, the hatred for local Ukrainians was pretty well disappearing. Even some aspects of the "inferior" culture were becoming acceptable. Ukrainian dancers from Vegreville having gained popularity in their home town, went to Edmonton where they delighted an audience of 4,000.

In areas where they had been settled for some time, Ukrainians were now ordinary members of the community. The main reason for this acceptability was that they were no longer all poor, and there was a small middle class.

The politics of the middle class fluctuated according to what was respectable. Although Ukrainians were no longer actively vilified, no Ukrainian could aspire to a job in an Anglo-Saxon establishment in anything but manual labour. The middle-class Ukrainians, like the Jews, were required to choose independent professions where they didn't have to be hired by an Anglo-Saxon. They became lawyers, doctors, dentists, opened small businesses. But even then, they could not expect much non-Ukrainian patronage. Potential Ukrainian customers, on the other hand, had been accustomed to dealing with a non-Ukrainian middle class.

Svarich began his career as a bilingual auctioneer. Shandro was an agent for International Harvester in the Ukrainian districts. Swystun was a lawyer. Their children went to university and became engineers, dentists, lawyers, doctors, and went on to even bigger and better things. Michael Luchkowich, honours graduate of the University of Manitoba, was the federal Member of Parliament for Vegreville from 1926 to 1930. He was the first Ukrainian M.P.

Some call these men shrewd; others term them sellouts. Either comment seems irrelevant without taking the larger society into consideration. It was inevitable that some Ukrainians would be consumed by a passionate desire to succeed. To do this they had to follow the rules of Canadian capitalism. While one may wish to condemn the rules, it seems pointless to rail at the men who followed them.

Religion, Ukrainian nationalism, assimilation—these were the values of the Ukrainian middle class. The latter two do not go together, but the aspiring capitalists didn't care so much about the independence of the Ukraine as they cared about being successful in Canada, so they held contradictory positions because they were respectable in Canada. They wavered around a lot but in general supported the politics which emphasized authoritarianism; and for that reason they supported the churches. It was good for business.

The Ukrainian Self-Reliance League (Samostiyniki) was formed in 1927. It was Greek Orthodox, nationalist, anti-communist. The

membership were encouraged to join any Canadian political party but they had to join the Orthodox church because it was considered by the League to be the more truly Ukrainian religion. (Stechishim, 1953: 31)

Greek Catholicism had been steadily losing ground to Orthodoxy. Instead of attempting to improve, the Catholic Church became more doctrinaire and authoritarian and indulged in an extraordinary number of internal disputes.

Farmers weren't doing much better. In the previous Parliament, the farmers' representatives in the Progressive Party had voted with the Liberals, thus succeeding in getting a few concessions for farmers. When the Liberals had their own majority, having absorbed the Progressives, they no longer pretended to care about farmers.

The UFA retained power in Alberta, winning 43 out of 60 seats in the election of June 1926. In 1925, Greenfield had been succeeded by J.E. Brownlee as premier. The membership no longer had enough power to protest a lawyer's leading the farmers' party.

In fact, the U.F.A. in 1926 and 1930 represented a status quo, "business as usual" government defending a competent administration record against discredited opposition parties. (Trofimenkoff, 1972: 151)

The system of constituency autonomy was converted into one of cabinet control. Brownlee completed the transformation of the UFA into any other political party, with all power being held by the Cabinet.

The Canadian Labour Party disappeared after 1927 when the AFL ordered its unions in Canada either to withdraw their support of the party or be expelled. Probably the only positive result of all this farmer/labour parliamentary politicking was the limited old age pensions granted in 1926.

## A Desirable Class of Immigrants

My mother has been crippled for over ten years. At first she lived on welfare which was increased to \$120 a month. Now she gets an old age pension of over \$200 a month. She's never had it so good, but she is not, of course satisfied. She wishes she were young again, she wishes she could walk. She would like to get a job. If she could walk, she told me several years ago, she would get a job and maybe earn as much as \$250 a month! She would learn things, if she had a job. She would learn to speak English, she told me. She might even learn to run an elevator.

An elevator? I said in amazement. Why would you want to learn that? It might be useful, she said. All knowledge is useful.

Buy why an elevator?  
 To go up and down in.  
 Up and down what?  
 Anything.

But you don't learn how to run an elevator. Everyone knows how. You just push buttons.

How do you know which buttons to push? You think you're so smart because you know things like that. If I could walk, I would get a job and learn too. Mr. Student says he's been around. But where has he been and what does he know? He doesn't even know how to run an elevator!

Mr. Student is over 80 years old, arthritic and more frail every year, and now he will never learn about elevators. Nor will my mother.

My mother and father came to Canada as farm labourers in 1928. My mother was 19 years old, and she had already been through a world war, a civil war, and two famines.

On the train across Canada everyone cried! They had never seen such a wilderness of muskeg and bush as northern Ontario. People were sorry they had come, and they wept across Canada. Except my parents, they tell me. They were playing cards. A Ukrainian Czech came up to them and asked why they weren't crying like everyone else. My father hurled the cards across the room in a characteristic gesture.

Why should we cry? he demanded. People are afraid it will be worse than where we came from. But what could be worse than the *pahn's* Poland? We have nothing to lose.

In the long run, of course, he was right. Canada was a developing society, not a stagnating victim of a series of imperialists, as was the country they left behind. But in the short run, he was wrong. They had never had to work so hard in the Old Country and they didn't have the same kind of racism to deal with. They did have something to lose—their health, and their hope for a better life.

My mother and father were part of a large number of farm workers who were imported between 1896 and the Second World War. They came from a "non-preferred" country, which meant that only farm workers and domestic labourers were allowed. My father says his hands were examined a dozen times before he was permitted to come. My mother tells of one man whose hands weren't suitably calloused and work-worn. The other immigrants advised him to rub his hands with brick and sand, which he did for several days, in order to pass inspection.

My mother and father were required to buy a train ticket to Winnipeg, along with their steamship ticket, and were not allowed off anywhere along the way. From Winnipeg, they went to Lamont, as it was suggested to them that there were jobs there.

Why did you decide to come to Canada? I asked my mother.

Because we were poor, that's why. There's a saying when we play

cards now and someone has a good hand, we say, well now I don't need America! Those who were signing up to be farmers had to go directly to the land, and were not allowed to work first. We signed up as farm labourers because we had borrowed the money for the fare.

The first farmer they worked for was Hrinko Timchuk. They were paid \$2.50 a day; \$1.50 for my father and \$1.00 for Mother. My father spent 12 hours a day clearing bush. The only available equipment was an axe. The farm husband sometimes worked along with his hired hand. The farm wife spent her whole day cooking and cleaning and rarely went outside the house.

My mother fed the pigs in the morning, milked five cows, separated the milk, washed the separator, then repeated the whole thing in the evening. In between, she picked roots on newly-broken land. Her main problem on this job was learning to milk in the Canadian fashion, with the fist rather than fingers. Probably in the Old Country they milked like that because cows didn't give much milk. Peasants were lucky if they got enough to eat themselves, let alone good feed for their cow.

They worked for this farmer until the bush was cleared, which took about two months. The farmer may have kept them on longer if my father had known how to handle an axe better, but in addition, my mother injured her employer's aesthetic taste by dipping her fingers in the milk to soften the cow's udder. They were not told if they had done something wrong, only that the job was ended.

Next they worked for Wasyl Tychkowski, where they were also paid \$2.50 a day. They picked roots, stooked, milked eight cows, and so on. Mother learned to stook real good and was as good as any man, but they didn't pay women as much. Wasyl Tychkowski's parents had been among the earliest Ukrainian immigrants in Canada. When they died, they left their son four quarters of land and were themselves buried on the farm. The grave gave my mother the creeps.

In summer, they worked from sunup until sundown. One day they finished before the sun went down and came to the house, and the boss was angry at them. They should have sat out there by the stooks and not told him they were finished.

There were three other workers. The workers slept in tents or haylofts and weren't given enough to eat. Tychkowska would deal out one egg, one potato, one slice of bread, one slice of meat to each person and that was all. Tychkowski's little boy watched every mouthful and counted how much of everything the workers ate. Mother milked the cows so she could drink some of the milk and get along that way, but my father was always hungry. They had to use their own pennies to buy bread if they got a chance to go to town. My father told mother to steal him food when she was in the house washing the separator, but she couldn't because Tychkowska was always watching her.

One time the wife went away to pick berries for five days, and then the husband did the cooking. He brought sandwiches out to the field with the bread cut in thick slabs instead of proper slices. For once they had enough to eat. Forgive me for not cutting the bread nicely, Tychkowski apologized.

They complained about being hungry, and Tychkowska said to wait until the ducks were ready for slaughter and there would be more meat then. But the devil himself would have starved waiting for those ducks.

The Slovak worker strained himself once and was sick for two weeks. He lay in the grainery recovering. Once a day the boss lady would put a few potatoes and an egg in a bowl and give it to her little boy to take out to him. One Sunday, which was their day off, my father went to town for some bread, and my mother picked wild raspberries. She picked and ate a whole bunch herself, then took some to the sick man in the grainery.

Oy, girl, I'll never forget your generosity, the poor man said.

My mother had to keep looking over her shoulder to see that my father didn't see her doing this, otherwise he'd have accused her of having an affair with the sick man. Jealousy was a sickness my father had, but (as with most men's illnesses) it was my mother who suffered the consequences.

One day when my father was in town, he got them another job. They weren't sure if they were allowed to change jobs, so they tied their meager belongings in a rag and ran away over the fields.

This job was with Tilson, who was a schoolteacher as well as a farmer. Here they got enough to eat, but it wasn't their kind of food. Everything was too sweet. But they didn't have to put sugar on their porridge and could avoid foods baked with sugar in them. Tilson's stepmother did the cooking at first.

Tilson was some kind of Baptist preacher as well as a teacher and farmer, so he was away all day. They not only got enough to eat, but they didn't have to work so hard, since there wasn't any direct supervision. Eventually his mother went away to Edmonton and got married, though she must have been near 70. (He wasn't very good to her because she was only his stepmother, my mother says, but he probably wouldn't have been good to his own mother either.)

After that my mother did the cooking. She made *borsch* and good food like that. She had seen how other farmers fed their workers and told Tilson to buy some prunes. He came back with two pounds, which wasn't even enough for one meal. Don't give them prunes for breakfast, he said, and my mother told him not to be so cheap. Father was constantly poking her in the ribs and telling her not to talk back to the boss.

My parents were paid \$75 a month in the summer and \$25 a month in the winter plus room and board. Since they were entirely responsible for



the farm, my mother was bitter about the large amount of work they did for a small amount of money, but she couldn't persuade my father to complain about it. Tilson had learned to speak Ukrainian, so he wasn't a bad guy, and he also tried to teach the workers English. During that year, my mother learned the only English she was ever to know.

Tilson owned five quarters of land (800 acres) and most of the time had only two workers. He owned eight horses and over 100 pigs. In the spring, 72 calves were born, though only two cows had to be milked. My mother cooked, cleaned, fed the pigs, milked the cows, picked roots, stoked, stacked bundles, and so on. My father looked after the horses, plowed, sowed, harvested, stoked, cut hay, etc. They worked six days a week, but that only meant that on Sunday they didn't work in the fields. Even on Sunday, the animals had to be fed and the cows milked.

My father and Lucuk went to look for a homestead in the Peace River Country in 1929.

After my father left, there were two English workers hired, named Tom and Joe. They were paid the same wage in winter as my parents. They figured they were lucky to get that much, as it was a privilege to be fed and housed through the winter. They said it was much worse in England, but although they were grateful to be in Canada, they were homesick for England. Joe was quite nice-looking, even if he was small and skinny; one of the Mayakowsky girls wanted to marry him, but he wouldn't have her.

Tilson married John Anderson's eldest daughter. She died a tragic death a few years later. Tilson gave their baby to old Mrs. Anderson to raise. I'm sorry to have caused you so much trouble in your old age, he said to her.

He prayed a lot, my mother said, like all them crazy baptists, and tried to make us pray along with him. So when he was saying prayers, your crazy father bowed his head but I would bang dishes around and set things on the table. Your head must be filled with straw, Tilson would say angrily.

They worked for his father-in-law too. There wasn't enough to eat. She had all these fancy dishes. She would put a few thin slices of bread on a silver tray and then cut them into quarters. It was just enough for one mouthful. More bread, everyone said. That's all the conversation there ever was at the meal table. More bread. It's possible they didn't know any better because they were English. One fall during threshing there were about five workers at Anderson's and they all quit at once. He went to the police to complain about all his workers quitting at threshing time. When the police came to investigate, the workers told them there wasn't enough to eat. They said she put pretty dishes all over the table, but there wasn't anything to eat.

We didn't work as hard on our own homestead as we worked for those

accursed farmers, my mother said. On our own homestead at least it was for ourselves.

It was while in Lamont that my mother found out about this "Mrs" business. In the Old Country they at least let you keep your own first name, although your second name was your father's and the third your husband's. But here they told her she had no name of her own and was called "Mrs. Makar Potrebenko." Don't I exist any more? she asked bitterly.



**6**

# **The Depression**



# Irene Berezowski\*

Irene Berezowski's family was from Tarnopol, ten miles from Lviv. Her father was conscripted into the Austrian army in 1914 when she was seven years old. Ukrainian conscripts were sent to the front before others and her father was captured by Russians and sent to Siberia where prisoners lived under terrible conditions of cold and hunger. He escaped, but the privations had been too much, and died in 1920, shortly after returning home.

Before the father's conscription, the family had been at a reasonable economic level. They owned a cow and a horse, which the Russian army took away. They managed to hide some grain by burying it, but everything else they owned was taken away by the two armies, as was everything the other villagers owned. All able men were conscripted. Only crippled horses and old men were left behind.

After the war, the area which had been part of the Austro-Hungarian empire, was taken over by Poland. The Poles were even more repressive than the Austrians had been. They allowed no Ukrainian schools, and only boys were allowed to go to Polish schools, so Berezowskaya's formal education consists of one year of Austrian school.

Since they were orphans, all the children had to go to work. At the age of 11, Berezowskaya cared for the priest's children. Later, the work became harder and she had to go to the *pahn's* farmstead. She is one of the few people who didn't work as hard after she came to Canada. That's because, upon the advice of friends, she signed up as a domestic labourer rather than a farm labourer.

Her mother's sister, who was already in Edmonton, sent her an affidavit, and Berezowskaya came to Canada in 1930. Those who had affidavits could go directly to the place where the relative lived. Those without had to go where they were sent.

In Halifax, they were greeted by a well-dressed man they presumed to be a government agent. He took them to a restaurant and told them they could have whatever they wanted, but they didn't know what kind of food was eaten here, let alone what it was called. So he ordered for them, and they got an excellent meal of meat, potatoes and salad.

Then he escorted them to Montreal. In Montreal, they were loaded on a truck like cattle and taken to the railway station, in this case the CNR. There the agent bought them some food for the road; bread and tinned fish and a few other things, and that was the last they saw of him. Those with affidavits were free to walk around in Montreal. The others were locked in a room. Some girls and boys managed to run away here. It was

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\* (Personal Interview, Edmonton, June 1973)

the same in Winnipeg. There, two more girls ran away, leaving all their belongings behind.

In Edmonton Berezowskaya stayed with her aunt and uncle for a few weeks. They had been in Canada for some time already, and the uncle had a job working for the city—putting tar on the streets.

Having rested up and looked over her new surroundings, Berezowskaya set about looking for a job. She was told the sisters in the cathedral on 97th Street were looking for two women to whitewash the classrooms. She applied for the job and was hired at \$15 a month. In the Old Country they had been paid in kind and not money, so this seemed to her a reasonable amount. Since classes were not over yet, she was set to work weeding the garden.

The schoolgirls often came to talk to her while she was weeding, pretending to be helping her with the garden.

Are you really going to whitewash the classrooms for \$15 a month? they asked.

Yes.

Are you so stupid? Sister Maria is bragging all over about the cheap labour she found!

The Sisters were Christians and would extract your soul if they could. Berezowskaya was too nervous to ask the nuns for more money, but the girls kept nagging her about it and telling her that such work paid \$35 a month. Finally, she went to the head Sister and said whitewashing was hard work and she wanted \$30 a month. The Sister said all right, so then Berezowskaya was sorry she hadn't asked for more.

The whitewashing took two women seven weeks, since the halls had to be done as well as the classrooms. It was really heavy work. One day when Berezowskaya was doing the top of the hallway, she fell—ladder, whitewash, and all—and hurt her right arm and shoulder. A nun sympathized with her, but instead of telling her to rest, said: Now you must whitewash with your left arm. Berezowskaya thought some unpleasant peasant curses but didn't say anything.

A father's cousin who lived in Edmonton tried to telephone her at the cathedral but was told she didn't work there. She went to visit him one Sunday, and he was angry the nuns hadn't let him speak to her. Also by this time her fingers were burned by the lime, and she had her hands wrapped in bandages. The cousin got her a job with a Jewish family in Lamont. At first she was paid \$12 a month, then it was lowered to \$10. She worked there from July 1930 to 1933.

She didn't get days off and didn't even know there was such a thing. She did the cooking, housecleaning, washed and ironed clothes (there was a washing machine), and she carried the water. There was no running water in the house, so she walked one block with pails of water. On Sundays if the family went out, she might go and visit someone or

have someone to the house.

In May 1933 she married Berezowski, who had a shoe shop. At that time she was working in Edmonton. The family she worked for lived in a 14 room house, and she was paid \$15 a month. They owned a store on 101st Avenue. Because they were rich and there was nothing for rich people to spend their money on during the Depression, the wife went to Russia for a visit and hired a housekeeper for the time she was away. There were, besides the husband and five children, the wife's parents, a cousin and two children, making twelve people all together. The cousin did all the cooking.

Berezowskaya did the washing, again with a machine. On washdays she started work at 5 a.m. When the clothes were hung out there was ironing and cleaning to do. That was the most work. The floor had to be scrubbed with a scrub brush on hands and knees and then waxed. In the hallways there was a rug which had to be swept regularly. After supper, until 10 p.m. she mended and did other work she hadn't finished during the day. The family was always having guests, which made more work.

Still, she didn't work as hard in Canada as in the Old Country, and if someone had given her a free ticket home, she would not have gone. She was making more money than in the Old Country, but the requirements were different. She had to wear shoes every day, so she had to own two pairs of shoes—one for work and another for Sundays and holidays. In the Old Country only one pair was needed.

Berezowski gave up his shoe shop and bought a farm 11 miles east of Barrhead. It had previously been owned by a black man who gave up after building a shack and clearing 50 acres of land. By the time they moved to the farm, the Berezowskis had an 18 month old son.

On the farm Berezowski worked at clearing more land. Berezowskaya fed the pigs, milked the cows, cooked, and tried to look after the shack, which had only one room. The floor boards were about half an inch apart, so that things the little boy was playing with would fall through the cracks, and he would look around in bewilderment. The whole house leaked except for the space where the bed was. Whenever it rained she put out all the pans and pails she owned to catch the drips. In the house, besides the bed, was a table, stove and a separator. At first the little boy slept with them, but later, when there was another baby, they bought a Winnipeg couch for him. The outside of the house was *hlina*, with whitewash on the inside. The ceiling was made of crooked beams and the house was so low most men couldn't stand up straight. They lived in it for seven years.

Like many other homesteaders, the Berezowskis were beset by a series of tragedies. They borrowed money to buy two horses, one of which was a pregnant mare. Both the mare and the colt died. In the seven years they lived on that farm, they were haled out three times. Berezowskaya was sick most of the time, had miscarriages, and required



surgery. They gave up, and Berezowski went to work in a shoe shop in Barrhead. Later, he went back to farming again and blamed his wife for his failures. If he had a proper helpmate, he said, he would have been successful.

When the children were grown up and on their own, she left him. She lined up a job before telling her daughter what she had done, so the father wouldn't hold his daughter responsible. With money she had saved from selling raspberries, she hired a neighbour boy to drive her to town.

In 1966, at the age of 59, Berezowskaya was a domestic labourer again, and again with a Jewish family in Edmonton. Things hadn't changed much. She was paid \$80 and board and room, which, considering how much prices have changed, may be less than she had earned during the Depression. But she no longer had to work after supper, and she got half a day off on Saturday and every other Sunday off. They were good people, and she worked there until she had a heart attack, at which time her employers looked after her until she was well enough to live on her own. She now lives in an apartment for old age pensioners, has many friends, and laughs a lot. Quite often, as they all do, she speaks with bitterness of the exceeding harshness of her life.

## Drought, Debt, and Protest 1930-1931

In July 1929, unemployed workers were already demonstrating at the Parliament buildings in Edmonton demanding work. By September, unemployment was critical. By Christmas, money was scarce and farm prices dropped. Ukrainians and other immigrants were the first to be unemployed, because they did seasonal work and because of the prejudice against them, prejudice that was to grow in virulence as the depression wore on.

In 1930, there were about 400,000 unemployed across the country. Eighty per cent of the miners at Drumheller were laid off. In 1931 there were 750,000 unemployed men in Canada (women weren't registered), and 600,000 farmers on relief. 14,753 of Edmonton's population of 79,197 were on relief. Demonstrators demanded jobs or government assistance. Their demands were ignored; the demonstrators were beaten by police, jailed, deported. In 1931, 720 people were arrested for protesting, of whom 155 were jailed.

Unemployment was nothing new. Each wave produced vehement protests which eventually subsided. The government supposed this one

would also go away by itself. But it didn't. Capitalism had again collapsed and would only be revived by preparations for another war.

The situation of farmers deteriorated rapidly. In the 1920's, the farmers had wanted to change things.

After 1930 the western farmers were reduced to asking for relief instead of reform. (Macpherson, 1953: 9)

The drought was worst in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Although there was no real drought in the Ukrainian settlements of central Alberta in October 1919, the *Vegreville Observer* reported that many people were suffering unsightly skin infections, said to be due to the tremendous amount of dust in the atmosphere. All through the 30's, Saskatchewan dust blew across Alberta. The extreme drought was in Saskatchewan, part of Manitoba, and the part of southern Alberta included in the Palliser Triangle.

The main problem in Alberta was debt and interest, and it was only partly due to the stock market crash.

Equally important contributing factors were post-war inflation, the high cost of mechanization, exorbitant interest rates, and the boom-bust-boom grain prices that kept the rural West in a turmoil throughout the 1920's. (Gray, 1968: 2)

Between 1926 and 1930, farmers had bought tractors, trucks and other farm machinery on credit. The price of wheat fluctuated greatly—only by expanding the acreage sown could the farmers hope to make a living. They went into debt expecting that increased production would pay for machinery and more land. But from 1930 the price of wheat went down below the cost of production and stayed there. Prices of beef and pork were also low, sometimes lower than the cost of freight—and Alberta farmers have always paid the highest freight rates.

The UGG and the Wheat Pool had overpaid for the 1929 crop, not expecting the price to drop so drastically in 1930. They had to borrow money and this debt was not paid off until 1947. In other words, these "co-operatives" were simply businesses, dependent on the vagaries of the capitalist marketplace. Nor did anyone else care about farmers.

Hon. Frank Oliver told a Toronto audience that the only hope for the coming year was that we might have a poor crop. Mr. Oliver was not being facetious. His statement was not made without regard to the facts of the situation in Canada. But what a commentary on the stupidity of our social system. According to Mr. Oliver times are bad in Canada because of a surplus of wheat. In other words people are hungry in Canada today because we have too much food.

(*Alberta Labor News*. March 22, 1930)

Premier J.E. Brownlee and the UFA government were returned to

power in 1930. The new government included two new Ukrainian MLA's. Isadore Goretsky, a teacher, was in the Legislature from 1930 to 1935. Peter A. Miskew was later to cross the floor to join the Liberals. The UFA kept roughly the same percentage of the popular vote—46 per cent in 1926 and 39 per cent in 1930.

Federally, MacKenzie King and the Liberals had been in power when the Depression began. King refused to admit there was any unemployment and did not think it mattered if there was. He supposed the provinces were only asking for assistance because they were run by Conservatives, and that the Depression was just an opposition plot to discredit him.

As a result, R.B. Bennett and the Conservatives were elected in July 1930. Bennett, a millionaire and a corporation lawyer, also had difficulty believing there was a depression. After all, he didn't know anyone who was poor. Bennett saw his job as protecting banks and big business. There had already been a long series of recessions (a constant feature of capitalism) so there was no reason to suppose this was any different. Those in power needed only to wait it out and in the meantime find a suitable scapegoat to blame everything on. The low price of wheat was blamed on the Russians purportedly dumping wheat, destroying the world prices.

Anti-communism didn't help the people. While there was little starvation as such, the relief rations "... were not enough to live on and not enough to die on." (Judge Stubbs, quoted by Allen, 1961: 299) People reacted in various ways. Some committed suicide. A great many stole grain. Others turned to religion and all kinds of crazy fundamentalist preachers gathered followers.

The leaders of the AFL unions said strikes couldn't be won during an economic crisis and that nothing could be done about wage cuts. Some even opposed the idea of unemployment insurance. The best they could think of to do about the crisis was pass resolutions about relief for the unemployed. The Alberta Federation of Labour wanted unemployed women as well as men to be registered. They also asked for laws to prevent white "girls" from working in Chinese restaurants. They still believed in electoral politics and D.K. Knott, a labour man, was elected mayor of Edmonton in 1931, with predictable nil results.

Not everyone gave way to despair in its various forms. Some organized. The Communists denounced both the TLC and ACCL unions and formed the Workers Unity League for those disillusioned with American unions. It was going to form industrial unions. However, there was another desperate need—for relief, and for organizing the unemployed. The League grew at a time when others said it was impossible to do anything. It claimed to have won some wage increases and to have organized new places. Beginning in 1931, the Communists organized a National

Unemployed Workers Association, with membership of up to 16,000. It was affiliated with the Workers' Unity League. Some cities had local councils which fought against evictions and tried to help people get on relief.

The Workers' Unity League demanded non-contributory unemployment insurance, a seven-hour day, five-day week. They were against deportation and for the defense of the Soviet Union. They asked for equal pay for equal work for women and young people.

The correct line delivered to the Canadian Communist Party for the first half of the 30's was that independent unions should be formed. As the conditions in all countries are not the same, this policy may have been disastrous for some as its abrupt reversal five years later was in Canada. But for the time of their existence in Canada, these unions were effective.

In 1930, the Farmers' Unity League was formed, also with Communist inspiration. This gave new life to the Communist Party, which had been losing membership at an alarming rate until then. The Farmers' Unity League was against foreclosure, evictions, sales tax. They demanded a minimum income of \$1,000 a year for every working farmer. They wanted free education and free medical and hospital care for the poor, old age pensions at 60. In addition, they were for unity between farmers and workers, workers' control of industry, and against imperialist war and intervention in the USSR.

There were communist and anti-communist meetings throughout the Ukrainian settlements. Carl Axelson spoke at the Ukrainian Farmer Labour Temple at a meeting of the Farmers' Unity League and pointed out that little or no Russian wheat had been dumped on the world market. Farmers' Unity League meetings were held in Andrew, Willingdon, Hairy Hill, Two Hills. The movement was quickly gathering strength.

In January 1931, Premier Brownlee addressed a meeting in Vegreville, and finding that his audience were mostly Ukrainian, stressed that the law must be obeyed and people should cease disturbing. He said that wheat prices were low because farmers had over-produced so it was all their own fault and they should be quiet about it. He said they must still pay taxes because the government needed revenue. Representatives of the Ukrainian middle class—Goretsky, Miskew, Luchkowich—also addressed the meeting, asking Ukrainians to obey the government.

The Ukrainian Self-Reliance League pronounced curses on the Farmers' Unity League and assured everyone Ukrainians weren't communists. It was an assurance that needed to be repeated often and frantically over the years.

For years, Alex Hryhorovich and Vladimir Kupchenko toured the Ukrainian settlements making anti-Soviet speeches. If the Communist Party of Canada had been independent, these speeches—describing the suffering of Ukrainians in the Soviet Union—would have been nothing

more than a diversion, but the Canadian communists placed themselves in the position of living or dying with the Soviet Union and had to defend it continuously.

In 1931, a delegation of 16 men including John Boychuk and Ivan Naviziwsky went to visit the Soviet Union. They returned with glowing reports, perhaps because they saw the fate of Canadian communism tied to apparent success in the U.S.S.R.

Carl Axelson had been an important person in the UFA, then transferred his energies to the Farmers' Unity League. In 1932, he hung himself in his barn at Bingville, near Medicine Hat.

Alex Hryhorovich and Vladimir Kupchenko spoke for three hours in February 1931 to 700 people at the Catholic Church in Mundare and persuaded the meeting to pass a resolution requesting the government to prohibit Communist literature and deport foreign radicals. Ukrainian Communists, for all their Marxist analysis, were more incensed by these Ukrainian nationalists than by Canadian capitalists and their lackey politicians, supposing these resolutions were the prime cause of the repression.

Vladimir Kupchenko assured a gathering in Kiew that Taras Shevchenko, the Ukrainian's beloved poet, had not been a communist. Kupchenko and others formed a group called United Loyalists of Canada at Two Hills, a group which doesn't appear to have done anything besides getting formed. Peter Svarich assured all readers of the *Vegreville Observer* that only five per cent of Ukrainians were communists.

A communist meeting in the Labour-Farmer Hall in Vegreville was disrupted by anti-communists throwing eggs and breaking windows. Wasyl Cherniwchan and John Prystupa were charged. They were found guilty when two other men testified to having broken the windows in question. All four men were charged with perjury but this charge was dismissed by the judge who would not allow evidence from the communists who would not swear on the Bible.

"We," he said, referring to the British stock in the country, "are still the bosses here." (*Vegreville Observer*. April 15, 1931)

This was part of the campaign by those in power to deny their responsibility for the economic crisis. Those in power expected to lose nothing during the economic crisis—all the sacrifices were to be made by workers and farmers. When those workers and farmers protested, they were denounced as communists, foreigners, agitators, etc. The purpose of calling people names is to justify the use of force against them. People like ourselves can't be beaten up without protest, so the government first had to divide people against each other to identify and isolate a scapegoat. Everything was blamed on foreign agitators.

In accordance with the propaganda that the Depression would disappear if the agitators disappeared, the Communist Party was declared illegal in November 1931. Seven men were jailed under Section

98 of the Criminal Code: Tim Buck, John Boychuk, Matthew Popowich, Malcolm Bruce, Sam Cohen (Carr), Thomas A. Ewen, Amos T. Hill, Tom Cacic.

Thomas Ewen was the secretary of the Workers' Unity League. Amos Hill was a Finnish communist leader. Matthew Popowich had been born in the Ukraine in 1890 and was trained as a teacher. He came to Canada in 1911 and worked for Ukrainian communist newspapers. As national secretary of the ULTA, he attended the founding meeting of the Communist Party. Tom Cacic was the leader of the Czechoslovakian branch of the Canadian Communist Party.

Cacic was sentenced to five years imprisonment of which he served two and was then deported. The other seven were sentenced to two years for seditious conspiracy in plotting to overthrow the state and five years for being members of an organization which was declared illegal under Section 98. The seditious conspiracy conviction was nullified on appeal and they served about three years of the rest.

The police thought that if the communist leaders were imprisoned, the Workers Unity League would stop organizing and protests against unemployment would cease. This did not happen. Instead, there were additional protests about the jailing.

Much more successful as a terror technique was deporting the poor and unemployed; thousands of these were sent away without protest. Nobody knew who they were. At a municipal meeting on December 12, 1931, a Mr. Uluschak from Mundare saved himself and his family from deportation by paying \$5 of his hospital bill. Many people didn't have \$5. As well as a terror technique, deportation was a means of cutting down on municipal relief costs. In 1930, 4,000 people were deported, half of them British. Between 1930 and 1932, 15,368 people were deported, 60 per cent of them for being poor.

In April 1931, the Vegreville Chamber of Commerce voted to deport:

All persons not having acquired citizenship who may be guilty of making seditious utterances, or who are engaged in attempting to create distrust in, or disrespect for, Canadian institutions.  
(Vegreville *Observer*. April 29, 1931)

A venerable Canadian institution of the time was poverty, but the members of the Chamber of Commerce were not poor, and the rich chose not to notice poverty, to ignore suffering, and to accuse the dying of disrespect.

Judge Dubuc of Vegreville refused to grant citizenship to a Ukrainian communist because "...we want to leave things as they are and not try to change them." (Vegreville *Observer*. January 7, 1931) Things as they were, were pretty grim but only for the poor, and Judge Dubuc was not poor.

An early environmentalist proclaimed his pleasure with the depression

in the *Vegreville Observer*. He was pleased about the decrease in tractor sales, and the increased sales of the raw materials for cooking and sewing. Women were being put back in their place. During the 1920's women, having won the right to vote, demanded all sorts of things including decent wages. The economic situation meant that women lost what small gains they had made during their fifty year rebellion. In eastern sweatshops, women and children were hired at less than the minimum wage for more than the maximum number of hours.

When my mother was over one afternoon and we were churning, she said, "This is what I used to do 30 years ago. What went wrong?" I said everything. I said since we had no electricity I separated cream by hand, and because we had no money I baked all my bread and John mended his own harness, right there at the kitchen table by lamplight, and if the cultivator shoes broke, he made new ones, and he'd learned to shoe the work horses and I was doing laundry by hand because we couldn't afford a gas-operated washer, and Lord God, that was hard work, and I was telling my mother this and she said, "It will all work out in the end. You'll be a better woman for it." God, I was never closer to killing a person in my life than right then. (Broadfoot, 1973: 277)

There were, however, a few compensations. In 1931, Maria Hawrysh divorced her husband; this made history as Vegreville's first divorce.

## 1932: Agitation, Deportation

In 1932 there were one million people unemployed in Canada. A survey done in November showed there were roughly 9,200 people on relief in Edmonton and Calgary out of a population of about 80,000 in each city. The cost per person for relief in Edmonton was \$7.05 per month. Relief recipients were given no cash, only vouchers.

The lowest price for wheat was in 1932 when it was 38 cents a bushel in Winnipeg, or about 20 cents to the farmer. In spite of this, there was a back-to-the-land movement, only part of which was voluntary. People were refused relief if they didn't move out of town. The Department of Immigration and Colonization hadn't anything to do since the curtailment of immigration, so they moved people to farms with the help, as before, of the CPR and CNR. From October 1930 to March 1932, the Department estimated that they had moved 50,000 people back to farms.

In 1931 there had been talk of a pay cut for the MLA's but it was only talk. In 1932, the UFA convention discussed debt moratoriums but were

persuaded to leave it up to the government, which did nothing.

The Liberals and Conservatives cared even less about the depression—they weren't hungry, ragged and humiliated. R. B. Bennett was asked by officials of the four western provinces for additional aid for relief. His reply was to decree that as of September 30, 1932 all transients would be eliminated from freight trains. He also promised camps for single unemployed men.

There was a hunger march of the unemployed in Edmonton early in the year. The Legislature adjourned from debating unemployment to hear 15 delegates from the unemployed marchers. Jan Lakeman and M. Stewart on behalf of the unemployed demanded emergency relief in cash, and public works like roads and hospitals where the unemployed could get jobs at decent pay. They also asked for a seven-hour day, five-day week, with no reduction of wages for those who had jobs. In view of the million unemployed, these demands seem excessively modest, but they were ignored. Because most roads were blocked by drifting snow, there were only about 450 marchers.

The unemployed were required to work at various kinds of jobs for relief. For example, in 1931 relief gangs built a road from Mercoal to Coalspur. In 1934 the unemployed were made to dig a road with pick and shovel from Cadomin to Luscar. They were paid 20 cents a day.

There were work camps set up for men described as "single homeless persons." They were given food and paid 10 cents to 20 cents a day for clearing land and cutting wood. The camps were run by the army and a maximum of 40 cents per person per day was allowed for food, clothing, shelter, fuel. It is not surprising that there was trouble in the camps. The western provincial representatives conferring in Calgary discussed deporting radicals, supposing that ordinary people would not complain about being hounded and imprisoned for the crime of being poor.

It is declared that difficulties now experienced in handling the unemployed situation in camps is largely the fault of agitators and among them are a number of foreigners. (Edmonton *Bulletin*. March 11, 1932)

The Alberta Provincial Police had started duty on March 1, 1917. Most of them were former RCMP types and they were largely involved in trying to enforce prohibition. When the depression began, their duty was to chase down the ardent agitator.

Labour unrest, especially in the coal mining areas, was a special concern to the government and therefore to the A.P.P. "Red" scares, threats of violence and large scale disruptions all contributed to the decision to involve policemen, both federal and provincial, in the activities of organized labour. (*Alberta Historical Review*. Autumn, 1973)



In spite of the very satisfactory beating job done by the A.P.P., the RCMP wished to widen their power and offered the provinces contracts which were cheaper than running a provincial police force. The provinces disbanded their police forces in the interests of the economy, and some cities did also. The Alberta Provincial Police ceased to exist April 1, 1932.

Two "Calgary Russians," one of whom was named Ivan Kortzey, offered to purchase the Calgary police force. Since it was all about money, the two men understood they could buy them "so much down, like a car, and so much a month." They planned to arm the police with sabres and march them up and down Calgary streets.

The other police had a lot more important work to do. A group of women in Coalhurst were given six-month suspended sentences for unlawful assembly. They were: Mary Wasinske, Grace Horchuk, Minnie Tymchuk, Effie Boychuk, Hanna Formos, Nancy Slemko, Sophie Hlashko, Tessie Yakiwcack, Rosie Boychuk. Until 1928, the mining company had allowed anyone to take coal from the dump; then it sold the rights to a company which was going to sell this dump coal. The husbands of these women were working only one day a week at the mines so they didn't make enough money for the family to buy coal. The women went to the dump, and were charged with unlawful assembly.

The youngest of these nine women is a girl of seventeen; a pregnant woman of eighteen and one of over fifty were also arrested. These women refused to freeze and decided to walk up to that coal heap and get a few chunks of coal rather than allow the kiddies to freeze to death. The upholders of the profit system arrested these women, of course putting a higher value on a few chunks of coal than on the health of the miners and their families. (*The Canadian Miner*. February 10, 1932)

The Mine Workers Union of Canada, which had affiliated with the Workers Unity League, went on strike at Corbin against a wage reduction. There was a massive protest march led by women and children. The police had a tractor driven through the march "followed by 50 policemen who attacked the crowd with leaded riding crops." (*She Named It Canada*: 60) Twenty-five strikers and 16 policemen were injured. Seventeen strikers were arrested. But the strike was not broken and in the end, the owners shut down the mine forever rather than negotiate with the workers.

In Canmore, miners won a strike against UMWA check-off in February 1932. In April, 1,400 MWUC miners went on strike to oppose wage reductions. The RCMP escorted scabs through the picket lines and beat men and women. In a few places, the MWUC was successful, but most wage reductions were carried out.

In general, the record of the years 1930 to 1935 in coal mining is a

monotonous recital of dozens of strikes and arrests in the hundreds. Strikers were arrested, not just for violence, but for such minor reasons as "violation of the I.D.I. Act" (i.e., going on strike without first applying for conciliation). In many cases, the purpose of the arrests was revealed by the withdrawal of charges as soon as the strikes were ended. (Jamieson, 1968: 221)

The arrests and beatings were tolerated because they were largely of people called foreigners. These people were defined by capitalist agents as non-human and responsible for communism, and maybe responsible for the depression as well. There were no protests when Ukrainians were beaten. It was all supposed to get rid of those agitators. 1932 was another bad year for agitators. Every time you turned around there were more of them, and no matter how many the police terrorized, there were always more. The government made a valiant effort. The public was turned against foreigners by the government, municipal authorities, the Canadian Legion. In the fiscal year 1932-33, 7,131 persons were deported.

Ivan Sembay and eight other men were tried by an immigration tribunal and found guilty of plotting against the government of Canada. They were held in Halifax most of the year awaiting deportation. Applications for appeal to the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia and Canada were turned down, as was an appeal to the Privy Council in England. John Stahlberg was deported first. In December 1932, more men were hustled aboard the German ship, Dresden. In January 1933, Don Holmes (Dan Chomicki) and Stefan Woroczyt were deported, leaving only Ivan Sembay. There were protests across Canada on his behalf; nevertheless he was deported.

Sembay originally came from Polish-occupied Halychina. He managed to escape and was given refuge in Canada. But now he was found unpalatable, for in Canada as at home, he fought against injustice. To return him to Polish-occupied Halychina would have meant certain death, and since Canada had earlier rescued him from this death, they could hardly send him back again. He was granted his last wish and deported to Russia. Two years later he died in a Russian concentration camp.

Bertram Ley, a Calgary communist and editor of the *Chinook*, was deported to England as an undesirable citizen. It should be stressed that only deportations of the prominent and popular were reported. There were thousands deported and no one knew their names and their only crime was poverty. In February 1933, the Edmonton *Bulletin* reported that 70 deportees had passed through Quebec City but no one knew who they were.

Similarly, not many of the depression-caused deaths or suicides were reported. When they were, the media pretended the depression did not exist and attributed the deaths to personal causes.

The media waxed indignant about the Lindbergh kidnapping. Hunger and suicide in one's own town was not news. The kidnapping and murder of the Lindbergh baby was news because it diverted people from thinking about solutions to their problems. Diversion was one of the media's tasks, and they did it excellently.

For farm families, a radio in working order was a categorical imperative. It broke the barrier of isolation that had held the prairie West in its grip for almost 50 years. The radio was not only entertainment, it enabled the farm people to shut themselves away from the depression itself, from the dust, and from the wind that blew night and day with its incessant, deranging whine. (Gray, 1968: 53)

The music was mostly the big band sound of Guy Lombardo, Irving Berlin, Gershwin, Rogers, Cole Porter. There were a large number of comics—Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy, Eddie Cantor, Jack Benny, Fibber McGee and Molly, Amos and Andy, Red Skelton. Then there were the soap operas. Now these people *really* had problems, not just a mere depression, and they moaned and smooched over the airwaves.

Only the very poor did not own a radio—this included a large proportion of the second wave Ukrainian immigrants.

In 1932, the Ukrainian National Federation was formed, mostly by the better-off people among the second-wave immigrants. It was a breakaway anti-communist group set up in opposition to the Ukrainian Self-Reliance League, who, they said were washed-out, made-in-Canada patriots. They claimed the first wave were too concerned with church matters and not patriotic enough, and castigated them for not sending an army to rescue the Ukraine during World War I. The Federation supported an independent, fascist Ukraine. With time, their nationalist fervour faded and they became more of a cultural/educational group. They did not send an army to rescue the Ukraine during World War II.

## The Hunger March: 1932

The price of wheat in 1932 was about 25 cents a bushel to farmers. The province had a UFA government and the city of Edmonton, a Labour city council. Both of these bodies had been instrumental in setting up the CCF and endorsed its platform. But the response of the UFA to the depression was to cut mothers pensions by ten per cent. All workers wages were lowered by an average of ten per cent. The UFA assisted the coal

operators in the Crow's Nest Pass in smashing the Mine Workers Union of Canada and thereby lowering the miners' wages. The miners' leaders were jailed but terrorists who beat men, women and children were condoned.

In reaction to all this, a big Hunger March was planned for December 1932 by the Workers Unity League and the Farmers Unity League. While communist theory tends to consider farmers less "advanced" than workers, the militancy of Alberta farmers led, in this instance at least, to a bending of the orthodox point of view.

The Farmers of this Province because of their long experience, being composed to a very large extent of proletarian origin of the cities, were possibly more advanced culturally than in any other western province. (Pamphlet: *The Alberta Hunger-March*, p. 10)

There had been a hunger march early in the year which was not well attended because of the weather. Now another year of the depression had gone by and there was no end in sight. Another march was planned.

But the weather was bad and there were blizzards in the Crow's Nest Pass. Many of the unemployed were too poor to travel, or didn't have warm clothes. Then the farmers in the vicinity of Edmonton, who didn't have so far to come, proclaimed their support for the march. Farmers from Myrnam, Slawa, Spedden, Mundare, Vegreville, and other towns, stated their intention of marching in Edmonton.

The purpose of the march was to place certain demands before the provincial government. Among these were: cancellation of all debts, exemption of small farmers from taxation, cessation of sheriff's sales and grain seizures, cash relief for poor farmers, free medical care and all education costs at the expense of the province

The march was to be on December 20, in time to wish Premier Brownlee a Merry Christmas. Premier Brownlee said there was not to be a march and asked the RCMP for assistance in stopping it. The chief of police in Edmonton said no permit would be issued and the mayor ordered the police to prevent marchers from coming to Edmonton.

A feature of the depression was the refusal on the part of politicians and the media to admit there was a depression. Everything was just fine and if people were poor it was all their own fault.

The fact is, of course, that most of these people brought their trouble on themselves, by poor management, by improvident living, by reckless expenditure in good times, by sheer, downright laziness. (*Vegreville Observer*. December 21, 1932)

Reverend A. Chrustanka, on the other hand, didn't deny there was a depression, but he still maintained it was the people's own fault.

He showed that the world's general economic crisis was mostly due

to the fact that humanity had departed from moral principles of life. (Vegreville *Observer*. December 21, 1932)

Police stopped people on the roads to Edmonton but truckloads of people were getting into the city nevertheless, arriving by night and by unexpected routes. Food was donated by those farmers who had some and it was prepared at the Ukrainian Hall. On December 19, special squads of police were detailed to prevent the march, but more people kept arriving. They came from Willingdon, Two Hills, Mundare, Myrnam, Smoky Lake, the Crow's Nest Pass, Drumheller, the Coal Branch, Calgary, Lethbridge, and other places.

On the morning of Tuesday, December 20, city police and RCMP raided the Ukrainian Labour Temple and the Ukrainian church next to it on 96th Street. The raid was to take away the arms everybody was told communists carried around. No arms were found. What they did find was a group of women cooking turkey.

The march was to be at 2:30 that day, and the raid was just before noon. People were hassled and Waino Luchtalo was charged with assaulting a policeman. Many people were taken down to the police station for questioning. The people claimed they had been arrested but the police later denied this and said they had all come of their own free will, just for a friendly chat.

At 3 p.m., about 12,000 people gathered in the square on 99th Street for the march to the Legislative buildings. (The police later testified that there were only about 2,000 demonstrators and 7,000 to 8,000 onlookers.) The speakers told the people they had been forbidden to march, and should walk along the sidewalk. Then the police attacked.

Police batons rose and fell, skulls were cracked, men and women trampled underfoot, and the hoarse roars of an angry mob echoed for two hours in downtown streets on Tuesday afternoon when so-called "Hunger Marchers" incited by known Communist leaders, came to grips with the combined forces of R.C.M.P. policemen in Edmonton's first major "Red" clash with the forces of law and order.

Baton charges by a troop of 24 mounted policemen, reinforced by a hundred men on foot who "mopped up" behind the charge, clearing the sidewalks, left several members of the mob lying on the pavement as the police carried out their orders to break up the parade.

Thus wrote the Edmonton *Bulletin* (December 21, 1932), which was later to deny there had been any police brutality. No one was killed, perhaps because of the heavy winter clothing. After the original charge, the people attempted to re-form the parade and were again attacked. The police riot lasted from 2:30 to 5 p.m. Harry Gooding, George Poole, Max

Mohr were arrested on the speakers stand. John Gager and Peter Yakerowski were arrested later that day.

After the parade was dispersed, a delegation presented the marchers' demands to Premier Brownlee. The premier repeated that the police were acting under his orders.

The following day the police again raided the Ukrainian Hall, carrying with them 50 blank warrants. They arrested 32 men and one woman as leaders of the march, but nine of the men and the woman were released the same day.

Twelve religious organizations in and around Edmonton denied that any "true" Ukrainian had been involved in the march and said it was all a plot by the "Red International." (Edmonton *Bulletin*. December 21, 1932) The Ukrainian nationalists tried to help the police by reporting to them everyone they knew.

The prosecutor asked for the preliminary hearing to be adjourned and intimated that it had all been a dastardly plot involving a nation-wide conspiracy complete with foreign agitators. That same day, a search of cheap rooming houses resulted in the arrest of Jennie Levine and John Ornachuk.

The *Bulletin* liked the conspiracy/agitator line and pointed out that the marchers weren't hungry, having been fed at the Ukrainian Hall, and that most of them even had mittens or gloves on, if one can believe such a thing in the middle of a harsh Alberta winter. The headquarters in Toronto which was supposed to have ordered the march (and presumably, supplied the agitators) was also supposed to have as its motto: Communize the world or destroy it.

This was all part of the campaign to make communism an obscene and fearful idea which no one dared even mention, as was successfully accomplished by the 1950's. It wasn't always like that.

Few active intellectuals avoided the challenge of socialism in the early twentieth century. Whether accepted or rejected, the questions and solutions prescribed by Marx were an integral part of the debates of the day. (Weinstein, 1967: 74)

Politicians, police, judges, radio, newspapers, all took part in changing this situation so that by the 1950's, McCarthy could decree that communism was not simply an idea with which one might agree or disagree, but a subject too disgusting to be mentioned at all.

Waino Lutchalo, charged with assaulting a policeman before the march, refused to kiss the Bible or to recognize the court and was sentenced to six months with hard labour.

On December 24, Joe Gallant was arrested as a "Red" leader while applying for single men's relief. (It seems as if Reds didn't pay their

leaders much.) There were several other arrests and dismissals. Nine men were allowed out on bail provided by the Canadian Labor Defense League.

MLA's and MP's of the UFA, and the UFA executive gave general approval of the brutality with which the march was broken up. Trade unions discussed censuring Premier Brownlee but decided not to.

It is very simple to say that the provincial and civic authorities should have permitted the parade. But it must be borne in mind that both local governments are harassed by the tremendous talk of making provision for the unemployed. (*Alberta Labor News*. December 24, 1932)

And that was all the organ of the Alberta Federation of Labor had to say about the matter.

The marchers were arrested under Section 87 of the Criminal Code which prohibited unlawful assembly. The preliminary hearings opened on January 5 with 29 defendants. It opened with Constable Albert Harold Keeler of the RCMP announcing that he was a spy. He had been a member of the Communist Party from October 1930 to May 1931, while employed by the RCMP. He contended that the march was thought up by the Canadian Communist Party's eastern headquarters. He promised to have more to say at a forthcoming trial. Charges were dismissed against six of the accused, including Jenny Levine; the other 23 were remanded on \$23,000 bond for Supreme Court trial

...after evidence had been adduced by the Prosecutor Charles Becker that the program of the Communist Party, outlined in a secret "Red Bible," calls for world revolution and bloodshed. (*Edmonton Bulletin*. January 7, 1933)

This "Bible" was identified as the "Program of the Red International" which called upon workers to strike and demonstrate.

The preliminary hearing proved that the government was not so much concerned with the charge (Unlawful Assembly) as they were about victimizing men and women who were opposed to the activities of the capitalist class. (Pamphlet. p. 16)

Yet another person was arrested: R. Berlando of the East Coulee office of the Mine Workers' Union of Canada. He had been part of the delegation who met with the premier. The office was also raided and it appears to have been part of the continuing effort to destroy this union. In addition, Murdoch Clark and Stanley Pawlyk were arrested.

Peter Kassian was released because of poor health, and the case against John Nicklick was dismissed for lack of evidence. A police technical error resulted in the dismissal of the cases against Richard Lexon and Lewis Murray who had been in the Fort without bail. That left:

John Gager, George Poole, Mike Kotyk, Anton Nowakowsky, Karino Staudinger, Mike Haydiuk, Ben Swankey, Sam Rosin, Anton Woytyshyn, John Oraschuk, Peter Kyforuk, Stanley Pawlyk, Mike Nowakowsky, Max Mohr, W.M. Patterson, Alex Miller, Peter Daly, Jack Gallant, Pat Draper, Jack Sereda, Murdoch Clark, Roy Berlando, to stand trial January 25. (It should be noted that the spellings of names differ markedly in the newspapers and the pamphlet, sometimes even within the same story. I have chosen the spellings that look most reasonable to me, but am aware they are not necessarily the correct ones.)

W.R. Howson and Fred Jackson, who was an MLA for the UFA, were counsel for the accused except for George Poole who acted for himself.

The judge would not admit as evidence the statements made by the marchers without warning. This was in reference to the incident before the march when the police converged on the Ukrainian Hall. The people understood that they were arrested, but the police said they weren't and therefore, there was no need to give the customary warning. The spy, Keeler, said he had told the men to come along for questioning but hadn't said they were under arrest. The judge ruled that if a police officer says you should come along for questioning, this compels you to do so whether or not he says you are under arrest.

More cases were dropped because the only evidence against them was their own statements. These were: Wm. M. Patterson, Anton Nowakowsky, Karion Staudinger, Ben Swankey, Jack Sereda. That left 17 defendants.

Chief of Police Shute testified they had found the situation "menacing." Besides Constable Keeler, another police spy, Jacob Tatko, testified. He was a police court interpreter who had been expelled from the Communist Party in 1928 when it became known he was a spy.

Stool-pigeons, paid to spy on workers, gave evidence against these prisoners of the U.F.A. government. They "saw" banners being hoisted, speakers advocating defiance of law and order and institution of Russian rule in Canada. ...Chief Shute, like a good boy, takes the responsibility for prohibiting and smashing the parade. ...Some business men testify that they lost business on account of the Hunger March. Thank Heaven it was not on account of the depression. (Pamphlet: The Alberta Hunger-March, p. 27)

Counsel for the accused claimed that merely being at a meeting did not constitute unlawful assembly. The judge accepted this and more cases were dismissed, leaving only 12; John Gager, George Poole, Sam Rosin, Anton Woytyshyn, Stanley Pawlyk, Mike Nowakowsky, Max Mohr, Peter Daly, Jack Gallant, Pat Draper, Murdoch Clark, Roy Berlando.

These people claimed they were only there and not at all unlawfully assembled. It appears that to be part of an unlawful assembly, one must



assemble unlawfully, not just be standing around at a meeting. Howson, counsel for the accused, said the Crown hadn't even proved there had been a parade. Fifty or fewer paraders didn't need a permit, and all the rest may have been onlookers.

Mike Nowakowsky, who identified himself as a garage proprietor from Mundare, said he had parked his truck nearby in order to see what the meeting was about. He heard the speaker say there would be no parade but that people could walk along the sidewalk. The police then hit him on the head and he had to be taken away to get stitched. Several other people claimed they were just there to take pictures for their newspapers, but were not themselves part of the assembly.

Charges were withdrawn against Stanley Pawlyk. Mike Nowakowsky, Max Mohr, Sam Rosin, Jack Gallant were acquitted. After all the hullabaloo about conspiracy and bloodshed, only seven were found guilty of unlawful assembly, and the jury recommended leniency. John Gager, George Poole, Murdoch Clark, Anton Woytyshyn were sentenced to six months hard labour. Peter Daly and Pat Draper got two months, and Roy Berlando, one month.

Some of the jury were visibly surprised when the judge pronounced these sentences. (Pamphlet: *The Alberta Hunger-March*, p. 27)

In spite of the fact that the sentences were too severe, the conviction of only seven men after all the talk of a nationwide conspiracy seems somewhat anti-climactic. Perhaps the police considered that smashing the people during the march was sufficient. Maybe the trial was only intended as more anti-communist, anti-foreigner propaganda. Or perhaps the sound and fury of the trial was to drown out the obvious police brutality.

## I've Been Working On the Railroad

For a year after their arrival in Canada, my mother and father worked for farmers around Lamont, Alberta. In the fall of 1929, my father went to Vancouver; from there he went to work in a sawmill in Englewood. All the men there were laid off in December. My father went back to Vancouver to wait until the sawmill reopened. It hasn't yet.

My father had \$72 which he had earned in those three months. He and some other men got a room near Central Park. Every day he walked into the city to look for work. The streetcar cost eight cents so he walked. He mended his own boots by finding old shoes at the dump, cutting out

pieces of leather and tacking these on the boots, one on the inside, one on the outside. There was no work. At the end of three months, he had squandered the whole \$72 he had earned at the sawmill.

In the spring, Wasyl Hook wrote him to come up to Nelson and get a job on the railway. My father jumped his first freight. That was 1930 and the freights were crowded with unemployed. During the winter some people were able to get relief in Vancouver, but in the spring everyone was cut off so freights were jammed. My father went by freight to Nelson, then hitch-hiked and walked the 60 miles from there to Kootenay Landing, which is near Krestova.

After the building of the CPR through the Crow's Nest Pass in 1900, there was only one gap left. The railway stopped when it reached Kootenay Lake and started again on the other side. To get across, the train cars were put on a ferry, and there were barges for the freight. At Proctor, the train was unloaded, hooked together again, and proceeded on its way to Vancouver.

The good side of the lake was being kept for a highway and the CPR was stuck with the north side to build its connecting railway. It was 36 miles of mountain. The CPR contracted it to Green Contractors, who subcontracted 10 miles to Foley Brothers. Foley Brothers sub-subcontracted one mile to each of ten different groups of labourers.

These gangs were of different national groupings: Swedes, Russians, Ukrainians, etc. Each gang had to have at least twelve men: a head man, one or two blasters, two to four drillers, one cook, and a number of labourers. Their job was to build the grade so that it was ready for laying track. They had to level a strip, fill the grade, dig ditches. They had a year to do the mile. When they were finished, gravel would be laid on the completed grade, and then the track could be laid.

None of these gangs had an engineer. The CPR engineers measured the number of cubic yards involved before they contracted it out, but kept the figures secret. The head men of the gangs bribed the engineers to tell them how many cubic yards were involved so that they would have some idea of how much money they could earn.

None of the gangs had any equipment or money. Foley Brothers rented the equipment to them on credit. They needed a push car and rails to get supplies to the site. If any of these rails got bent or broken, they had to pay their value and rent new ones. They needed hammers and other manual equipment. They needed work clothes, rubber coats, boots, which Foley Brothers sold to them on credit at twice their value. Foley Brothers also sold them food. The Doukhobors were selling potatoes at \$1 a sack and would have preferred to sell directly to the workers. But the workers didn't have enough \$1's so the potatoes were sold to Foley Brothers for \$1, who resold them on credit to the workers at \$8 a sack. The head man signed all the bills and hung them on the wall so every

worker knew how much they owed. They knew they were paying crooked prices but they had no choice and the amount they owed was still less than what they expected to earn.

The other men on the gang—Levchuk, Rafalovich, and the others—worked on the grade for a year, but my father arrived late and only worked two months, April and May, before they were finished.

My father says that for the first few days of that kind of work, your whole body ached and you squeaked like a rabbit in your sleep. But there were no choices—you either got tough or died.

One illustration may serve to show the kind of work it was. There were no jack hammers in those days. To dig through rock, you needed a hammer and a piece of steel, like John Henry. One man held the steel to the rock, turning it slightly after each blow of the hammer, while another man stood above him swinging the hammer with all his might down on the steel. The hammer swinger got up a regular rhythm, swinging the hammer over his head in a steady series of blows. The other man turned the steel the correct amount during the time the hammer was in midair and descending for another blow. Most teams changed around, but my father, being so strong, was always a hammer swinger.

On another gang, there was a father-son team named Wasyl and Kostyeek. The father was holding the steel bit. It was sleeting and he had his feet resting on a log made slippery from the sleet. He was changing the steel around when his feet slipped a tiny bit and his head moved forward just enough to be in the way of the hammer. If he had sustained a direct blow his skull would have been crushed, but the hammer slipped along the side of his head, exposing but not crushing the bone. The men thought he would die any minute, there was so much blood. They carried him a half mile to the boat which took him to hospital in Proctor. He was sewed up and back to work in four days.

Another time, a scaffolding broke and a hand car loaded with supplies fell into the lake. My father jumped in—coat, boots, and all—and quickly tied a rope to the car so it could be pulled out, then swam proudly back for shore carrying the other end of the rope. The other men were amazed and my father didn't let on for some time that he wasn't risking his life at all. He was an excellent swimmer and knew that being in the water fully-clothed for a short time is no danger to a strong swimmer.

After work, which lasted until dark, they ate and then went to their bunkhouse. Here there were all sorts of miscellaneous chores to do, mostly involved with washing and mending clothes. One man always read aloud to the others. The rest mended, or just lay on their bunks. The books were borrowed from the Mandreevna library in Winnipeg by mail; postage money was collected from the group with difficulty. They read *Zemlya* by Emile Zola, Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, the Karmeliuk legends, and many others.

Later, on the homestead, my father recounted the Karmeliuk story for audiences. Since there were no books, they asked for more and more until he got bored with it. He embellished and exaggerated the story for his own amusement, so that when people read the real book, they were somewhat disappointed. For this reason my mother maintains to this day that he is a bigger liar than Tolstoy.

Perhaps other work gangs read the bible and prayed. The men in my father's bunkhouse were already Marxists without having read Marx. My father, in his three months in Vancouver, had observed the conditions of the workers and concluded there was no hope for people under capitalism.

In the summer of 1930 the grade was done. CPR engineers came again and measured the grade and reported on the number of cubic yards for which the men were to be paid. These were different engineers and they reported about a quarter as many cubic yards as had the original engineers. The men were stunned. They demanded Foley Brothers pay them according to the original figures, but Foley Brothers said they weren't supposed to have those figures and it was their own fault if they had been given the wrong ones. They had no money coming to them, Foley Brothers said. For a year's work, they were to be paid nothing. Zero. But to get them away from the site, Foley Brothers gave them each \$15 so they could get to Nelson.

Green Brothers in Nelson told the men they had 96 cents coming to them for one year of labour. But, the man said, he would give them \$45 if they went away.

The head man, Yulisov, went by freight to Calgary to consult with lawyers. The lawyers told him they would need \$500 to begin with to hire the engineers to re-measure the grade. After that there would be lawyers' fees. Of course these men had been chosen for the last subcontract because they had no \$500's with which to fight the CPR. Yulisov came back to Nelson after a week and reported the news to the other workers. In the end, they accepted the \$45 and went away. Thus, they were paid \$60 for one year's work.

My father had only worked two months, so he hadn't been cheated as badly as the others. He went back to Lamont with his \$60.

## The Homestead

The first Mike was born while my father was working in B.C. When my father got back to Lamont he found my mother, the new baby, and Fedosia Lucuk living in some farmer's chicken coop. They went to work for Kostyshyn who was a good man and even gave them an empty house

on the farm to live in. All summer my father cut brush, stooked, and threshed.

On December 30, 1930, they moved to the homestead in the Peace River country. With their farm earnings and the \$60 they had \$312. With this money they bought an axe, a saw, a knife, 12 sacks of flour, glass for windows, a cow from Nowoletsky for \$55. My parents and the first Mike lived with Nikolaychuk's in their hut. This soon became unbearable because their Mike bullied our Mike and his parents didn't stop him. My parents had to build their own house right away, but first my father had to clear a space in the thick bush.

Winter days are very short in northern Alberta—it gets light after nine and is dark again by five. Way before sunrise, my father would be cutting down willows. Willows are a bit shiny and therefore, slightly visible in the dark. When it became light, he worked at building the house. When the sun set, he set fire to the great pile of willows he had cut early in the morning, and then continued work by this light until the pile had burned.

He was even rich enough to hire a worker. The previous fall, Stepan Tarnowski (later killed in a hunting accident) had been threshing at an Englishman's place near Sexsmith. This man, named Redwood, had a whole herd of registered cattle. Stepan Tarnowski was always a hard working and honest man, and Redwood had grown fond of him. After threshing, Redwood shipped some cows for which he received \$80. He sent word to Tarnowski that he had kept back one pregnant cow which he would sell to him for \$40. Stepan had children and no milk so he badly needed a cow but he hadn't the \$40. When my father arrived with all his riches, he loaned Stepan the money for the cow.

But now Tarnowski owed my father \$40. The going rate for workers was \$1 a day. Tarnowski worked for my father for 28 days. They cut down trees, raised the house frame, then began the tedious business of cutting boards by hand, with Tarnowski as the bottom man. For the floor, the boards were planed with a hand planer. Even for a small house, this is a tremendous amount of work.

Tarnowski still owed my father \$12. My father had spent all his money by then and demanded that Tarnowski pay him the \$12 which, of course, Tarnowski couldn't do. By then the cow had calved and it was a registered calf, unlike any peasants had seen before. My father said Stepan must give him either the calf or the money. The cow my father had bought had proved barren; at least she wasn't about to calve that year, so there would be no milk, whereas Tarnowski had both a calf and a milk cow.

When people have no other entertainment, they gossip a lot. Lucuk went around telling people that my father was being unfair to Tarnowski. I let him give you \$12 then, my father said to Stepan, and that was how the

matter was settled.

That was 1931. My father bought a bull calf from Yakimuk for the \$12. The steer grew fat and sassy. Three years later, my father put a rope on the steer and dragged him all the way to Rycroft, but at the stockyard there, they told him he could only get \$7 for it. My father wasn't about to sell him for that, nor did he have the strength to drag him home again, cattle being rather unco-operative about things like that. He took the rope off and let the steer go, not sure what would happen. The steer was quite surprised to find himself free after the tremendous battle on the way there. He took a few tentative steps and sniffed the air. Then, having considered the matter, he suddenly made up his mind and took off at 100 miles an hour.

My father hitch-hiked home. He saw the steer again by the river about 12 miles from home. When he got home, he lay down to rest and in a short time, heard the steer pounding into the yard. The steer was quite pleased with himself and set up a tremendous noise, demanding to be fed as well as announcing his arrival.

He should have known better. In the fall, my father killed him. He sold the meat for four cents a pound and it came to \$29. He kept the head, feet, entrails, and other parts of the beef that are now considered waste, for their own consumption.

Besides work, there was politics. As soon as possible, homesteaders set up community organizations. Community and organizational life was very important to peasants. All of them knew they were being exploited but there were different reactions. The traditional method of expressing despair is religion: it is all God's will people should suffer. So they glorified their suffering, thus trying to make it meaningful.

Others became communists. There was a branch of the ULFTA at Rycroft (which is north of Grande Prairie and about 14 miles from my parent's homestead) quite early. Some of the first homesteaders in Rycroft had been miners in southern Alberta who were blacklisted after the OBU strikes and unable to get mining jobs. They began organizational life in Rycroft but later the group split into communists and nationalists. There was bitter rivalry between the two groups.

One of the Muzika brothers was a nationalist, the other a communist. During an argument one day, one called the other a pig. If I'm a pig, his brother pointed out, then you must be also, since we came from the same mother. The other considered it for a while. I guess I must be, he said regretfully.

A branch of the ULFTA was set up in the Woking colony in 1931. Seventeen people were present. My mother was not one of them. The women tried to persuade her to join and she would have if my father had not been so active in politics. But there was all that farm work to be done, and two children to look after.

## Virtues are for Others

In 1933 there were 1,200,000 unemployed. The problem for the government was how to keep them under control. For the single unemployed men, they set up concentration camps run by the Department of National Defense. Men whose only crime was poverty were herded into these camps and made to work for their food and 20 cents a day. In November, 1933 such a camp was established at Elk Island Park for 150 to 180 men. The object was not so much to feed people as to imprison them so they would not fall prey to the agitators.

Freight riders were harassed, persecuted, beaten, imprisoned. They fell off trains and were killed, or lost limbs. In the fiscal year 1933-34, 4,474 people were deported.

Urban people on relief were given vouchers for food and rent, and nothing else. They were given no clothing, no medicine, no tobacco, no toothpaste, no aspirin, no bus fare, no money for a movie or a haircut.

Most people tried to find 25 cents a week every week for a newspaper. Unexpected needs continually cropped up, like needles and thread, darning wool, a bit of cloth for fancy work, a pattern for remaking a dress, a half-dollar every other month for a co-operative half-keg of beer for a neighbourhood party at which the Woodyard was forgotten. The catalogue of essential trivia differed from family to family, but it seldom added up to less than a rock-bottom minimum of \$1.50 a week. (Gray, 1968: 29)

Men talked continuously about methods to avoid pregnancy. Pregnancy was a disaster. An unemployed man's wife who got pregnant got no medical care and no extra funds for food or baby clothes.

Women were driven maddest by the poverty. Men had to go and work for relief and could talk to other men, but women couldn't go anywhere. Women were too harassed and too ragged to complain in an organized fashion. A concerted campaign was conducted to see that they remained that way. Women were told they were supposed to be glamorous, superficial, passive. The struggle to set up a birth control clinic was opposed by everyone except the UFWA.

Single women were forced into prostitution. They had to work in sweatshops, or the government forced them into domestic labour by paying \$5 a month each to employer and employee.

Periodically, the well-heeled aldermen in Winnipeg, Calgary and Edmonton rose in their place to ask why it was that the city was keeping 130 women on relief while their neighbours were unable to

get housemaids. (Gray, 1968: 143)

The virtues of poverty, sometimes called returning to nature, mostly involved putting women back in their place. Women were to be denied ready-made clothes, gadgetry, prepared foods, and go back to the lives of incessant labour which destroyed their mothers and grandmothers. It is "natural" for women to live lives of incessant toil and to die young.

Miss Romanych had been hired by the Alberta Women's Bureau in 1928 to teach Ukrainian women manners, and was the only woman in Canada to be entrusted with such a high-ranking government job. Miss Romanych spent a great deal of time talking about the ignorance of women and Ukrainians. She spent less time teaching than talking about ignorance, leading an innocent observer to suppose that was what she was hired to do.

One of the duties of the media was to divert and distract people from their problems. The deaths of the local poor usually went unreported. Instead, people were regaled with stories of corruption and decadence among the rich. Rich people were richer than ever during the depression because they had nowhere to spend their money. So they had long parties, yacht tours, orgies, sensational murders.

A romance of love and brilliant social life, then hardship and tragedy was bared here (London) last night with the identification of a woman who shot herself on a rose-strewn bed in Paris a week ago as Mrs. Nina Williams, former wife of Douglas Williams, a member of New York stock broker's firm. (Edmonton *Bulletin*. Jan. 3, 1933)

It was safe. No one would rebel because a rich person died on a rose-strewn bed in Paris.

President Beatty of the CPR assured people that things would get better soon and that 1932 had been "... a year of definite and constructive progress towards improvement." (Edmonton *Bulletin*. January 3, 1933) I suppose it all depends on your point of view and it was the job of the newspapers to report only the point of view of the rich.

We didn't cover the Depression because it was not in the best interests of our publishers and stockholders to do so..... (Broadfoot, 1973: 352)

R.B. Bennett, millionaire, son of a millionaire, corporation lawyer, prime minister, preached the virtues of poverty. Christians preached the virtues of suffering. Like R.B. Bennett, they did not have to acquire these virtues themselves.

But diversions and preaching about virtues didn't always work. In 1933 there were marches all over Canada. People demanded non-contributory unemployment insurance, jobs, release of the Hunger Marchers, repeal of Section 98.



It was another bad year for agitators. The RCMP commissioner complained there was unrest all over, ranging from miners in Nova Scotia to the unemployed in Vancouver. He said Communists had not only infiltrated relief camps, but the province of Quebec.

The communists claimed that all strikes in 1933 and 1934 were led by the Workers Unity League under the guidance of the Communist Party. By 1933, the Workers Unity League had about 21,000 members, many of them unemployed. Probably only a small percentage of the members were also Communist Party members. This League, rather than the CIO, was the real beginning of industrial unionism in Canada.

Except for 1933 and 1936, Alberta weather was better than Saskatchewan. But in 1933 there was drought, hail, wind, grasshoppers, rust, unseasonal frost. There was almost no crop.

The government and the railways continued sending people back to the land. The CNR's Department of Colonization announced that they had sent 3,402 families to new farms near CNR lines. Also 1,412 families were settled on homesteads under the Relief Settlement Plan.

In 1933, the farm debt of the province exceeded \$300 million, which required an annual interest payment of a minimum of \$24 million. It would have taken almost the whole of the 160 million bushel wheat crop produced in 1932 to cover the interest charges alone. (Gray, 1968: 200)

The purchasing power of farmers totally disappeared, but the mortgage companies and banks continued foreclosing. Rich men talked about "protecting integrity" and "preserving national credit."

In December, Mr. And Mrs. Rusnak of Smoky Lake were charged with stealing grain. Only Mrs. Rusnak appeared in court, explaining that if they wanted her husband they would have to go and get him. She told the judge of hungry children and years of despair, while the municipality rejected their requests for relief. They had stolen grain so that they and their children would not starve.

Mr. Rusnak was at home sharpening his old and rusty fork. When the police arrived to get him, he stuck the fork in his abdomen. But he missed all his vital organs. Mrs. Rusnak was given a six-month suspended sentence. When Mr. Rusnak came out of the hospital, he was charged for attempting suicide as well as for stealing grain, and the family had a hospital bill to pay.

The Vegreville Chamber of Commerce found Relief Administration to be an interesting luncheon topic. Well-fed men in suits and white shirts slowly munched a variety of food and listened to the speaker talk about Relief Administration, which was an interesting luncheon topic.

No, we never thought of the poor people. The relievers. We'd see them on these make-work jobs, cleaning up back lanes, digging

dandelions, hauling coal. I never thought to pity them, or help them. Far as I know, nobody did. They were just there. If I went up to the public library on Williams Avenue and I saw how the people lived around there, sometimes I'd wonder. But only how people could live in such poverty, such conditions. I was up and they were down. (Broadfoot, 1973: 225)

## 1934: Farmers' Strikes

The summer of despair was ushered in by a meteorite which blazed across Alberta before exploding somewhere near Camrose. In many ways 1934 was the worst year thus far. The weather was better than the year before, but it had gone on for so long now—clothing got shabbier, children sicklier, and there was no end in sight. The most common method of suicide seems to have been poison. Probably it was cheaper and more easily available than firearms. Men and women drank some form of strychnine and died or were maimed.

1934 was the peak year for the bush camps, which held some 25,000 men. No organization or grievance procedure was permitted, nor was there any recreation. The men felt abandoned by God and mankind.

Tim Buck (1952: 96) says there were 189 workers' strikes in Canada in 1934, of which 109 were led by the Workers Unity League, and that 84 of these were won. There were also relief camp strikes at Drumheller, Edmonton, Lethbridge and Calgary.

There were two farmers' strikes. In March, Myrnam farmers went on a non-delivery strike against the local elevator because the agent graded all grain as "tough." The grain commission investigated and advised that the agent be transferred. The company shuffled its agents around the province and this settled the matter for a time.

In November, Mundare farmers protested against being cheated. As well as suffering unnecessarily high dockage and low prices, they thought there should be cleaning equipment in the elevators. The strike was organized by the Farmers' Unity League. Peter Kleparchuk, secretary of the strike committee, and A. J. Lesiuk, chairman, announced the strike and said that farmers had appealed to the grain commission without success. They asked all farmers and workers in Canada to support the strike.

Shortly after the strike was called in Mundare, farmers at Hairy Hill, Norma and Whitford declared their support. Pickets were set up and no grain was delivered to elevators. RCMP were sent to beat on strikers and on November 7, fourteen strikers were arrested.

By November 13, the strike had spread to 24 districts including Hilliard, Two Hills, Hairy Hill, Vovrik, Royal Park, New Kiew, Bushland, Plain Lake, Innisfree, Inland.

When scabs hauled grain, the pickets stopped them. They would lie and say they were taking the grain not to be sold, but to be milled. Though they were hauling it to sell, they had to get it ground. There were incidents when scabs were protected by the Dominion Police. Nevertheless, the pickets overturned scab wagons, wheels upward. No one could restrain the farmers' rage in the struggle for their just demands. This is our history. (Mike Novakowski. *Life and Word*. November 11, 1973. Translated from Ukrainian.)

A supporter of the strike in Innisfree said non-communists were also supporting the strike because there was no doubt about dishonest grading and low prices. The cost of production was about 65 cents per bushel for a 20-bushel-per-acre crop and the price to the farmers was about 28 cents. He wrote that it wasn't necessary to be a communist to see red. (Vegreville *Observer*. December 5, 1934)

A farmer named John Fedun said he had been intimidated when he tried to take his grain to market. The picketers had felled a pole across the road in front of his truck so that he was unable to proceed. Another farmer named John Lamash asked for and received police assistance to transport his grain across the picket line. Constable Graves of the RCMP tried to drive the wagon past the picketers and the wagon overturned into the ditch.

Picketers were charged with intimidation, obstructing police, and wilful damage. They were: Peter Kleparchuk, William Zaseybida, Dmytro Ulan, Sam Ulan, Peter Bereziuk, Fred Yaniw, Joe Osinchuk. Steve Hewko was also charged with assaulting Sergeant K. E. Heacock of the RCMP, who was also the prosecutor in the case. The defence said that Constable Graves had himself overturned the wagon in his ineptness in driving too near the ditch.

Peter Kleparchuk and William Zaseybida were sent to jail for two months. The remainder were fined \$25 and costs for intimidation and \$20 for obstructing police. The case was appealed and Kleparchuk and Zaseybida had their sentences lengthened to seven months. The case against Dmytro Ulan was dismissed; the rest had to pay \$50.

Ukrainian Catholics obeyed their priests and opposed the strike. In December, Ukrainian nationalists held a march in Myrnam, waving the Union Jack and singing "God Save the King." Accompanied by some members of His Majesty's loyal Canadian lackeys, they escorted several loads of grain to the elevator.

Mayor White of Mundare organized an anti-strike committee and swore in special constables to assist the RCMP in scabbing. The strike

was losing force in Two Hills and Innisfree. There had been no organized strike in Vegreville although little grain had been delivered. The merchants said the demands were justified but they deplored the methods, as they have been saying for lo, these many years about any workers and farmers demands.

The police reported that by December 17, the situation was back to normal. Perhaps they meant that elevator companies were cheating again, because the strike didn't peter out until some days after that.

Although the strike had been defeated, the companies could no longer cheat so flagrantly. A new grading system was introduced, resulting in slightly higher grain prices.

In the same year, William Aberhart, who had been preaching on radio for some years as the head of the Prophetic Bible Institute in Calgary, read one of Major Douglas' books on social credit and was smitten. Thereafter, he preached not only evangelism but social credit.

Throughout the summer of despair, William Aberhart made promises. I don't suppose anyone believed his promises, but he spoke so well—sonorously, with confidence, and with the full force of God behind him. It sounded so easy. While everyone knew it wasn't that easy, it was nice that someone could make it sound so easy. He brilliantly and incisively denounced the society and held out a vision of another one, blessed by God, where inequality would be eliminated.

Meanwhile, Vivian MacMillan and Allan D. MacMillan charged UFA Premier J. E. Brownlee with seduction. He denied it and said it was a conspiracy to ruin his reputation. The court awarded Vivian MacMillan with \$10,000 damages. She appealed for more without success. At the trial she testified she had been an employee of Brownlee and had been pursued by the Premier because his wife was sick. She was seduced in the house and in his limousine. People heard about the luxurious surroundings in which their Premier lived and contrasted it with the drabness of their own lives. Premier Brownlee, who until the trial had bombasted that it was all a dastardly plot, offered little or no defence.

In the eyes of the people he was condemned not so much by adultery as by the details of the luxurious surroundings in which it took place. Premier Brownlee told farmers to have patience; he told police to beat on the poor, but he lived in a mansion and rode around in a limousine. He resigned as premier on July 1, 1934 and was replaced on July 10 by R. G. Reid.

This completed the people's disillusionment with the UFA. MLA's no longer heeded their constituents, and spent most of their time just trying to preserve the UFA in power. The party which was to have been ruled by the people was ruled by the Cabinet, which not only didn't feel bound by the party, but no longer even bothered to explain its actions.

Things seemed to be out of people's control—perhaps it was best to

leave it to God. The party had once belonged to the people. Now the Premier lived in a mansion and seduced his servant. Later, of course, Aberhart was to do similarly reprehensible things and get re-elected, but Aberhart had never pretended to be a man of the people, nor to represent anyone but God. He told the people he knew what was good for them and that they didn't have to worry about anything—God and William Aberhart would look after them. And the people—bruised, disillusioned, weary—thought that promises were better than nothing.

Aberhart was assisted by the fact that the Communist Party planned to run candidates in the next election. Communists were riding the crest of popularity, with over 5,000 members. The eight imprisoned men were released between June and November 1934. Tim Buck was paroled in November on condition that he do no public speaking. Immediately, a mass meeting of 17,000 people was held in Toronto, and in continuing defiance, Tim Buck followed this with a cross-country speaking tour. Blairmore, Alberta declared a public holiday when he came to speak and the main street was renamed Tim Buck Boulevard.

It was at this time that the Communist Party reached the peak of its influence. Thereafter, its impact diminished. Communists criticized the existing society and it was self-evident they were right. But in practice, they spent as much time vilifying social democrats—the most common appellations being “yellow dogs” and “social fascists”—as they did dealing with issues. In addition, Ukrainians were shocked by the news that in 1934, Ivan Sembay died in Russia, as did D. Chomicky from Winnipeg. Myroslaw Irchan (the penname of Andrey Babiuk), the Ukrainians beloved writer, who had returned to the USSR in 1929 died in 1934.

As a result of these turmoils, people's frustrations were channelled into support of Social Credit. William Aberhart had what sounded like the same diagnosis as the communists. He said the problem was capitalism and that the bankers and the “fifty big shots” of Alberta caused the depression. But to change the situation, people didn't need to learn the intricacies of communism vs. socialism, or worship the east—they had only to vote for Aberhart.

Social Credit arose at a time of despair and was consciously an anti-communist movement. They agreed with the diagnosis which was obvious to everyone at the time but suggested a different solution—one which couldn't disturb the status quo. (Macpherson, 1953: 133)

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# **Sunset House**

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## Ruth Borisevich\*

Ruth Borisevich's parents came from Halychina to Canada in 1905. They got a farm of stones in Manitoba, at Inwood. There was better land, but they didn't know the language and the agents told them there was no other land available.

Borisevich was a radical while in the Old Country. He belonged to the "Sich" and on the wall of their house in Manitoba hung a portrait of Ivan Franko. Borisevichikha went to church because it was a social occasion.

Every two years the mother had a baby. Just like steps. There were a lot of children to pick stones. They picked stones and piled them along the fence. When they went back to visit some years ago, there was a stone wall, in some places as high as a house, that they had piled up over the years. There had at first been some soil, but now the land is all white with stones.

Yoy, did we live here??? Did we do all that work?

The children also picked seneca roots which were washed and sold. They were made into some kind of medicine in Winnipeg. They also gathered strawberries and other berries for canning. It wasn't much of a life. The only time one could say they had any fun was recess time at school.

When Ruth was five and one-half her mother died in childbirth. She had borne a tenth baby and the placenta didn't come out. The women attending didn't know what to do. Only after four days was a doctor called, and he said it was too late. He told the father to get two poles, sew a blanket around them, and on this makeshift stretcher carry the mother the 18 miles to Teulon so an operation could be done. It was too rough in the wagon—she must be carried. But it was May and there were floods all over. For two miles it was like a lake before you got to the road. How could they carry her? They insisted the doctor should remove the placenta there. The doctor saw there was no other choice. Borisevichikha hemorrhaged and went unconscious. Borisevich put cold water on her face and she opened her eyes. Her face was stark white. Don't worry, she said, I won't die—I still want to live. And those were her last words.

The baby was taken by a neighbour who had a baby three years before.

\*(Personal interview, Edmonton, December, 1973. *Life and Word*. August 7, 1972)



She intended to breast feed it but was unable to. So all the women talked it over and decided to bottle feed the baby. But there was only one bottle and nobody knew about sterility and the baby died of dysentery.

The father died just over a year later, perhaps because he didn't want to live after his wife's death. He got a cold which turned into pneumonia. Ruth had started school just that year. Her brother wrapped Borisevich in a grey fur coat and took him on the wagon to the hospital. Ruth saw them go by the school, with her father in grey leaning against his son. When she got home, they told her he was ill and had gone to hospital. He never came home again.

There were nine orphan children. The eldest, Anton, was 21 years old and it was he who kept the family together. The youngest, Ivan, was two. Ruth's sister, Anna, who was 11, became the housewife. Some people from the orphans' home in Winnipeg came to visit and wanted to take the children to orphanages. But Anton said they all wanted to stay together and would not allow the family to be split up. So they worked and grew together and were thankful for it.

The brothers tried farming for another eight years on that stone farm. It was 160 acres and had been farmed with oxen until 1916, when they bought horses. Every year the family cleared more bush, plowed more land, sowed wheat, oats, rye. Every spring they picked rocks.

Besides the farm work, Ruth's brothers trapped animals for hides and cut wood in winter to sell, in order to pay off the farm mortgage. But when the interest was paid, there was nothing with which to buy warm clothes, or school lunches.

The school was three and one-half miles from the farm. They usually walked to school unless it was snowing heavily. In one room there were 64 pupils taught by one teacher; in another room, 42 pupils.

When the eldest sister, Anna, was 18 she left the farm and got a job in Winnipeg. At that time there was a lot of propaganda about the Peace River country, how the land was very fertile and anyone could get rich. The family decided in 1929 to move to Peace River.

They couldn't sell the farm because it was too heavily mortgaged. They arranged a sale for the machinery but already in 1929, farmers were getting poorer and couldn't pay a fair price, so they had to sell at a loss.

The mortgage on the farm was \$900, so the government took it and rented it to another farmer. The family decided to take some of their belongings to Peace River with them rather than sell. They sent three cows, three horses, and some machinery by a freight train and Ruth's brother, Stepan, went with this.

The rest of the family bought a car which Anton and Mikola took turns driving. They had a tarpaulin tent in which they slept and they cooked by the side of the road. The trip took a week.

They first went to Big Prairie, near High Prairie, where there were

already some people they knew from Manitoba. The brothers built a shack there. Since it was still autumn, the cattle didn't need any kind of shelter.

They took out a homestead all covered with bush and with no land broken. But they only spent the winter there, and in the spring, sold the shack for \$100. The family moved to Sunset House—about 60 miles away. There were now seven of them, the eldest sister, Anna, having stayed behind in Winnipeg; and the second sister, Mary, staying on to work as a domestic servant in High Prairie.

At Sunset House, they again built a shack, began clearing land and making the homestead into a farm. They had moved there because there was less bush and they knew some people in Sunset House who had organized a branch of the ULFTA. The eldest brother, Anton, was already interested in communism. In Sunset House as well, there was already a school, so the younger children could get educated.

## Wasył Shewchuk\*

Wasył Shewchuk was born in 1896 in Lviv province. His parents were middle peasants owning seven *morgs* of land. He went to school for seven years until his father fell ill and could no longer support him. After a year in the village, Wasył asked his mother's father to loan him the money for the fare to Canada. He left for Canada in 1912. He was transported on a freight ship on which there were 300 to 400 other Ukrainians. When they reached Montreal after great suffering, many were returned home again because they could not pass the medical examination.

Wasył Shewchuk was then 17 years old. On the ship he became friends with a young man named Wasył Nowasad who was also travelling alone. He was going to his uncles' at Roblin, Manitoba. Shewchuk's uncle, his mother's brother, also lived in Roblin but he didn't know about him because he had left eight years earlier. He decided to go to Roblin with his friend.

When we arrived in Roblin on a Saturday, there were many people at the station, who had come to meet the immigrants—relatives, villagers, friends. Wasył Nowasad was met by his uncle. No one met me. Still, I was lucky, because my uncle was in town and we met accidentally. This was an unexpected meeting and we were both deeply moved. For a whole year, I stayed with my uncle, helping him a bit on the farm.

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\*(*Life and Word*. October 4 and October 11, 1971. Translated from Ukrainian.)

The next year my uncle and I went to work for richer farmers at harvest time. I lived in Roblin for seven years. During that time, I worked on farms, in the sawmill of the Burroughs Lumber Company in Gilbert Plain, and in the winter we went to the bush and cut wood. In the spring we floated the logs down the Swan River to Grandview.

Wasył Shewchuk got married in 1919 to Martha, who had been born in Roblin. In 1920, they moved to Fort Frances, Ontario where they lived until the depression forced them to move. Martha stayed behind in Fort Frances while Wasył went to the Peace River country in March, 1930 to look for a suitable homestead. He and some others had the idea they might be able to start a collective there.

When he arrived in Sunset House there were already other homesteaders there. It was 40 miles from High Prairie. There were no roads, only Indian trails. But the land was good, and it seemed a good place to start a collective.

I took out a homestead and built a shack from logs. My wife had asthma and for this reason the doctor had advised us to leave Fort Frances—the climate wasn't suitable and the air polluted with chemicals from the large factories. She left with the children and stayed in Edmonton at first. I wrote her to come to Sunset House because I had taken out a homestead.

I had a small hut in Fort Frances, admittedly unfinished, but it was left to "God's will" because nobody wanted to buy it. In other words, we left Fort Frances bare-handed after ten years of hard work at the mill.

My wife came to High Prairie but couldn't get to Sunset House because there were no roads, and one had to make one's way through the bush for 25 miles. Therefore I hired Ivan Parasiuk, who now lives in Vernon, to bring her, our belongings, and the children with a tractor.

After two days we arrived in High Prairie with the tractor. Here we placed the goods on a home-made wagon, settled ourselves, and set out for home. We left High Prairie in the afternoon and when we'd gone ten miles, we were caught by darkness in the bush. The tractor got stuck in the mud and couldn't move. I should explain that when we were going to High Prairie, there was still a bit of frost and the ground was hard. But in Alberta, weather changes quickly—thaws come quickly and you can neither walk nor ride.

When we got stuck in the mud, from which it was difficult to extract ourselves, Parasiuk said that he would take the tractor up the little hill, then tie the wagon with a long rope, and thus pull it out. I bent over one side and Parasiuk the other, to tie the rope to the wagon, when the tractor rolled down along its path, grazed me with a

fender, and broke a bone in my shoulder. Ivan Parasiuk quickly jumped on the tractor and drove it to the little hill. I fell in the mud without any signs of life.

My wife panicked and wanted to jump in the nearby river with the children. She started crying: What shall I do here without a husband? It's better that the children and I should perish with him. She was restrained, I was somehow extricated from the mud and returned to life. And so with a broken shoulder, we spent a whole week making our way to the homestead.

Just as we got out of the mudhole, within half a mile, the tractor struck a tree and a front wheel broke. Here we left it, and continued on foot. We had to sleep nights on the cold, wet ground.

About halfway, 20 miles from High Prairie, Ivan Parasiuk went on foot to bring horses from Sunset House, so that we could get to our homestead on horseback.

We stacked everything in the bush and waited for his return. There was nothing to eat. It was two days before he returned for us with the horses. I was tormented by my injury and suffered great pain.

On four horses' backs, we reached Sunset House—our shack on the homestead. That's how we began our *hospodarstvo* on the homestead at Peace River.

After we reached our homestead, our life was very difficult. We had no way to get to the doctor from there, and no money to pay for treatment. We were cut off from the world and from people. We stayed there until 1935.

Having found that we couldn't make any sort of life here, we decided to move to Edmonton. We renounced our homestead. We had five head of cattle and we got only \$35 for them. One of the reasons we left Sunset House was my wife's illness. She began to suffer from asthma. In High Prairie, the doctor gave her some other kind of pills by mistake and she was in a serious condition. They rushed her to Edmonton. There she stayed in hospital for a month. They forbade her to return here and so the whole family went to Edmonton.

We lived in Edmonton for a time. It wasn't possible to find any kind of job. They didn't want to give us "relief" (assistance) because they said we "didn't belong to the city." It was proposed to us that we return to the homestead, they offered us horses, cattle, and "relief." But to what did we have to return? We'd given everything away because no one had the money to buy anything.

For a whole month I kept going to the administration building and couldn't get relief. There was trouble in the house. The children

went to school hungry. The doctor gave us a letter in which he wrote that my wife couldn't return to the farm because of illness, but the clerks disregarded it.

There was nothing left to do but seek our "fortune" elsewhere, so my son and I went by freight to Calgary, then to Lethbridge, from there to Picture Butte, to contract 20 acres of beets from a farmer. That was the beginning of 1936.

When we left Edmonton on the roof of a cargo train, it began to snow and was very cold. I held the boy to me. He was 14. He fell asleep. I shook him, saying: Wake up, son, because we'll freeze—we must find an empty car in which to hide from the cold. The train stopped beside a water tank, we got off the roof, and looked for an empty car. To our luck, we found one and went inside.

We weren't in it for long, for at the next stop a brakeman came in, lit a flashlight and saw us. He told us to get out. When he lit the flashlight, we saw at the other end of the car, a large bull tied with a chain, which maybe they were taking from a fair.

The brakeman asked who allowed us into the car. He said if the bull had broken the chain he would have killed us, for which the brakeman would have been held responsible.

I told him the whole truth: that we had no money, we were going to pick beets, we were on the roof and nearly froze and had looked for shelter. He seemed to be a good soul and took us with him into the "caboose." Near Calgary, he told us to get out and walk because the police persecuted people there, which could mean trouble for both him and us. That's what we did.

From Calgary we got to Lethbridge, then to Picture Butte. Here we started working on the beets. Soon my wife and younger daughter, Sonia, joined us.

The farmer planted the beets and irrigated the fields and we saw that no weeds grew and that beets didn't grow too close together. We had to thin them. We worked there from April 15 to October. The hardest work was thinning. Beets are planted thickly in rows like wheat, then thinned later so that they are one foot apart. Only then can the beets grow large.

We also worked on the harvest because then there wasn't so much work on the beets. My wife helped with the cooking, I worked by the machine to make a bit of money. Thus we spent the summer.

I went from there to Vernon on November 7, 1936. I brought with me only \$10. Winter began. I knew no one. I did various seasonal jobs: worked in orchards, gardened, cut trees. For an hour's labour in the garden of a Japanese, I earned 20 cents. For cutting a cord of wood, 75 cents. Relief was impossible to get—you had to have lived in a town for two years. And thus we suffered for several

years—always half-hungry. In 1942 I got a job working for the city of Vernon. I worked there until 1961. After that I retired.

I first became acquainted with the progressive movement in 1921 in Fort Frances, when I worked at the pulp mill and met Mikola Sawchuk, who now lives in Vancouver. I regard him as my first teacher who directed me along the path to the progressive movement. The same man signed me up to ULTA which already had a branch in Fort Frances.

In Fort Frances, I got a class education. In time, I joined the Communist Party of Canada. I took quickly to socialist ideas and participated actively in organizational life.

I remember I was entrusted to speak in public on the theme: what are communists and what do they want? When I stepped out on the stage, I wished the floor would give way under me so I could disappear. I was terrified when I saw so many people before me, and so many eyes looking at me. I found myself in an irresolvable position: to flee was impossible, and to finish my speech, equally impossible... I somehow said that which I had memorized, then I read from a little book. When I finished, the people applauded though there wasn't much to applaud.

Eventually, I got used to it, gained self-confidence, made speeches more often, and didn't have to finish them by reading.

In ten years in Fort Frances, I learned a great deal. I loved reading and art and literary study. Even now I love reading, though the doctor has warned me too much reading might affect my health.

When I came from Fort Frances to Peace River, I was already an organization man, understood why there were rich and poor, why some lived in luxury and others in poverty. There were people who came to homestead at Sunset House but unfortunately, few of them had a progressive outlook.

When I came to Sunset House, there was a whole group of young people—Ivan and Mikola Alexewich, Mikola Sawchuk (who now lives in Toronto and works in the Ukrainian Bookstore)—but there was no organization.

We organized a branch of ULFTA and began building a Ukrainian Farmers' Home on the Alexewich farm. It was difficult for us to work because it was a long way to the Ukrainian Farmers' Home and there was no road. When we organized ULFTA, people flocked around it and lived like one family.

In five years we did much organizational work around Sunset House.

Often the settlers in this area found themselves in very difficult circumstances. When in the spring, melting snow created lakes around Sunset House, people were cut off from the rest of the world.

Often they ran out of supplies, particularly bread. Therefore, food was brought by aeroplane, and was dropped from the air.

People lived very harmoniously and shared what they had. They went hunting for moose and rabbits, then shared it cooperatively. For example, the Borisevich family in one winter killed 30 moose for the community.

One time in July, Borisevich shot a moose in our yard from the window of our house. When we were skinning it, a "mountyak" (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) came and asked what we were doing. Understandably, we couldn't exculpate ourselves, so we told him the whole truth. (In the summer it wasn't legal to shoot moose—only in the fall and winter.) He only told us to share the meat among the people because he knew we had found ourselves in big trouble at flood-time.

I want to mention the Borisevich children. There were seven of them—five brothers and two sisters. They were orphans. Most of them had been born in Canada. They came here from Manitoba. They set up an organization in the house. I lived there for some time and tried to explain to them about the organization and the class struggle and development of the community. True, they didn't understand everything that I was explaining, because I wasn't able to do it very well. In time, they understood a great deal and then studied on their own and became good organizational workers.

## Ruth Borisevich

The Borisevich children wanted very much to go to the Hunger March, thinking they could hitch-hike to Edmonton. But they had no proper shoes or boots, and wore only moccasins around home, so they couldn't go.

In Sunset House, the four brothers took one homestead each. Two sisters having stayed behind, there were seven of them on the farm. Ruth, who was just 15, became the housewife. Mary sent goods from time to time from High Prairie and sometimes she sent clothing.

It was very difficult the first year on the farm because they didn't have a garden. They bought corn flour and hunted moose. Since they had brought cows with them, they had milk, butter, cheese. They helped other homesteaders who had come from the Old Country and had no machinery and no cattle. The majority of the settlers were Ukrainian. Some couldn't make it and went elsewhere. The ones who stayed, survived because of community cooperation.

In 1931 Wasyl Shewchuk organized a Youth Branch of the ULFTA

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\*(Personal Interview. Edmonton, December 1973. *Life and Word*. August 7, 1972)

which had about 15 members. They started a drama group and put on plays at the Tarzan school. When the Alexewich brothers built a house, the plays were held there. They built a small stage, set up benches, and made the house into a theatre. When the Ukrainian Farmers' Home was built, it could hold 200 people. Wasyl Shewchuk also organized a dance group which travelled to Fairview and High Prairie on occasion.

We didn't have our own mandolin orchestra but many people could play various instruments, so we got together, arranged concerts and entertainments. We celebrated all workers' holidays in the Ukrainian Farmers' Home: May 1, the Great October Revolution, anniversary of Taras Shevchenko and Vladimir Lenin. At these celebrations, we read poems, performed musical compositions. People gathered from the whole district. Often progressive Swedes came from beyond the Little Smoky River.

But life was more often a matter of survival than celebration:

I remember how in 1932, the homesteaders had no flour, no sugar, no salt, no kerosene. They demanded relief. Even if they harvested grain they sold it for nothing, a bushel of wheat for 18 cents, a bushel of oats for six cents. For such money, one couldn't buy much. Therefore people applied for relief because they had nothing to feed their children. It was necessary to apply to the RCMP for relief.

A "mountyak" came on a horse from High Prairie to our place. I was at home with my younger sister. He wanted one of us to go with him to those seven homesteaders who had applied for relief. My sister was afraid and I was afraid to go with the policeman, but he assured us that this was in the interests of the homesteaders and that he would bring us home. He wanted us to interpret for those people who asked for relief because they couldn't speak English.

In order to protect my younger sister, I agreed to go, and we went from one homesteader to another. We came to Shostak's house. On the table lay some dry black bread. The policeman said to ask the woman if she had anything other than that bread. I translated his words into Ukrainian. She answered:

See, Wasylinko, (Ruth's Ukrainian name) only that which is on the table. And for a week, I have had no salt. I have nothing to cook for my husband and children.

What did she say? the policeman asked me in English.

I translated her words into English. So it was in every house. He wrote everything down and promised to look after it, and said that these homesteaders would get relief. And he kept his word. After some time, a notice came that we should go to High Prairie and get this relief, which was given in provisions. Who would go? All the men had gone to make some money on the harvest. Only the women



were left behind with small children and they hadn't any vehicle with which to go for the provisions.

Rosalia Maksilevich (Parasiuk), Martha Shewchuk and I decided to go for the relief. We went 40 miles in a wagon, and rode the whole day. We got to Petro Vivchar's and slept the night on his floor. He was a very progressive person, a stage manager, artist, stage painter, an organizer. Now he is 94 years old and lives in the old people's home in High Prairie. In the morning we went to the office for relief. We were given a list of who was to get how much, which we were to get at the store: flour, sugar, salt, kerosene, pepper.... We put it all in the wagon and headed for home. We had brought bread from home with us and bought some sardines for the road.

It was difficult to restrain the horses on steep hills. All three of us had to pull on the reins to slow the horses. We entered a steep culvert and the horses couldn't pull the wagon and the load up the hill. We had to carry the sacks of flour on our backs up the hill. After we had carried everything up, we hitched up the horses and they dragged the empty wagon out of the culvert. We stacked the goods, and off we go.... In a few miles, there was again a similar culvert. And again we had to carry those sacks of flour up the hill.

At first homesteaders didn't have large stoves in which they could bake bread, but only small ones for heat and cooking. Only in our house was there a large stove which we had brought from Manitoba, in which you could bake bread. For a long time, I baked bread for many homesteaders: in the evening I leavened, kneaded in the morning, then baked. I baked every day, even on Sunday, because people must have bread. I baked bread for Severins, Valyushaks, Kitkheniuks, Stanesiuks. Twice a week, I baked bread for our family—six loaves at a time. The bread was from coarse flour and difficult to knead. I wasn't yet 16 years old. I did this without pay—one must help friends and neighbours. True, at the suggestion of Wasyl Shewchuk, for whom I baked bread, they collected money and for this money bought me some material and I sewed dresses—one for my sister, Nellie, and one for me.

They lost Johnny. Johnny had been only two when their parents died and was the youngest in the family. He was a talented amateur actor. One night Ruth and Nellie went to rehearsal.

Where's Johnny? they were asked.

He's at home sick, vomiting, I don't know why.

They blamed themselves for losing Johnny. We didn't know, Ruth said all these years later, we didn't know. We were so young ourselves, little more than children, and we didn't know.

They took him to the doctor at High Prairie. Forty miles in a wagon. They travelled all night. He was delirious and worried about Ruth who

had stayed behind. The three older brothers were away at work harvesting for rich farmers some place near the Saskatchewan border. The younger sister went with the sick boy and the brother, Steve, who drove the wagon. Someone had to look after the farm, so Ruth got another girl to stay with her and stayed home.

In the morning they got Johnny to the doctor, but the doctor was busy so it was afternoon before he examined him. He said it was already too late, that the appendix had burst and Johnny had peritonitis. He had to be taken to McLennan, another 36 miles from High Prairie. It was too late to operate. They put in a drain tube. The boy was delirious with fever and kept falling off the bed. The hospital was run by nuns and maybe they didn't look after him because they asked him to pray and he refused. Or more likely, they were just understaffed and overworked. And so he died.

He is buried in a small cemetery at Sunset House.

## Ruth Alexewich\*

After Shewchuk organized a youth group, the group did various sorts of fund-raising. One such event was a picnic. For one picnic, Ruth got up at 5 a.m. and went to pick wild strawberries. They had butter from their own cows, and with the strawberries, she made two pies to sell at the picnic.

The picnic site was five miles from the homestead. By the time Ruth had made the pies, the others had already left for the picnic and there was no saddle left for her. So she rode on a horse bareback, carefully holding the two pies in a box in front of her. Along the way were several hills and one creek. The horse leaped the creek faster than Ruth expected and she slid off, strawberry pies and all. The pie crusts were cracked all over, but people bought them anyway. The money raised this time was for the paper *Farmer's Life*.

The homesteaders helped each other as much as possible. For example, it was too far for some children to walk to school. A farmer who lived near the school gave up his house to those children. They lived there during the week. Ruth's sister, Nellie, herself a schoolgirl, looked after the children and cooked for them. All this was done without pay.

I married Mikola Alexewich in 1933. He had a homestead at Sunset House and lived there with his brother, Ivan. Life was difficult. I remember the first time I was pregnant, it became necessary in the fourth month to go in a sleigh 40 miles in February during severe frost to the hospital in High Prairie. During this journey, I had a premature baby. He died. I stayed in hospital ten days. Although I

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\* (Personal Interview, Edmonton. December, 1973. *Life and Word*. August 7, 1972.)

could not yet return home, my husband took me home. It took 14 hours in a sleigh during severe cold. This affected my health severely. Later another premature baby was born. Only the third time did we safely have a child.

The four Borisevich brothers lost their homesteads because they couldn't pay the taxes. The government sold the land for \$600. The Alexewich's couldn't make it either. In 1935, their homestead and all their belongings were sold for taxes. After that, Mikola Alexewich went to work as an organizer for the ULFTA. Ruth went to various educational courses with him. She had only grade seven in Manitoba and didn't get a chance to go to school after that, so she found the ULFTA courses valuable.

In 1936 My husband went to Winnipeg for the Higher Educational Course of the ULFTA. I was left in Edmonton—working as a domestic servant in private houses, at first for \$6, then my pay was raised to \$10 a month. Once a week, on Thursday, I had a day off. Also they allowed me to be free every second Sunday. On my free days I went to the Ukrainian Workers' Home—this was my greatest pleasure.

When the course in Winnipeg ended, Alexewich went to Highland Park to teach a three month course in which Ruth also participated. After that they moved to Lac Cardinale—still in the Peace River country. Mikola worked for one farmer and Ruth for another and they only met on their days off. In 1937 he was sent to teach another course while Ruth stayed in Highland Park.

They moved to Edmonton in 1938. Except for a short time during the war, Mikola Alexewich has been a paid organizer for the ULFTA.

In 1959, this group chose Ruth as National Housewife and sent her to visit the Soviet Ukraine as the prize.

They still live in Edmonton and she is still the model housewife she has always been. She remains active in organizational work. She prepares the sets for dramas at the Ukrainian Centre. When she has time, she paints.

**8**

# **Still the Depression**



## 1935: Promises Promises

In 1935 there were 1,300,000 unemployed. The militancy born of despair culminated in the On-to-Ottawa trek which started in the bush camps of B.C. and was organized by the communists. These camps were run like prisoner-of-war camps by the Department of National Defence. The men were given their food and 20 cents a day. There was no reading material or radios.

Arthur Evans led 800 men out of Vancouver. They rode freights to Regina, picking up more men along the way so that by the time they reached Regina, there were 2,000 of them. They were not to arrive in Ottawa for the police had orders to stop them. Six people and one policeman were killed. The leaders of the trek counselled non-violence. Then they went to Ottawa, leaving everyone else behind in Regina.

The Ottawa conference on June 22 between the Regina strikers' delegation and Mr. Bennett and his Cabinet degenerated into a shouting match between the Prime Minister and Arthur Evans, the strike leader. Mr. Bennett called Evans a thief, and Evans called the Prime Minister a liar. ... The Ottawa Conference was such a failure that it left everybody baffled as to why it had been held. Mr. Bennett rejected all the demands of the strikers with less than a shred of consideration. (Gray, 1968: 155)

The situation of farmers in 1935 was no better than it had been in previous years. In May, the temperature was already in the 80's. The worst drought was in the Palliser Triangle from 1934, so just as people thought it couldn't get any worse, it got a lot worse. For those people who could grow wheat, the price of wheat remained below the cost of production. Nevertheless, the government continued moving people to farms. The back-to-the-land movement between October 1930 and March 1935 caused 125,422 people to be resettled on farms.

And William Aberhart made promises. Among the promises was the one that everybody would receive a "basic dividend" of \$25 a month. Twenty-five dollars was an awful lot of money in those days and even if no one believed they would actually get it, it was great to sit around daydreaming about what you could do with \$25 a month every single month. It didn't matter that the rest of the theory was vague and confusing, for Social Credit was a mass movement of despair, which

"... at worst, could not make things worse." (Morton, 1950: 287)

The Communists jumped on the electoral bandwagon. Mike Nowakowsky of Mundare announced that he would be a provincial candidate for the Communist Party in the Whitford constituency. Since Alberta usually held its provincial election the same time as the federal one, William Halina announced he would be the Communist candidate for the federal election.

Our old friend, Vladimir Kupchenko, offered his measured opinion of the matter:

In most fiery terms the speaker condemned the militant and malignant tactics of the serfs of Red Moscow which aims to overthrow the most civilized British constitutions and governments in order to replace them by a form of dictatorship of the most lunatic Red fanatics. (*Vegreville Observer*. June 19, 1935)

Aberhart had the biggest meetings of all. Two thousand people attended a rally in Vegreville in July to hear that "50 big shots" were to blame for poverty in Alberta. Later, Aberhart changed the number of big shots and even later, confessed he didn't know how many big shots there were. By this time, he was one of them. Macpherson writes that Aberhart distorted Douglas' theory but that didn't matter since it made no sense either way. (1953: 149) The main aspect of it was that it was anti-democratic—the experts were to decide what was good for people. Neither Douglas nor Aberhart thought democracy was necessary. The problem of the depression was just one of accounting, and accounting was for experts. Nobody could explain the theory, so the leaders became custodians of the mystery and followers just had to have faith. Mainly, it offered a reform of capitalism without changing the relationship of capital and labour.

To get popular support for a doctrine, an essential part of which was the insistence that the people are not competent to discuss it, the only way was to promise everything and discuss nothing, to assert that you had all the answers and demand to be taken on trust. (Macpherson, 1953: 130)

A record number of voters turned out for the election of August 22, 1935. Social Credit got 56 seats out of 65 seats and 54 per cent of the popular vote. The UFA got zero seats and 11 per cent of the popular vote. Neither the Communists nor the CCF won anything, although the Communists made a surprisingly good showing. Social Credit stayed in power from 1935 to 1971.

Social Credit's victory ended what was supposed to be a farmers' government but never was. The UFA had been in power from 1921 to 1935. It had done little for Alberta one way or another as only those

demands of farmers were acceded to that were also good for capitalists. In 1935 there was little difference between the cabinet control of the UFA and Social Credit. Neither one allowed for voter participation. But at least Aberhart had never pretended to be a man of the people—he was responsible only to God. Whole UFA locals went over to Aberhart. But, although both began as protest groups, neither the UFA nor Social Credit was very good at it, thinking the system could be changed without disturbing property rights.

The radicalism of both was that of a quasi-colonial society of independent producers, in rebellion against eastern imperialism but not against the property system. (Macpherson, 1953:220)

Social Credit preached there could be better distribution of wealth without disturbing private ownership, and was consciously an anti-communist movement.

Ukrainians from the east and north of Edmonton had previously voted for Ukrainian candidates no matter what party they were from. It was not until the CCF became a force that Ukrainians voted for a party rather than a candidate. In the 1935 election, both candidates for Whitford were Ukrainians. Andrew Shandro ran again for the Liberals and lost to William Tomyň of the Social Credit. Tomyň was in the Legislature until 1952. James M. Popil and George Woytkiw were also elected for Social Credit.

With Social Credit in power, people sat around waiting for their \$25 a month. None was forthcoming. In the first place, the new party didn't even have its leader in the House. Aberhart had not run for election as he had not, apparently, expected his party to win. The other parties agreed not to run candidates against him so he was elected by acclamation the same year.

In October during threshing, a meteorite set afire a straw pile belonging to one Wally Campbell—which may have been a portent of disaster. A mine explosion killed 35 men at Coalhurst. The winter set in and it was one of unprecedented cold. A Canadian Wheat Board was established by the federal government but the price of wheat stayed below the cost of production.

But Aberhart had only promises. He obviously didn't know any more than anyone else what social credit was supposed to do; he had only gotten carried away with the fineness of his rhetoric. Now he didn't know what to do except deal out more rhetoric. He asked people to quit their carping already and give him a chance. He said it was all to be fixed by experts, and therefore, the father of Social Credit, Major C. H. Douglas would soon arrive from England and tell them what to do.

The Communists were running candidates in all parliamentary elections in accordance with the policy decided by the seventh World



Congress of the Communist International held in 1935. There was an acute danger from fascism in Europe and the Comintern felt that united fronts were necessary to avert fascism in those countries where it had not yet come to power.

Stewart Smith proposed on behalf of the Political Bureau that the entire line of the party, all its activities, should be directed to the development of working class unity. He signalized the unqualified character of the party's proposal for unity by announcing the willingness of the party to support the merging of the revolutionary unions of the Workers Unity League in the A.F.L. and the C.I.O. (Buck, 1952: 117)

The Worker's Unity League had been steadily building membership and strength during the depression years, organizing the unemployed and collecting the people who were dissatisfied with the traditional unions. The Communist Party then had a change of policy, and dissolved the League urging everyone back to the American unions. This process began in 1935. Some people resisted but everyone knuckled under within the next two years and the Worker's Unity League was no more. Dissolution of the League was made easier by the CIO drive which began in 1935 in the U.S. The CIO was opposed to the AFL in that they wanted to organize industrial unions rather than craft unions.

Most of the members of the Farmers Unity League were of East European descent. While the League had a lot of support, many farmers weren't prepared to denounce "kulaks," nor to make the farmers' needs subservient to those of workers. They deserted to the Social Credit and the CCF when these were formed. In November 1935, the remaining Farmers Unity League members were urged to join other farmers' organizations. The League was dissolved in 1936.

In July, the communists arranged for a United Anti-capitalist Front Nominating Convention in Shandro for the federal election. Luchkovich refused to participate for the UFA, but other members of the UFA were there. The Convention nominated Matthew Popowich as the candidate for the Vegreville constituency. (Popowich had been sentenced to five years in prison along with Tim Buck in 1931. He was freed after serving two and one-half years.) At another united front meeting in Hilliard, a United Front Farmers' Conference nominated Peter Kleparchuk as the candidate for the Victoria constituency.

In 1935 the Communist Party asked for united fronts with the CCF but the latter did anti-communist propaganda instead. At the same time as the Communists were asking people to support the CCF, they were denouncing it.

Communist involvement in parliamentary politics served to help Social Credit in Alberta and the Liberals federally. Many people, perceiving

that a vote for the Communist Party would be wasted, registered their protest against capitalism by voting Social Credit. In the 1935 federal election, Mackenzie King and the Liberals came back to power. Alberta sent mostly Social Credit candidates to the federal parliament. Even Vegreville sent a non-Ukrainian, William Hayhurst, because he was Social Credit, to replace Michael Luchkowich who had been an M.P. for the UFA from 1926 to 1935.

In 1935, the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act was passed in belated recognition of the rural emergency. I don't think it made any difference.

## Za Rozoo

They had no clocks so they told time by the sun and their stomachs. One day my father was out working at cutting down brush, and waiting to be called for dinner. Usually Mother halloed when dinner was ready. But this day there was no call although his stomach and the sun told him it was past noon. Finally, mosquitoes and hunger caused him to quit working and come to the house. Mother told him dinner would be late and he should lie down and read while waiting.

The reason dinner was late was that she was dyeing clothing. All clothing was then made from flour sacks. Underwear was made from the sack as it was. For outer clothing, the sacks were dyed. Mother had several tubs of boiling water prepared for the process, one of which was on the stove and the other one, the floor. Into the one on the floor, she put the dye and then the boiling mixture was ready for the material to be dipped in.

In the meantime, little Rose complained to her father. Mike was dead by then so they had only the one child. She was always a very clever child and beautiful as well. She was very self-confident and caused her parents no end of joy and amazement. But when she decided she wanted something, she could not be made to change her mind. This day, she wanted to play with the kindling. Tarnowski's barn had recently burned and she had been impressed by the fire. She wanted the kindling to build a barn but Mother told her she could not play with it.

Father said that other people's children had toys and that Mother shouldn't refuse the child the only available playthings. Mother replied it wasn't the kindling she begrudged, but the space. The hut was small and there wasn't room for both playing and dyeing clothing. Father then said Rose could build her barn under the table and he moved the box of kindling under the table for her. This satisfied everybody.

Having constructed the barn, Rose then pretended it was burning. *Stayna horit*, she called at the top of her voice, the barn is burning. She

was always an energetic child and never moved slowly, but leaped and skipped and danced. Now she waved her little arms, shouting "barn burning," delighted with herself, leaping backwards. Straight into the tub of boiling dye. Father didn't have time to move. Mother grabbed the child's hair and hurled her from the tub just as she fell in, so only her buttocks touched the boiling dye. As quickly as possible they tore off her clothing and saw that huge blisters were already forming on her buttocks and the backs of her legs.

They treated her as best they could. She screamed with pain for hours and eventually could scream no more, but just lay in bed squeaking and moaning.

The only medicine they ever had besides iodine was Zinc ointment. It was soothing and seemed to have disinfectant properties. They had once had some but it was all used up because a can of ointment got shared with the entire community. My father went to Yakimuk's to borrow some but theirs was also used up.

The child whimpered and moaned. Her rear end was oozing and beginning to run pus.

This was the summer of 1935. They had a lot of chickens by then. My father gathered all the eggs and it came to 13 dozen. A can of Zinc ointment cost 15 cents. He put the 13 dozen eggs in a sack and walked the 14 miles to Rycroft.

He went first to Mahaychuk's restaurant where he offered them all the eggs for 15 cents. It was 1935 and people were starving but Mahaychuk had more eggs than he knew what to do with and refused to buy more. My father called him names and threatened him, but Mahaychuk wouldn't buy the eggs.

Next my father carried the sack of eggs to the hotel where the train crews were fed. They also didn't want any eggs.

He went to see Deleyova Mary at the Co-op store. Although she was a good woman, the store didn't need any eggs nor could she trade him 13 dozen eggs for a tin of Zinc ointment.

Go and see Harry, the manager, she told my father.

Harry was in an office above the store from where he could look down and see that nobody was stealing anything. My father climbed up those stairs but Harry also told him the store didn't need any eggs. Harry advised him to go see a friend of his who was a retired doctor living at the other end of town. If this didn't work, he should throw the eggs into a ditch and return, and Harry would give him a can of ointment.

Father went to see the retired doctor. The man listened to his story, took the eggs, and then gave him 25 cents.

With 25 cents, my father could buy the larger can of ointment. They used up the whole can. Where the scalds weren't oozing, they were dry and cracked so that any movement was painful. My mother covered a thin

cloth with the ointment and covered Rose's buttocks and legs with it. Over this she put a diaper. The cloth didn't stick then and could be changed often. The child could move again. The infection also cleared up with this treatment and there weren't any scars left afterwards.

## Khango

If you wanted to be a farmer, you had to have horses. If a family had no horses, they could never hope to scratch even subsistence from Alberta soil. But my parents had been on the farm for about five years and had no horses.

Those who came from Russian Ukraine could go on relief. Since Canada did not have diplomatic relations with the USSR, there were no ships going that way to send people home on. The rest of the people, including my parents, who came from Polish-occupied Ukraine or Belorussia, could be deported and could not, therefore, go on relief. They had to be farmers, or else.

In 1935 Biletsky decided to sell out. Since he had built a house and it was no better anywhere else, he returned again after the harvest. But in the spring, he was selling out. Being a comrade, he came to see my father first. Father had made some money on squirrels and in the spring he bought the old mare Chickamarda from Biletsky for \$14.

Chickamarda came so cheap because she was over 30 years old. She was a bronco from one of those ranches around Sexsmith and broncos weren't very strong, though willing to work themselves to death. They were originally Indian horses and were caught in southern Alberta for sale in the Peace River Country. If you galloped Chickamarda and urged her on, she would just keep running until she collapsed. A neighbour who borrowed her said she was an amazing mare and could even understand what you said to her. Her preferred language was Ukrainian and like the Ukrainians, she was willing to work until she dropped.

Sergei Lucuk also owned a mare, only his was a proper mare for which he had paid \$150. Now that they had one horse each, Lucuk and my father planned to team up for seeding. Sergei's being the proper mare, he got the team first.

After the first day's work, my father went to see Chickamarda. He found her standing in front of the feed trembling all over and unable to eat. Lucuk said she had worked eagerly in the morning but that he'd had to get a willow whip for the rest of the day. She just couldn't keep up with the proper mare, poor old Chickamarda.

You can't be a farmer with one old bronco, even if she could understand Ukrainian.

One morning late in the summer, Biletsky came riding over on Nellie with Nellie's colt following behind. Khango was a very pretty horse when he grew up and my father says he was even prettier when he was a colt. Nellie was also a bronco but although they were small horses, they were really pretty. Khango was still sucking and there was lots of good range in those days so Nellie was well fed and had lots of good milk for her colt. He was a beautiful colt, dancing along behind her, full of energy and skipping about our yard while she grazed.

But my father didn't have a penny. In the spring he had money from squirrels, but among other things he had spent it on that year was the naturalization which cost \$5. Now it was nearing harvest, and there wasn't a penny left. Biletsky wanted him to buy the mare and colt.

But I don't have even five cents, my father told him.

Ask how much at least, Biletsky urged.

It doesn't matter how much, I don't have any money.

Thirty dollars for the two of them. Isn't that a bargain? Ten dollars now and \$20 after the harvest.

It's a bargain all right, but I don't have the money.

Regretfully, Biletsky got on Nellie and rode away, with the beautiful colt dancing along beside them.

Sereda lived on the neighbouring farm. They had cut a trail through the bush so they could visit each other and could also watch each other's yards. There wasn't any other method of amusement except watching your neighbour. My father says when he was looking for work, he would pass by rich people's houses and it would be all warm and pretty inside and there would be a radio playing. *Shche radio hraye*. That, for some reason, aroused the most envy and bitterness. Since they had no radio, Sereda came over to find out what Biletsky wanted. My father told him about Nellie and her pretty colt and told him Biletsky only wanted \$10 down because he was a comrade.

Sereda remarked it was a great pity to pass up such a bargain and said he had \$10 which he was keeping for binder repairs. Machinery was really expensive in those days, even second-hand machinery. Until that harvest, they had all used scythes and sickles and harvested by hand, but that year Sereda had bought an old binder from Kowaliuk, what is called a three-horse binder because it was only six feet long.

Sereda offered to loan my father the \$10 he had been keeping for binder repairs.

What if your binder breaks down?

We will pray to God that it doesn't, Sereda replied, and they both laughed since they were communists and atheists.

My mother also thought it was a good idea to buy the horses. She was always present when there were visitors. My father says it was because she was hospitable and nobody could leave the house without at least

having a cup of tea. The amount of sugar they went through was amazing. He says he always meant to speak to her about it, but never did. When I knew her, my mother didn't appear so hospitable, so perhaps she only wanted to know what was going on.

After tea and discussion, Sereda went home and returned with the \$10. My father walked over to Biletsky's and came back riding Nellie, with Khango skipping along behind.

Now they had to worry about the binder. My father went over Sereda's field, picking up roots and rocks and any sticks the children might have left lying around. But after all that, Sereda went only about 60 feet before the binder broke down.

They unscrewed the broken part, but there wasn't anything you could do without money. There wasn't such a thing as credit in those days. You either had the money or you went without.

Sereda had given my father the money and now it was up to my father to get it back for repairs. After careful consideration of the matter, they decided that Chiruck had money, maybe even more than \$10. So my father went to Chiruck's. They were surprised to see him. Not being revolutionaries, they had few social dealings with my parents.

You never come to see us, Stepan Chiruck said, so it must be that there is something wrong.

*Stepanku, sokoliku*, my father said, because that is how you talk when you are asking for help. *Stepanku, sokoliku*, I need \$10 and it doesn't matter how much interest you charge. I will earn the money during threshing and pay you back. He told them the story to which they listened attentively. Then Chiruck looked at his wife and said: Zos'ka, we must help this man. They gave my father \$10.

Sereda took the money, and putting the broken binder part in a sack, went walking to Sexsmith. It was 24 miles each way but peasants would rather walk than ride horseback. It only takes you one day to recover after walking 50 miles, whereas after riding that far bareback, it would take two weeks to recover. He got the new part, fixed the binder, and then harvested both his field and my family's.

My father says he had a lot of land cleared by then, maybe six acres already. It was all seeded to oats. When wheat freezes, there is hardly any left while frozen oats yields the same number of bushels per acre and is good enough for feed. After the bush was all cleared there were no longer such devastating frosts but at first, they seeded only oats. They worked for each other on a day for a day basis but if one man worked for another with horses, then it was seven days for one.

While Sereda and my father were harvesting, Chiruck was seized for deportation. When the police arrived, Chiruckka sent the children to hide and the police didn't want to take her without the children so they took only Chiruck away.

Chiruck was being deported because they said he was crazy. It had all begun the year before when he shot a cow moose and her calf for food. They had four children to feed. Someone must have reported him because the police never came snooping around on their own. They found the meat, and because moose in those days was more important than children, Chiruck was sent to jail for three months. As a result, he developed severe emotional difficulties and was transferred to a mental hospital for a time.

Zosya was Chiruck's second wife, the first one having died. They loved each other as no other peasants ever did. They rejoiced in each other's presence and would not even go to the fields except hand in hand. The result of their love was four children in rapid succession. The men often talked among themselves about birth control. The only method they knew was *coitus interruptus* which Chiruck said didn't work for him because he lost consciousness at the critical second. So they had all these children but they still loved each other.

In the mental hospital he had been examined by a doctor who said his illness was hereditary and that none of his children would be any good, which, of course, was not true.

My father was at the post office when Chiruchka got the letter from the government. Nick Zaichkowsky translated it for her. Zaichkowsky's had a bunch of teenage boys who had been to English school in Manitoba and did the translating for everyone. The letter said that unless she agreed to have Chiruck sterilized, they would all be deported. I don't suppose Nick knew the difference between sterilization and castration and my father didn't either. That is how farm animals are sterilized. Certainly, Chiruchka understood the letter to mean that her husband must be castrated. Then and there she directed Nick Zaichkowsky to write a letter of refusal.

There were no further letters and no one came to explain anything. The police came and took Chiruck away but Chiruchka had hidden the children. After that, she left the children with different neighbours and herself hid in the bush.

My father was working on the edges of his field with a scythe, cutting down the grain the binder couldn't get at. She came out of the bush, and all these years later, my father told me:

She emerged from the swampy bush at the edge of the field on a hot day. I remember every detail of that bush and I even remember the way the sweat trickled down my face as I worked.

Give me back my \$10, she said.

My father explained that while he sympathized with them in their sorrow, he didn't have the money. He said he would send it to her after the harvest. She said she didn't believe he would send the money after they were gone. Then she fell on her knees before him and started

cursing.

The curses were the only power peasant women had. She could wish upon my father all manner of horrors such as that he would spend ten times \$10 on hospital bills for his wife and child, and there is no way to escape a peasant woman's curses.

He dropped the scythe and cried: Zos'ka, Zos'ka, *ni klinni, ni klinni*, I will get the money for you somehow!

Then he ran home in a frenzy to put on clean clothes.

Where are you going to go? my mother asked.

I don't know. Perhaps I will go see Joe Roslanowsky and he will advise me.

Joe Roslanowsky was another comrade. He served a function that perhaps priests or doctors serve in other societies. He was a wise man, Joe was, and always knew what was happening and could advise a person on the correct thing to do. He didn't have any money himself, but my father thought he might know who did have money. Perhaps if Chiruchka had gone to Joe with that government letter, the whole thing would have turned out differently, but now the tragedy had been set in motion and could not be stopped.

My father washed and dressed and then put on his boots, in preparation for the walk to Rycroft. As he was leaning over to lace his boots, there was a scream from behind him and Pol'na leaped on him, sticking her hand down the front of his pants.

This, you understand, was peasant humour, my father explained. Pol'na, in particular, made a specialty of grabbing people.

My father threw her off, muttering *yakoho chorta*.

What's wrong with him? Pol'na asked my mother. My mother apologized for Father being so nervous and told her the story.

Ah, said Pol'na, that is trouble indeed. I am on relief and I am not allowed to have money, but I have \$10. If they find out, I will be cut off relief and maybe punished.

They talked about it for a time and agreed the situation was desperate enough to take the risk. My mother went home with Pol'na and Leo Litke handed her the \$10 they had hidden.

My father knew some of the Chiruck children were staying with Trikhon but they only came there to eat and otherwise stayed out in the bush because Trikhon, too, was worried about deportation. He found Chiruchka and gave her the money. He said nothing; nor did she.

Chiruchka had been advised by someone to go and see a lawyer, which she did, and then he came from Sexsmith to see her and told her to bring the children home. She paid him the \$10, and as well, killed and plucked a dozen chickens for his fee, though he must have been paid by the police as well.

A lot of people had heard she called a lawyer and people came from all



around to see this phenomenon. But now that Chiruchka brought her children home, the police arrived.

There were two policemen and a one policewoman. About 200 people had gathered in Chiruck's yard to see what the lawyer would do. The police looked nervously at all the people and the people immediately began explaining the facts of life to them. This continued for most of the day. Finally the police said that in view of the public support the Chiruck family had, they would not be deported. The policewoman even kissed Chiruchka to show her everything was all right. Chiruchka was thus convinced of their sincerity and beamed with joy. *Teper ya seru matiri nashim voroham*, she said. The police told her they would go and arrange with the government to bring her beloved Stepan back, and went away.

The people then dispersed, pleased to see a happy ending for a change. Chiruchka and her children went to be in joy and security. But the police had only hidden in Lee Otto's bush and in the night they fell upon Chiruchka and the children and took them away.

The next day a neighbour discovered that Chiruck's animals were unfed and then the people realized the duplicity. But there wasn't anything they could do about it since they lived in such precarious circumstances themselves. The animals had to be fed, so they held an auction sale and sold them. People bought the animals with the agreement that they would pay for them after the harvest. They also agreed if the Chirucks came back, they would each return to them the animals they had bought. My father was secretary for all this, recording who had bought what and how much they owed.

My father earned money on the threshing near Rycroft that year. It was a great fortune because not only didn't he have to go far, but he made over \$60. He paid Biletsky the other \$20 for the horses, and tried to pay Pol'na interest on the borrowed \$10, but she refused and accepted only an even \$10. He even had enough money to loan Tarnowski \$30 with which to pay for Chiruck's horse.

When everyone was through threshing, my father collected all the money for Chiruck's animals and took it to the police to send to her. The police sent the money to the Chirucks in the Old Country but she refused to take it. It was such a small amount to pay for all the years of work, and the bitterness. I don't know what happened to the money.

But that was how my father got to be a farmer with horses.

## Still the Depression

The winter of 1935-36 was the coldest on record. The cold broke in March—by the end of May it was 98 above. During the third week in July it was over 100 every day in southern Alberta and Saskatchewan.

In southern Alberta, the C.P.R. used snowplows to clear the tracks of soil drifts 10 feet high. From Calgary to Winnipeg there was almost nothing but dust, in a bowl that extended clear down to Texas. Within the bowl was stifling heat, as if someone had left the furnace doors open and the blowers on. (Gray, 1968:110)

In 1936, the number of farmers increased by seven per cent. Farmers in the drought areas had to leave, but the rest sometimes provided their own subsistence or stole grain; therefore people were moved out of cities and onto farms. If they refused to move, they were cut off relief.

In November 1935, there were 1,036,459 Canadians on relief. In November 1936, the figure was 1,100,025 out of a Canadian population of about ten million. Hundreds of thousands were not allowed relief but left to scabble subsistence from the soil, or die.

The Women's Council of the CCF in Calgary protested the appalling conditions of single unemployed women, who were expected to survive on \$3.50 a week. Neither in Calgary nor elsewhere were there any protests about women being forced into prostitution. Then as now, only the women were punished—the people and situations which forced them into prostitution were ignored.

The only people who had all the employment they needed during the depression were the police. They caught grain thieves and bootleggers. At least, they called them grain thieves. But since people only stole small amounts of grain, like 50 or 100 bushels at a time, it was obvious even to the police they were not thieves, but hungry people with hungry children. In addition to jailing the desperate, the RCMP administered relief in rural districts.

Finally the Liberals closed down the single men's relief camps. There had been 20,000 men in them in 1936.

It remained illegal for certain people to walk down the street. This included unemployed, strikers, and others of that ilk. On December 16, 1936, nineteen unemployed men were arrested for walking down the street in Calgary.

An intense class struggle took place in Calgary in the 1930's. I remember once when the unemployed, who were working for relief, went on strike. Strike-breakers were found. A few hundred put up a

battle. The police came and wouldn't let us go to the city—they were chasing us out to the fields. I had a small child then. Late in the evening, I returned home.

The police dealt brutally with demonstrators in Calgary. Many people were arrested and locked up in jails.

I remember how the unemployed gathered in a large hall for their meeting in July, 1931. I also went to that meeting. When one of the leaders of the unemployed was speaking, the mounties on horses came right into the hall. They turned off the light and started beating people. Among those present, panic broke out: women screamed, some tried to break through to the doors. I hid in a corner because I was afraid I would be crushed, as I was pregnant.

Frightened, I barely made it home, and lay down to rest. Suddenly I heard a commotion outside—voices, knocking. People came to us and told us the police had beaten Ivan Shemerh and we must hide him and give him first aid. We called the doctor who came to the house and bandaged his bloody head.

I took part in and witnessed many battles of the unemployed and the police at the time of the economic crisis. One time the unemployed started marching on the city council. At the head of the demonstration went Sophia Shaynin. The police arrived and beat her bloody and then pulled her along the pavement to jail.

In 1938, I got a job in a hotel and worked there seven days a week—without even one day off. I worked eight hours a day. In the evenings after returning from work, I went to the Ukrainian Workers Home for conferences, meetings, rehearsals. (Tatyana Samkulay. *Life and Word*, February 28, 1972. Translated from Ukrainian.)

In July 1936, several hundred unemployed marched on the Legislature in Edmonton demanding the closing of the soup kitchens and asking for a cash—voucher system. They weren't arrested but neither were their demands acceded to.

After 1936 there were no more large protests of the unemployed. Perhaps this was due to repression, or perhaps disillusionment with a whole series of self-appointed leaders of the people. Leaders were almost as numerous as grasshoppers in Saskatchewan. After the election of Social Credit, people despaired in silence.

One of the platforms of Social Credit was that only experts could understand the economy and decide what had to be done. Who could be more of an expert than the man who invented the whole thing? Major C. H. Douglas arrived from England. In March, however, he went home in a huff, proclaiming that Aberhart was not a true believer. R. J. Magor, the next "special financial adviser," also soon went away.

The promised \$25 never appeared. But in the summer some public workers were paid in the new scrip. Most merchants accepted it as money

after initial hesitation. In June and July of 1936, \$360,000 of these "prosperity certificates" were issued. A person named Charles Grant took the matter to court and the funny money was declared illegal.

All monetary reforms by Aberhart were nullified by Ottawa—playing monopoly is, apparently, the exclusive privilege of the federal government. This may have been fortunate for Aberhart; from then on he didn't have to do anything more than sit back and blame the federal government for everything. His greatest talent was bombast and rhetoric and that was all that was now required by the situation. The only problem was that the media ridiculed him something awful. He passed a censorship law—this was also nullified by the federal government.

In June 1936, Mackenzie King's government repealed Section 98 of the Criminal Code and the Communist Party was no longer illegal. At this time the Party reversed its policy of supporting independent unions. Therefore, in 1936 the Mine Workers' Union of Canada conference in Calgary voted to transfer its members back to the UMW. Within the next two years, District 18 of the UMW gained control of nearly all the miners in Alberta and B.C.

Another aspect of the new policy was the forming of united fronts. From regarding social democrats as greater enemies than capitalism, the Party now wished to make alliances with them.

What lay behind this policy was the threat of Fascism in Europe. On July 19, 1936 Spanish monarchists, with the help of German and Italian Fascists, began a war against the elected government of Spain. Fascism changed from a distant theory to an entity which must be fought. In September 1936, the Canadian Communist Party was asked to support Spain. A "Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy" was formed to sponsor and finance Dr. Norman Bethune's field medical unit. One thousand, two hundred and eighty three Canadians joined the Mackenzie-Papineau battalion.

The problems at home were almost overwhelming. The cold winter of 1935-36 was followed by a summer of record heat. Grasshoppers, rust, sawflies, ruined what little crop there was. This continued into 1937. The estimate for the 1937 wheat crop was 162 million bushels, the lowest in Canada's history. Agriculture Minister J. G. Gardiner said there were 70,000 farmers in western Canada with no crop and no feed. Many people in the drought areas of Alberta and Saskatchewan were showing signs of scurvy and other diseases of malnutrition.

The unemployed of Drumheller held a rally to ask for coal and clothing. They were told to have patience.

Patience won't keep you warm, nor can you eat it. More people than ever were stealing grain in 1937. A man named Steve Semeniuk, charged with stealing grain, strangled himself in his jail cell in Lamont.

It has now become routine procedure for subversive elements, following any police action, to immediately accuse the police of unnecessary brutality, intoxication and similar offences, and demand an investigation in the hope that they will have much to gain by such publicity at no cost. (*Sessional Papers*. Annual Report of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for the year 1938.)

As we have seen, the police only beat on demonstrators, strikers, farmers, freight riders, transients, foreigners, and the unemployed, so there was certainly no evidence of brutality.

During these times the media had a particularly important role to play in preserving the status quo. The glamour of Hollywood was pushed with desperation to keep people distracted, and particularly, to keep women in their place.

Studios, purporting to ease the anguish of the Depression reality, transformed movies into the politics of fantasy, the great black-and-white opiate of the masses. (*Ms.* April, 1974. p. 44)

The preservation of capitalism has always depended on the unpaid labour of women. During the depression, the newspapers, radio and movies perfected some of the techniques which have been used ever since to persuade everyone there actually was a women's place. The economic situation had reduced women to powerlessness and despair. That wasn't enough—women had to be made to accept this as their lot and women had to act happy about their lot. Here is some advice from Dorothy Dix:

. . . When the gray mare is the better horse there is likely to be a smash-up.

On the other hand, there is nothing that makes so much for the success of a marriage as for the wife to regard the husband as a little tin god, and to hang upon every word as if it were the inspired utterance of an oracle. When the wife begins every sentence with "John says," it is a certificate of domestic bliss strong enough to draw money on at the bank. (*Edmonton Bulletin*. October 15, 1937)

It is interesting that she uses a financial metaphor. The lot of single women was economically unfeasible, and one had to placate a husband in order to live. Women had dropped a long way from the partially successful struggle for independence of the 1920's.

The newspapers and movies also showed them pictures of what they must look like if they were to catch and keep a man. A caption under one picture read:

Lovely and blonde, Doris Nolan, young motion picture star is the epitome of glamor—that elusive quality that so many words are bandied back and forth about these days. She has beauty—real

beauty, a good deal of charm, ability and, of course, sex appeal, apparently the fundamental of glamor. Notice her widow's peak, the fullness of her lips, how wide her eyes, how perfectly shaped her nose. (Edmonton *Bulletin*. October 15, 1937)

Maybe wide eyes would help a person steal grain. Women's teeth were falling out from scurvy, their children cried from hunger, but they were required to worry about that elusive something, for fear of losing what little support they did have.

There were more pleasant diversions. Joe Louis became the new heavyweight boxing champion. The Dionne quintuplets were born.

But another important diversion was racism. Although everybody had a hard time getting a job, Jews and Ukrainians were particularly vulnerable.

Once public attention focussed antagonistically on the aliens, it stayed there. The Canadian Legion clamoured for employers to fire aliens and give their jobs to veterans. During the next two years, more than 10,000 new Canadians were deported, and twice as many, mainly of British birth, left voluntarily. (Gray, 1968: 131)

Racism was acceptable in the 1930's just as it is now becoming acceptable once again and scientists are being paid to "discover" the innate inferiority of certain people. Back in 1937, Major Douglas of the Social Credit decided it was all the fault of the Jews and that there was an international Jewish conspiracy to take over the world. Many of his followers were also of this opinion and anti-semitism became an integral part of the Social Credit doctrine. Fortunately, Aberhart had never been a proper follower of Douglas and although Aberhart was probably no less anti-semitic than anyone else in the 30's, anti-semitism was only of marginal importance to Alberta's Social Credit party.

In 1936, a group of people led by Daniel Lobay, Chwaliboga, and others, broke away from the ULFTA (which was closely associated with the Communist Party) to form the Ukrainian Workers League. This group is unique in the history of Ukrainian Canadians in that they were independent communists. In 1935 and 1936 there was a bitter factional struggle among Ukrainian Canadians. Lobay's group lost the dispute. The League remained an insignificant minority and eventually joined the Nationalists.

The Ukrainian Communist newspaper had been the *Ukrainian Labour News* from 1919 to 1937. In 1937, it changed its name to *People's Gazette* and continued until it was banned in 1940.

The struggles of the unemployed went on. In Edmonton the conference of the unemployed heard from Mah Kim, who said that Chinese people on relief got only \$1.26 a week. The government claimed the Chinese Benevolent Society was looking after the rest, but it wasn't true.

"We've helped build your railroads, your mines and your factories," he said. "We have done most of your menial work although we are not ashamed of that. We have lived here from ten to forty years and when the depression came we were still asked to accept, in fact we were forced to accept, the lowest in relief standards. (*The People's Weekly*, Edmonton. March 20, 1937)

There was a bitter and probably unsuccessful strike in 1937 for recognition of National Unions. It began in April at Swift's, Burns, and Gainers meat packing plants. These plants appear to have hired mostly women, many of them Ukrainian. Strikes also began at the New Method and Snowflake laundries for a 44 hour week and a minimum wage of \$25 a week for men and \$18 for women. Victor Thompson, organizer for National Unions, said there were five strikes in progress. Three picketers were sentenced to six weeks and thirty days for alleged assault on scabs. Like many other strikes, this one appears to have petered out with police brutality and extreme financial duress.

For the rich, and for those who had decent jobs, life wasn't much different during the 30's than any other time. A small amount of money could buy a large amount of goods. People went to movies, bowled, curled, played softball. The unemployed—the 20 per cent or so on relief—were segregated and silenced.

## 1938-1939: Unity

1937 was the last of the disaster years for Alberta farmers although they remained poor. But there were a great many tragedies yet to go.

The government was paying \$5 a month to any farmer who would keep a hired hand through the winter and if the hired hand stayed through the winter, he also got \$5 from the government. Nick Boychuk of Kaleland was one of the many farmers with such an employee in the winter of 1937-38. Nick Boychuk was not a communist. The man they sent him from Edmonton, Nick Pohorischuk, was a communist. This, in itself, is not important. But Nick Boychuk lived in the usual mean, one-room shack and there was nowhere for the other Nick to be except in the same shack. The two men had to be in constant intimate contact with one another, for \$5 a month each.

Winters in Alberta are long and cold. The shack was made of logs and mud as were most Ukrainian homes. The two Nicks, one a communist and one not, were stuck with it and with each other—a winter's jail sentence and death for one of them. They never even had a major quarrel about whether or not communism was better than capitalism. There were just the thousands of minor annoyances of living in a prison of mud and logs.

Pohorischuk didn't like Boychuk's cat.

There was blood all over the shack of mud and logs, and blood all over the snow around the house. Neither one of them used a weapon; they fought most of one day using their fists and feet and heads, collapsed with fatigue, and fought again. Nick Pohorischuk died.

Nick Boychuk cried and said he was sorry and that he had never intended to kill the man. But winters in Alberta are long and cold. Because it was considered that Pohorischuk's communism was a provocation, Boychuk got only five years for manslaughter.

The surprising thing about the stories of murder and violence was that there were not more of them. James Gray attributes the decline in violent crimes to the fact that nobody could afford to buy liquor. This may partially account for it, although during the first world war, not many people could afford liquor and the incidence of violent crime was very high.

There are probably a number of additional explanations. Until Spain, there were no wars. There were many groups preaching non-violence and the whole situation made violence socially unacceptable. When men are trained to kill, they kill. When murder is socially disapproved and when the punishment for crimes against persons are at least as severe as crimes against property, the incidence of violent crime diminishes.

Another reason for decrease in violence would have been more apparent than real. Assaults on women were rarely reported. Rape of domestic labourers was common but there wasn't anything the women could do about it. Wife-beating went unreported, due to the hopeless economic situation of women.

In August 1938, the Whitford provincial constituency held a meeting for farmers at which the executive of Social Credit, UFA, CCF, and the Communist Party were present. John Boychuk was chairman. This group called for a mass meeting. Therefore on September 4, 1938, two hundred farmers met at Willingdon and were addressed by William Halina and Herb Boutillier.

The United Farmers of Canada, Saskatchewan section, had called for a grain strike to protest the low price of wheat and the fact that there was no farmers' representative on the Wheat Board. The meeting at Willingdon decided it was too late for a non-delivery strike as many farmers had already delivered their grain. They made plans for a new organization and on October 27, 1938 the United Farmers of Canada, Alberta section, was begun. It seems to have been a way to send militant farmers back into the UFA. The immediate aims were given as including a moratorium on debt, a livestock marketing board, a minimum price of \$1 for wheat.

In Calgary, 2,000 relief recipients went on strike in April against



reduced relief allowances. On April 27, 13 strikers were arrested for walking down the street.

Between 1935 and 1937, the CIO organizing drive took place, culminating in a series of strikes in 1937. The CIO was organizing industrial unions and thus earned the enmity of the AFL, which only organized skilled workers. Alberta had few industries so this organizing drive meant little to Albertans. In December, 1938 the CLC, under pressure from the AFL, expelled all CIO locals. District 18 UMW was among the unions so expelled. It had always been an industrial union in that it organized everyone working in and around mines, not just the skilled workers.

Social Credit, meanwhile, was making more promises. The Two Hills correspondent commented wryly:

Mr. Aberhart now informs us that Social Credit is about to begin. Let us hope that this prognostician will prove more accurate than some of his earlier prophecies. After three years in power he has still to abolish taxes, pay dividends, arrange the "just price" and perform all those other feats of economic legerdemain of which he talked so glibly in 1935. We have had prosperity certificates without prosperity; solemn pledges and covenants and blue pledges which have left us solemn and blue enough; but have received no dividends and are not aware of any abolition of taxation. So the premier proposes that the party shall celebrate the third anniversary of its one achievement, the winning of an election. It's a poor premier that never rejoices. (*Vegreville Observer*. August 17, 1938)

The "People's League of Alberta" was formed in October, 1936. It was begun by banks, trust companies, insurance agencies, and other financial institutions, who were fearful of Aberhart's monopoly games. The people who had begun this so-called unity movement were of a conservative bent and had the backing of the provincial Conservative party. They invited all the other parties to join them in defeating Social Credit, but the Liberals refused and the UFA said they were already supporting the CCF. In 1937 they held large rallies, but then support began to fall away with charges that leaders were appointed by the business community. Since the charges were true, there wasn't much to be done except to be sneakier about it. The "Unity Council" was formed to replace the "People's League" in June 1938. It was somewhat more democratic but not enough to make any difference. It was challenged by the Independent movement, a loose coalition of Liberals and independents.

Even though there was no effective opposition, Aberhart was having trouble. Not to deliver promises is what bourgeois governments are about, but then they have to pretty up future promises. Dan E. C. Campbell, former editor of the *Texaco News Flashes* at radio station

CFCN was appointed publicity director for the province. Aberhart accused people of being more involved with bottles and cards than with responsible living.

1939 was the best growing season since 1928. The price of wheat was about 70-80 cents a bushel which was probably equal to the cost of production.

The UFA had been discussing the question of politics since their disastrous defeat in 1935, but every such discussion was accompanied by much confusion and no decision was made. Finally at the January 1939 convention, they decided never to enter politics again. The other question over which they agonized for years was whether or not strikes were morally justified.

The United Farmers of Canada had no such problems. The strike plans for the previous year having fizzled, the Alberta and Saskatchewan sections again planned a grain strike for 1939. They printed up manifestoes—1,000 in English and 1,000 in Ukrainian, but once again strike plans didn't work out.

After the King and Queen came to visit, the local rulers of Alberta breathed a sigh of relief that the Ukrainians had behaved so well during the visit.

In 1939 the Communist Party was said to have 16,000 members. They were still mostly Ukrainian, Jewish, and Finnish. The number of Finnish members dropped after the factional dispute accompanying Macdonald's expulsion. Also, a group of Finnish Canadians had gone to live in the Soviet Union and disappeared. The Russian attack on Finland in 1939 confused many Canadians. Nevertheless, ULFTA membership went up to 15,000 in 1938.

The communist policy of united fronts didn't work very well. Social Credit refused to be drawn in. The Communist Party supported the Liberals for a short time in 1939, justifying this by saying Mackenzie King was preferable to the Conservatives.

In spite of the theory, the Communist Party in practice did not promote women's equality. Women were allowed to participate only in the lowly capacity of doing most of the work, without credit. It wasn't considered nice for women to want positions as paid organizers, or to participate in demonstrations except by preparing food for them. Young Ukrainian women rebelled often and criticized their fathers for the way they treated their mothers. But they were defeated by the male chauvinism of the Ukrainian culture and of the larger Canadian society. Young women were considered sex objects in the Party as elsewhere and more likely to be assaulted or ridiculed than to be listened to. Many women quit the party out of sheer disgust, or were forced to leave by the barrage of ridicule. This left the men free to be organizers at the expense of their wives and

families.

The percentage of women in the party never rose above 15 per cent. At the same time that the Party leaders were trying to recruit more women, they ridiculed women's groups who worked for birth control. The Women's Labour League got its incorrect line straightened out when Tim Buck's wife became the leader.

William Halina was appointed as the federal candidate for the Progressive Party in Willingdon. Jan Lakeman was running in Edmonton. Neither one was elected.

William Halina arrived in Canada with his mother and father when he was nine years old. They went to a homestead near Lake Eliza in 1910.

In the old country, I finished three grades of elementary school. Here I learned the English alphabet. And because there was no school near the homestead, I studied from the Eaton's catalogue. This was my education.

I observed how our people lived. Life was meager, difficult, and from all sides injustice faced us. We wanted to struggle against it.

I was restless and wanted desperately to do something. My community activity began in the struggle when I was elected by the municipality to the school board. Here we worked for schools, road-building.

When we sold the farm, we moved to the town of Myrnam. I bought a garage. After some time, I got rid of it and opened a store. I also became an auctioneer.

In Myrnam I took part in the activities of the ULFTA, in the building of a hospital, helped build the cooperative movement, was a member of the provincial cooperative executive, took part in many cooperative conventions. In a word, I worked in those institutions and brotherhoods where I saw that I could contribute something.

In my belief in community work, I paid too little attention to family life. At home was a wife and four children. Sometimes there was a shortage of bread. My wife brought this to my attention but I was so engaged in work that I just had no time for household affairs. The children grew, went to school, and then came the necessity to study at university. Therefore, I was forced to think seriously, to give the children a proper education. (*Life and Word*. August 26, 1974. Translated from Ukrainian.)

Halina was a Communist candidate for Vegreville. Later, the family moved to Vernon, B.C. where he worked in the hospital office. He became an alderman, then Mayor of Vernon.

Meanwhile, a portion of the Ukrainian nationalists were preserving their tradition of supporting the wrong side. Hitler had promised an independent Ukraine and thus earned the support of the Ukrainian

National Federation from 1933. In March 1938, there was a convention of this group held in the east. Wasyl Swystun was the main speaker at the banquet concluding this convention. Among other things he said was that "the Soviet was our greatest danger." Also at the head table was Karl Gustav Kropp, Consul of Nazi Germany. (Davies, 1943: 23)

Other Fascist supporters in Canada in the 30's included the Blackshirts, the National Unity Party, and a few smaller groups and individuals.

Many Canadians volunteered to fight the Fascists in Spain and there were soldiers from 35 nations fighting there. In October 1938, the Spanish republic disbanded the International Brigade. The reason given was that this would counter propaganda that it wasn't the Spanish people themselves doing the fighting. Many soldiers didn't agree with this action but they followed orders and went home. Nearly 250 Ukrainian Canadians had been killed in Spain.

Hitler now knew he could attack smaller countries with impunity and in 1938, Germany took Austria and Sudetenland. On August 25, 1939 the Stalin-Hitler non-aggression pact was signed.

On September 1, Hitler attacked Poland. Two days later, Britain declared war on Germany. A week later, Canada also declared war. Canada no longer had to be at war automatically if Britain was, but they still needed the King's approval of their own Declaration, which He gave on September 10, 1939.

Censorship was made stricter but never reached the levels of World War I. Nobody was allowed to make public statements about things that would reflect unfavourably on Canada's defence, or His Majesty, or His Majesty's Allies, or about anything to discourage recruitment and discipline in the army. The police went around interning Nazis and closing down sources of anti-war propaganda.

Transients immediately joined the army. It's about all men can do who have not worked for many years and have lost their skills through years of disuse. They were taught to kill and sent overseas. Very little grain was stolen in 1939.



**9**

# **The Second World War**



# War Measures Act

In June 1940, the *Canada Gazette* published a list of banned organizations. They were: Communist Party of Canada, League of Young Communists, Canadian Workers' Defence League, Ukrainian Labour Farmer Temple Association (ULFTA), M. Gorky Russian Worker-Farmer Clubs, Horvat Cultural Association. The outlawing was done by order-in-council under the Defence of Canada Regulations.

Immediately after this announcement, the police began arresting people and sending them to concentration camps. Jacob Penner in Winnipeg was the first to be arrested. John Navis (Ivan Naviziwsky), manager of the *Ukrainian People's Gazette*, was arrested June 13. Matthew Popowich, Tom Chupruk, Tom Boychuk, and others were arrested in another roundup. Another mass arrest in July included Matthew Shatulsky and Peter Prokopchak. Later, John Boychuk was also interned. Altogether, 36 Ukrainian left-wing leaders were arrested. Many went into hiding and were never caught, but those interned included all the editorial staff of all the newspapers.

The eastern internees were sent to Petawawa and those from the west, to Kanaskis, in the foothills of the Rockies in Alberta.

All internees in this concentration camp, even if they were civilians and Canadian citizens, were classified as "prisoners-of-war." (Krawchuk, 1963: 32. Translated from Ukrainian.)

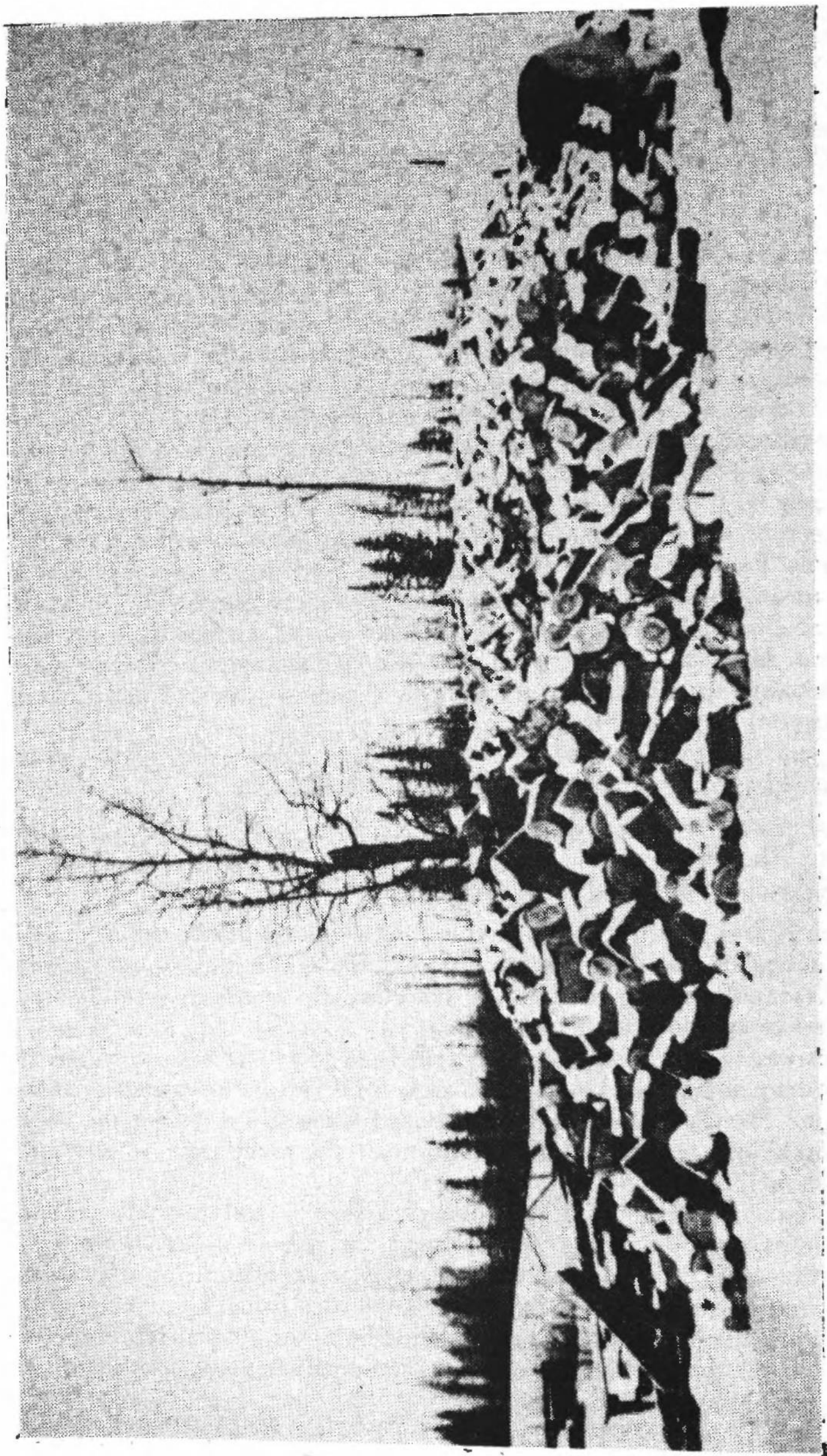
As in WW I, the Ukrainian Communists did not blame the capitalist government for their internment, but said it was the fault of uninterned Fascists, masquerading as patriots, who turned the government against progressive people. (Krawchuk, 1963: 32)

There were 110 Communists interned. They were put in camps already occupied by some Germans and Italians who were Nazi sympathizers, and some French Canadians who opposed Canada's entering the war. The immediate reaction of the communist internees was to demand separate facilities.

The legal basis for the internment was the Defence of Canada Regulations imposed under the authority of the War Measures Act. Under the same regulations, the property of the banned groups was confiscated and turned over to the Custodian of Enemy Property. The Ukrainian Halls were raided, books and documents destroyed. Some of the halls were given to the Nationalists, some sold to private individuals, others just padlocked and abandoned.

The ULFTA had 20,000 members when it was declared illegal, and





Our woodpile, probably taken in 1950's. (Rose Ames Collection—copied and processed by Vision Works)

published two newspapers: *Ukrainian People's Gazette* and *Farmer's Life*, with a circulation of 18,000. The ULFTA owned 113 buildings worth about \$1,000,000 and printing equipment valued at \$60,000. This property had been developed and preserved during the depression from the quarters and dimes people could not afford to give. It was all confiscated. The only left-wing Ukrainian organization not banned was the Worker's Benevolent Society.

The printshop of the *Ukrainian People's Gazette* was confiscated and sold to the Nationalist paper *New Pathway*. Books were burned or shredded for no other reason than that they had been printed in the USSR. Among the books so destroyed were: Shevchenko's *Kobzar*, *Eugene Onegin* by Pushkin, *War and Peace* by Leo Tolstoy, *King Lear* by William Shakespeare, *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens, and many others. Many papers and documents were also destroyed. In some cases, people burned things themselves in anticipation of a police raid. Thus much valuable historical material was lost forever.

For everyone else, life went on as before. Social Credit easily won the election of March 21, 1940 in Alberta. The drought and depression were over and Social Credit had been present at this ending, so they were bound to win. They got 63 per cent of the seats.

Well, it is the God-given right of the people of Alberta to suffer another four or five years if they like it that way. (Vegreville *Observer*. March 27, 1940)

In the federal election, Mackenzie King and the Liberals were returned. Unemployment insurance was introduced after all the years of agitation, but an important part of the demand—that it be non-contributory—was ignored.

The United Church was initially opposed to conscription but the Roman Catholics said they weren't mealy-mouthed pacifists. (Vegreville *Observer*. November 15, 1940) Although Canada had no good reason to be in the war, J. S. Woodsworth was the only M.P. who voted against it.

An order-in-council was passed under the authority of the War Measures Act restricting wages and wage increases. Caught up in the hysteria, union leaders did not oppose it.

## Ukrainian Canadian Committee

There were some Ukrainians who were Fascist sympathizers. These, the government treated with tender care for they were anti-communist and, as everyone knows, this is more important than being pro-fascist. The trouble was that the anti-communists were so fragmented as to be ineffective. The government set about uniting them under a plan worked out by the Department of National War Services after consultation with the Department of External Affairs.

For the job, they hired university professors. (University professors are paid to study people in case they should have to be controlled.) Under the guidance of Watson Kirkconnell, a professor from McMaster University, the Ukrainian National Federation and the Ukrainian Catholic Brotherhood formed the "Representative Committee of Ukrainian Canadians" in February, 1940.

In May, another such expert, Professor W. G. Simpson from Saskatchewan, persuaded three other groups to form the "Central Representative Ukrainian Canadian Committee of Canada."

The two groups thus formed failed to come to an agreement—Tracey Phillips was sent by the government to Winnipeg to do further persuasion. In November, 1940 the Ukrainian Canadian Committee (KYK) was formed.

The Ukrainian Canadian Veterans' Association joined in 1946 to become the sixth member. In the 1950's, several more groups joined the Committee, among them the Ukrainian Evangelical Church, the Ukrainian Free Academy of Sciences, and the Shevchenko Scientific Society, the latter two being third wave organizations.

Professor Kirkconnell claimed that the Committee in 1940 included all legal Ukrainian groups and represented 90 per cent of Ukrainian Canadians. In this figure, he included both the Greek Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches even though the churches remained independent of the Committee. He claimed 300,000 members for the Greek Catholic church and 115,000 for the Greek Orthodox. Of the organizations that were actually in the Committee, the membership for the Ukrainian National Federation was given as 19,000 and the United Hetman 2,635. Since Watson Kirkconnell played such a large role in the formation of the Committee, it may be interesting to examine his statements more carefully.

Kirkconnell considered, or said he considered, communists to be "left fascists." In 1943, he made a speech to the First All-Canada Congress of the Ukrainian Canadian Committee. He began relatively mildly by

denouncing the communists as "... wolves who would tear us all to pieces if they had a chance." (p. 3) He painted an idyllic picture of Canada where police protected the citizens and change took place when people wanted it. (p. 6) The only problem with Canada was all them aliens, who constituted a "serious psychological problem."

Working himself up, he called the ULFTA "poison on the pantry shelf."

Bands and orchestras and dances were the icing on the educational cake, but the cake itself was filled with political arsenic. (p. 20)

He said the ULFTA needn't be included in the Committee because it wasn't legal. Further, of its membership of 20,000, Professor Kirkconnell pronounced only 5,000 as "genuine" Ukrainians. (p. 26) He also called the ULFTA a rattlesnake (p. 26), Judas (p. 27), and "20,000 yelping members of a seditious organization." (p. 27) The British, the French, and the Germans were immune to sudden changes in ideology, he said, the unstable foreigners being Ukrainians, Yugoslavs, Poles, Russians, Czechoslovaks, Finns, Hungarians, Bulgarians, Italians, Lithuanians, and Jews. (p. 27)

But it turns out the learned professor himself was also subject to sudden reversals in ideology. In 1929, he had called the Ukrainian nationalists "nazis;" in 1939, he called the Ukrainian National Federation "markedly anti-democratic." By 1940, the professor was a supporter of Federation because it was "radical and republican" and would "work for a free Ukrainian republic." (Davies, 1943: 76-77) The transformation is not that difficult to explain. The professor was being paid by the government to make it. He was also president of the Canadian Authors Association and chairman of the Canadian Writers War Board.

Back to KYK, the largest founding member of the Ukrainian Canadian Committee was the Ukrainian National Federation. (Stechishin sneers at the semantics of a "federation" uniting with others to form a "committee.") The Federation was composed mainly of second wave immigrants and was openly pro-Hitler before the war. They thought Hitler would allow an independent Ukraine. When the war broke out, they pledged loyalty to Canada and the war effort. The UNF was the Canadian branch of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) with headquarters in Berlin. The leader was Andrey Melnyk who replaced Colonel Eugene Konowaletz. Even after they pledged loyalty to the war effort, their newspapers said the Soviet Union, not Germany, was the main enemy. The newspaper in Canada was called *New Pathway* with a circulation of 4,000.

The second of the founding groups was the United Hetman Organization. In 1918, a curious individual named Paul Skoropadsky set up a government in the Ukraine which was supposed to be like the old monarchist, *hetman* government. Skoropadsky was installed by the



German army and faced constant opposition from the Ukrainian people during his short reign. The effect of this on Canada was that in 1924 an organization was formed with the support of the Catholic Bishop Budka which became the United Hetman Organization in 1934. This group supported the claims of Danylo, son of Paul, to the throne of an independent Ukraine. They put out a paper called the *Ukrainian Toiler*. Kirkconnell claimed a membership of 2,635 for the group but the circulation of the paper was less than 1,000. (Davies, 1943: 147)

The third founding member of the Committee was the Ukrainian Self-Reliance League. They were Petlyurists and mostly Orthodox. Another founding member was the Ukrainian Workers' League, later called the Ukrainian Labor Organization, which had been a breakaway group from the ULFTA in 1936. Kirkconnell credits them with 400 members. Neither the Self-Reliance League nor the Ukrainian Workers' League held the extremist views of the first two, which may be the reason government strong-arming was necessary to unite them into one organization.

In 1942, the *Ukrainian News* in Edmonton listed the aims of the Ukrainian Canadian Committee as follows: to help Canada and Britain win the war, to help Ukrainians in Europe in their demands for an independent Ukraine, and to represent Ukrainian Canadians to the government.

The Committee regards itself as the spokesman for the aspirations of the 45,000,000 Ukrainians . . . (Yuzyk, 1967: 47)

That's quite an amazing claim for a group formed by the Canadian government!

The Communist view of the matter was that uniting Ukrainians in Canada was a worthy aim because national unity was necessary to win the war. But they thought the anti-fascist group, "Aid to Fatherland Association" should have been included in the Committee, since it was the largest Ukrainian Canadian group. (Davies, 1943: 51; Kardash, 1942: 30)

It should be stressed that both the formation and policies of the Ukrainian Canadian Committee were determined not by Ukrainians, but by the hired lackeys of the Canadian government. The virulence of the denunciation of the communists indicates the government was planning more for them than concentration camps for the leaders; however, after the Soviet Union became an ally, wiping out the communists became politically incorrect.

The government wasn't satisfied with just setting up the Committee. In 1941, a voluntary advisory committee called "The Committee on Co-operation in Canadian Citizenship, Communities of Recent European Origin" was set up under the Department of National War Services. The

committee's job was officially given as: to mobilize liberal ethnics against the war, combat discrimination against them, promote army recruitment, supply foreign papers with articles by the Writers' War Committee. Among the committee members were: Professor Watson Kirkconnell; Tracey Phillips; Hon. C. H. Blakeny, Minister of Education from New Brunswick; Professor H. F. Angus from UBC; Major J. S. A. Bois, University of Montreal; Donald Cameron, University of Alberta; Dr. S. D. Clark, University of Toronto; Robert England, civil servant, and others.

There was even a token Ukrainian—Dr. Kaye, who was the son of a senator of the Polish parliament and who had been Ukrainian before he changed his name. Dr. Kaye went from a farm in Manitoba to study at the London School of Slavonic Studies, from where he returned in 1940. He was the Committee's liaison officer with the foreign language press.

According to Davies, only two or three of the members did any work, and all this work was concerned with Ukrainian Canadians.

It does not seem to me that the Ukrainian nationalists can be held primarily responsible for the formation of the Ukrainian Canadian Committee. The nationalists were in a difficult position. Their presumably honest desire for an independent Ukraine had led them to be pro-Hitler and while this can be attributed to vile wickedness, it can also be attributed to a serious error in judgment and a total misunderstanding of the situation in Europe. It wasn't only Ukrainians who misunderstood Hitler. Among others who admired Hitler before the war, were Mackenzie King, the Duke of Windsor and Charles Lindbergh.

But having taken this stand, the nationalists were in a difficult position when the war began. They had to prove their loyalty and the government told them they could do this by being more unified about their anti-communism. It wasn't difficult to whip up the long-standing enmity between the two sections of the Ukrainian community. But it could not have happened without the intervention of the capitalist agents.

## Concentration Camps

In 1941, over 1,000 people were in concentration camps. There were 375 Germans and other Nazi sympathizers, 558 Italians, 96 Communists and 29 members of the National Unity Party. After considerable agitation and outside protest, all the Communists were moved to Petawawa in July 1941. In August they refused to work in the camp, protesting being jailed with fascists. The government then transferred them to the prison at Hull, Quebec.

According to the RCMP report of 1941, the Communist Party, although

illegal, continued to have a large and active membership. They were demanding such subversive things as free speech, conscription of wealth, and repeal of the Defence of Canada Regulations, particularly Regulation 21 under which they were interned.

The Communists had problems about what position to take on the war. It was at first going to be a war against Nazi aggression. The line changed after the signing of the Stalin-Hitler pact.

It was an imperialist war, between imperialist powers, for imperialist aims on both sides. (Buck, 1952: 161)

The Party began distributing anti-war literature and denouncing those who wanted to cooperate with the Canadian bourgeoisie in winning the war. This was after years of trying to unite everyone under the banner of anti-fascism.

Then Germany invaded Russia on June 22, 1941, at which time according to Tim Buck (1952: 167), the character of the war changed. The Party united around the slogan "A National Front for Victory" which was adopted by the Political Bureau of the Party on August 28, 1941. The "imperialist war" became a "people's war" and everyone was asked to reverse their positions again.

The Communists asked workers not to strike for higher wages and farmers not to ask for fair prices for agricultural products. They mobilized army recruits and fought for higher arms production. Communists even made friends among priests and Conservatives. Even Watson Kirkconnell then agreed that the ban on the Party should be lifted.

When the Stalin-Hitler pact was signed, the Red Army marched into West Ukraine and Belorussia—previously occupied by the Poles—and were greeted with rejoicing. The Russians took no Polish territory, only that part of the Ukraine and Belorussia which had been victimized by Polish imperialism. Two years later, the Germans overran the same area, killing and enslaving and burning. The invasion was a fearful tragedy for Slavic peoples, and outside help was needed.

In Canada, the banned ULFTA reorganized as "Association to Aid the Fatherland," and issued the paper *Ukrainian Life* from Toronto. By 1942, they had raised \$133,000 to assist their homeland.

In December 1941, Japan entered the war and discrimination against Japanese people in Canada worsened. They were forcibly moved to the interior of B.C. from the coastal areas. Their property, even including personal property like watches and cameras, was taken from them. Those who opposed the exile were put in concentration camps.

This was done in spite of the fact that 74 per cent or 23,000 of the Japanese were Canadian citizens. The exiling was not a sudden development from the attack on Pearl Harbour, but part of the traditional racist policy. Japanese Canadians were not allowed to vote. In 1940, a

year before Pearl Harbour, a "Special Committee on Orientals in British Columbia" published a report recommending surveillance. The Japanese were not allowed military training and they were registered.

When the war with Japan did come along, the Japanese were all lined up, so to speak, located, numbered, marked, ready to go. (Broadfoot, 1973: 161)

Few other Canadians opposed this move. They had been whipped into a frenzy of enthusiasm for the war. For most people after all the years of despair, the good times had come.

World wars are always good for capitalists. In both wars, they consolidated power. Both wars were an opportunity for capital accumulation at the expense, as always, of farmers and workers.

Ottawa became a centre of big business executives. They filled key posts in the administration, more particularly in the Department of Munitions and Supply. (Lipton, 1966: 267)

While increasing the power of capitalists, wars are an opportunity to decrease the rights of workers. In November 1941, an order-in-council was passed giving the National War Labour Board the right to restrict wages. Union leaders were enthusiastic about the war. Communists had a no-strike policy and co-operated with management throughout the war. Workers were not so co-operative.

With increase in mass production, union membership grew rapidly during the war. Nevertheless, in 1941, 48 per cent of the population of Alberta was still rural. Sixty-six per cent of Ukrainians were rural, about the same as during the depression.

## Conscription

Early in the war, the government had promised there would be no conscription. But in 1942, a national vote was held in which the government asked to be released from this promise.

The Communists passed the following resolution:

The Communist Party calls upon the Canadian people to vote yes on the plebiscite, and directs every party member and organization to unfold a great campaign around the central slogan: *Make the plebiscite into a mighty demonstration of national unity for total war!* (Buck, 1952: 171)

"Tim Buck Plebiscite Committees" were set up all over the country with the slogan "Vote 'YES' for Victory!" In May 1942, these became



"Communist-Labor Total War Committees" which organized conferences and urged workers to demand labour-management committees in factories. At the conference in February 1942, the Ukrainian Association to Aid the Fatherland (which became the Ukrainian Canadian Association in the same year), decided to send people out to canvass for "yes" votes on the conscription issue.

The vote was held on April 27, 1942. Conscription got a majority vote everywhere but in Quebec. Seventy-two percent of French Canadians voted against it, while 80 per cent of the rest of Canadians voted for it.

Vegreville was the only constituency outside Quebec to vote against conscription. The media went positively hysterical over this betrayal and cursed Ukrainians as being worse than Nazis. Their middle-class spokesmen protested that Ukrainians were all ignorant and had misunderstood the ballot. Communist spokesmen blamed the nationalists. Everyone was quite sure that Ukrainians were sorry about their ghastly mistake. All their spokesmen, communist and capitalist, being against them, it was unwise for the mass of Ukrainians to speak on their own behalf. They said nothing.

In Quebec, poverty necessitated some men joining the army. The gradual approach to conscription cut down much of the opposition—only in 1944 was conscription introduced for overseas service.

In the summer of 1942 some communists were conditionally released from prison, although their organization remained banned. By September 1942, all the interned communists were released from the prison at Hull. Some immediately joined the army. Others went about Canada exhorting workers and farmers to greater war efforts. A campaign to lift the ban on the organization was mounted.

In March 1943, there were 865 people left in the concentration camps. One hundred ninety-four were Germans, 21 Italians, and the remainder were Japanese, of whom 449 were Canadian citizens. They were there because they had refused to be exiled from the coastal areas of B.C.

On June 13, 1943, a conference was held to plan a new Communist Party. In August, 500 delegates in Toronto formed the Labor-Progressive Party. Tim Buck was elected national leader. The new party was mostly involved in mobilizing the working class for war.

During the war we issued the slogan of a National Front for Victory. Our party was the unifying force which brought the revolutionary workers, the politically-advanced farming people and urban middle-class people, including men and women of all creeds and sections of Canada, French and English, into a united effort for the overwhelming defeat of Hitlerism. (Buck, 1959: 350)

On October 15, 1943, the ban was lifted on the ULFTA and the other

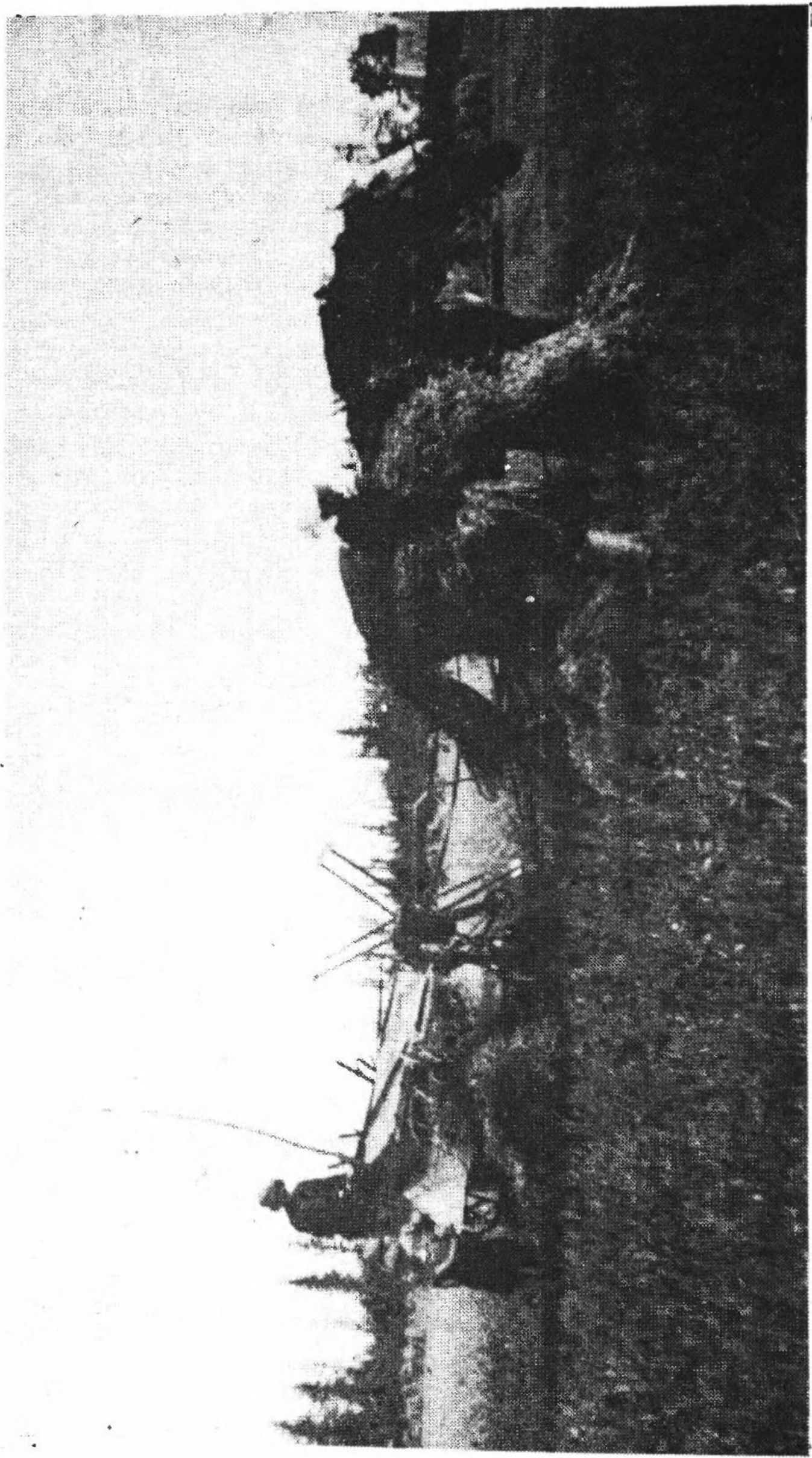
groups outlawed in 1940. The Ukrainian Canadian Association was already functioning; in 1945, the name was changed to Association of United Ukrainian Canadians (AUUC). Also in 1943, another left-wing paper, the *Ukrainian Word* was begun in Winnipeg.

In Alberta politics, William Aberhart died in 1943 and was replaced as premier by Ernest Manning. In the election of the following year, the CCF was the only serious opposition to the Social Credit. The theory of social credit had long since been discredited so Manning ignored it, concentrating on anti-CCF speeches and not speaking about his own party at all. In this way, the business community was won over, for until this time, Social Credit had been regarded as vaguely radical. Under the leadership of Manning, its transformation into a very conservative party was completed. The same anti-socialist strategy was used in every election to 1971, at which time the logical happened and Social Credit was out-conservated by the Conservatives.

During the war, non-militant unions gained strength since there was no opposition to them. The CCF also gained strength and respectability. It had begun with the idea of uniting farmers and labour, but was never very successful with this.

The war hastened the process begun during the depression, of transforming economic domination of Canada from Britain to the United States. The Conservatives favoured British domination; Mackenzie King had financial connections with American corporations and once the Liberals were in power, strengthened economic and military ties with the U.S.

The property confiscated from left-wing Ukrainians was mostly returned by April 10, 1945, except for that which had been destroyed. The nationalists were persuaded by the government to sell back the halls they had been given. There was monetary compensation for those buildings sold to private individuals.



My mother stooking beside binder. Harvest—probably around 1948. (Rose Ames Collection—copied and processed by Vision Works)

# **10**

## **Alberta Now**



# Workers

Released from the repression of the war, workers began agitating more successfully for higher wages. In 1946 there were strikes all over and trade union membership rose rapidly. Between 1945 and 1949, wages went up and hours of work went down at a quite satisfying rate.

But in the 1950's, both the TLC and CLC supported the Korean War, the Marshall Plan, NATO, and other forms of American aggression, because their American brothers told them to. It was a time of class collaboration. The unions got higher wages for their members but they did not oppose the increase in productivity and the intensification of labour in the 1950's.

Although in absolute numbers union membership continued to grow slowly, it seemed that the proportion of the non-agricultural labour force within the sphere of organized labour was remaining constant at about one-third. (Porter, 1971: 309)

In 1972, 26.7 per cent of non-farm workers were in unions.

Although many of the mines in the Crow's Nest Pass have been closed down, those people who still live there make a living by mining. Working conditions are not very good and the UMW is still the same union. Tony Boyle, who was the head of that union in the U.S. went to jail for the murder of a rival. The new president was elected because he promised reform, but reform seems slow in coming.

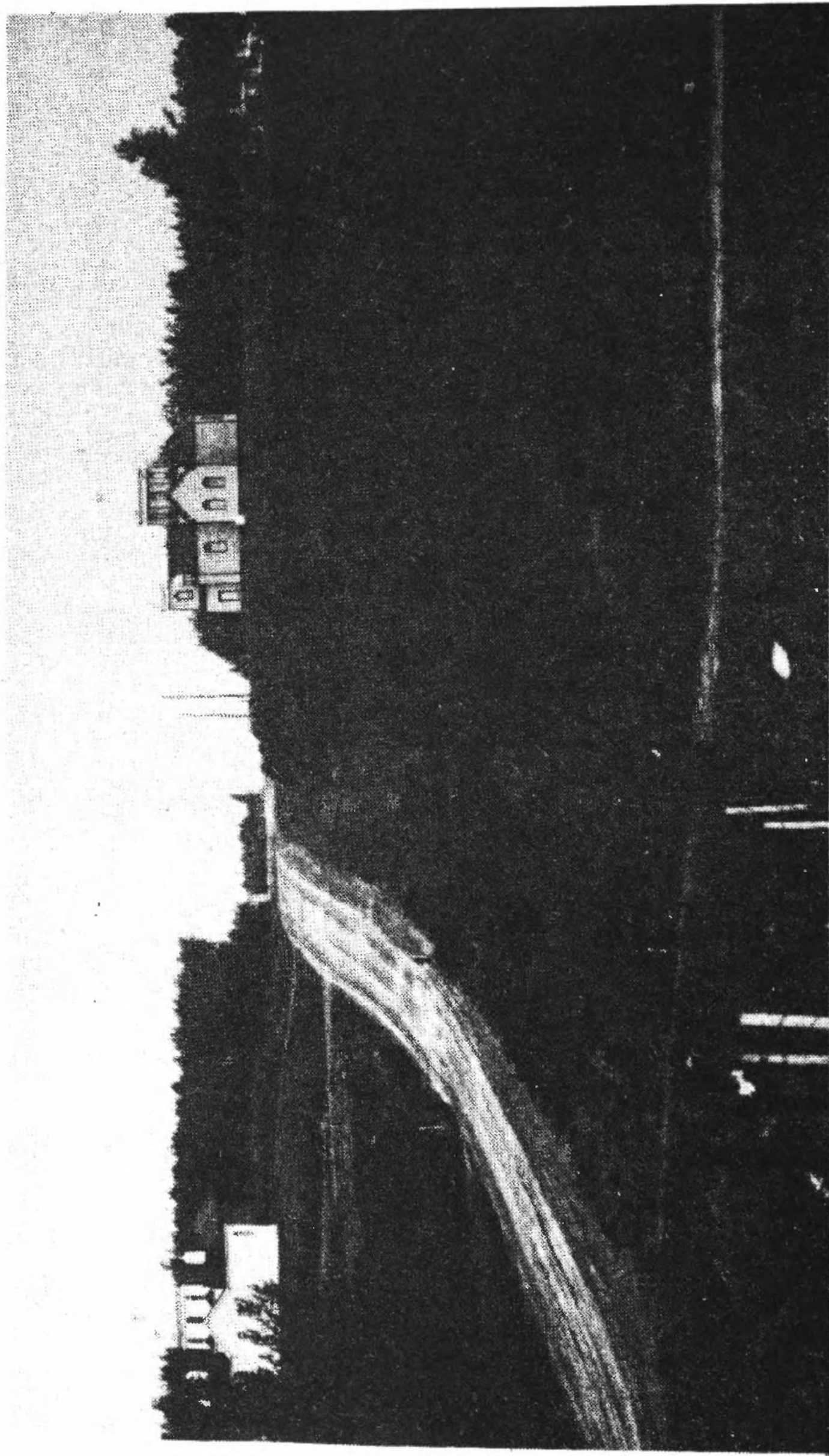
"Market unionism" or "business unionism" limits its activities to collective bargaining and is primarily concerned with wages. No new organizing is done. Union leaders have long since lost contact with the rank-and-file and are more likely to resemble lawyers and business executives than the people they are supposed to represent. Union leadership nowadays is just another way of making it, and union leaders can become political heavies, business executives, senators, or otherwise important men, once they have done their 25 years or so respectably.

Some of this was a reaction to the confusion of the 50's when everything that had to do with justice or workers' rights was labelled communist. Unions fought vainly for respectability.

Because they challenge these historic rights of property, trade unions are intruders whose presence is only grudgingly accepted by other institutional elites and by the rest of society. They have been accepted because of their power . . . (Porter, 1971: 312)

Union leaders have fallen all over themselves to prove that they really needn't be regarded as a threat to capitalism. So while labour income





Two churches about four miles south of Andrew. St. Michael's is on the right. On the left is a newer Greek Orthodox church. (photo by Vision Works, 1976)

rose by 12 per cent in 1973, corporation profits rose 36 per cent. It isn't much different any other year.

Alberta is not very industrially advanced compared to provinces like Ontario and B.C., although this situation is changing. The character of the working class in all of Canada has changed since the war. By 1959, there were more service producing than goods producing industries. In the old days, only rich people had servants. Only rich people's children got an education and only rich people got medical care. The demands of industrialized societies require that there be mass education, hospitals available to almost everyone, more restaurants, stores, hotels. A large portion of the working class is engaged in waiting on the other portion of the working class.

Service workers are the lowest paid of all workers and their wages increase more slowly. More women than men work in service producing industries. Women are rarely able to get a job in the commodity producing sectors, except in sweatshops. For the most part, women are waitresses, teachers, hospital workers, clerks, secretaries.

In all women's jobs, including typing and looking after children, the skills women bring to the job are not considered skills. The traditional unions have nothing to offer women and there has been no new organizing going on. The unions are not interested in poorly-paid workers. Nor is the Communist Party or the AUUC interested in the problems of women workers, even though a higher proportion of Ukrainian Canadian women hold down two jobs—one in the home and one outside.

Since the 1950's, there has been considerable pressure on women to hold down two jobs. They are supposed to be more than "just housewives." The present inflation rate and the increasing refusal of men to acknowledge their children make it more mandatory than ever for women to work outside the home. This goes along with the growing demand for cheap labour for the service producing industries.

Another characteristic of the Canadian working class is that while there is a consistently high rate of unemployment for unskilled workers, there is a constant shortage of skilled workers. Since WW II, unskilled immigrants have been disallowed employment except in particularly horrible jobs like domestic or farm labour. The desirable immigrant is now a non-agricultural skilled worker.

John Porter points out in *The Vertical Mosaic* that "knowledge has always been a source of power . . ." (p. 223) Knowledge has always been the privilege of a selected few. It is peculiar to Canada, however, that while there are many unemployed B.A.'s, there are relatively few trade schools. Skilled workers such as electricians, lab technicians, etc., are imported from abroad.

Another characteristic of the working class is that the sons and



daughters of farmers are being forced off the land at a tremendous rate.

Changes in agriculture have created a new "landless proletariat" to join with an immigrant proletariat in the rapidly growing cities. This unskilled bottom layer forms a large part of the unemployed. (Porter, 1971: 57)

There have been changes in the 70's which hopefully are going to continue and grow. There is a trend towards Canadian unionism, though not yet as pronounced in Alberta as B.C. There is also the beginning of attempts to organize women's occupations, begun by the women themselves. There is a long way to go, but perhaps we have at least begun.

## Farmers

Those who have large incomes for no work, they are honourable people; but those with incomes for which they plowed and seeded and harvested and raised cattle, these are worth nothing. (Pylipiw, Wasyl. Tape recording, translated from Ukrainian.)

In 1971 agricultural exports accounted for 15 per cent of Canada's total exports. For both the internal and external market, farming is still a major industry. Even more important, no industrialized country can survive without a food surplus.

But the number of farms is decreasing—in Alberta, from 99,732 in 1941 to 62,702 in 1971. The average size of farms is increasing—from about 400 acres in the 1930's to about 800 acres in 1971. The percentage of people living on farms in Alberta went from 48 per cent in 1941 to 37 per cent in 1951, 22 per cent in 1961 and 14 per cent in 1971. The farms are still owner-operated and only 7,617 of the more than 62,000 farms do not have the farm operator residing on them. The total acreage devoted to farming has not changed much—43 million in 1941 to 49 million in 1971.

For all of Canada, the situation is about the same. Farms are getting bigger, so that while the total acreage of land devoted to farming has remained the same for decades (in spite of the increase in the country's population), there are fewer farmers, and more of them spend more time working at jobs off the farm in order to make a living. In 1961, 11.4 per cent of Canada's population lived on farms; in 1966, 9.6 per cent and by 1971 the figure had dropped to 6.6 per cent.

In 1961, there were 481,000 farms in Canada; in 1971, the figure was down to 366,000, of which 31 per cent were rented and 69 per cent owned by the farm operator. Eleven per cent of the farms were non-resident, i.e., the farmer did not live on the farm. It is estimated that in 1973, there

were only 340,370 farms.

The small farmers are gradually being shoved out. When they can no longer make a living, they sell out to larger farmers, or in rare cases, leave the land to revert to forest.

Throughout the 40's and 50's, the way to make it as a farmer was to buy more land and more and bigger machinery. So people did that, buying up more and more in a frantic rush, and "pretty soon you find yourself a long way from anybody else." (Gudmunson)

For about ten years, 1,000 farm units a month have disappeared. The small towns are diminishing or disappearing; there is no community and no social life for those who remain on the land. Farms get bigger and neighbours, farther away from each other. There are no doctors, no teachers, no lawyers, no garages, fewer stores. Children are bused to school at incredible distances. In the 15 years to 1968, 40 of the 48 counties and municipal districts in Alberta decreased in population. Cities get bigger and small towns shrink.

Between 1966 and 1971, the population of Edmonton and Calgary increased, as did that of Grande Prairie, while Drumheller, Vegreville, Lamont, Smoky Lake stayed about the same. The population decreased in Two Hills, Mundare, Myrnam, Willingdon, Chipman, Hairy Hill.

A study done in Manitoba showed that at the present rate of people leaving farms, there will be no one left in rural Manitoba by 1985. (Gudmunson) The situation in Alberta is about the same.

Sporadic increases in the prices of farm products have meant that the price of land sky-rocketed, and only established farmers with substantial borrowing power can buy land. After the cost of land, there is the cost of machinery; these costs are going up many times faster than the price of farm products. Farming, therefore, requires a large capital investment with little return on the money. Farm prices are high but the cost of machinery is even higher.

The farm family is the unit which developed the agricultural potential of the prairies. There isn't enough money to be made on small land holdings and farmers must expand continuously in order to stay in the same place.

Comparative rural poverty means depopulation of rural areas and overpopulation in cities. It means higher unemployment since the unemployed cannot move back to the land and support themselves. It means all the social tragedies that accompany rapid social change of this magnitude.

The government pretends to subsidize farmers, but farmers see none of these subsidies. They only benefit the buyers, like Canada Packers and Safeway.

In 1966, about one-third, or 100,000 to 150,000 of the farm families in Canada were living below the poverty level, even when their non-farm

income was added.

The price of wheat fluctuates greatly but is never very high. In 1958-1959, No. 1 Northern paid \$1.59 per bushel; in 1973-1974, \$4.57. This compares with 91 cents in 1914 and \$2.31 in 1920. Since that time, of course, the price of farm equipment has risen at a phenomenal rate.

There have been a variety of cooperative marketing agencies formed on the prairies since 1900. These are not effective as a social movement, and have become an "amalgamation of business enterprises run by managers for their own benefit." (Gudmunson) The price of farm goods is not determined by the co-ops, farmers, or even the government, but by the large buyers such as Kraft, Safeway and others. Most of these are international companies to whom it doesn't matter if the farmers of any one country are destroyed by low prices.

Far from helping the situation, the government has behaved in a criminal fashion. The Task Force on agriculture found that "the grain surplus had reached crisis proportions in Western Canada during 1969-1970." (*Canadian Agriculture in the 70's*, p. 63) So the government paid farmers not to grow wheat, thereby decreasing wheat production by 313 million bushels by 1970. Wheat acreage in Alberta dropped by half. In 1973, there was a wheat shortage.

The government planned it that way when it carried out the Task Force recommendations. These were: giving money for not growing wheat, eliminating small farmers, preventing new land from being opened to agriculture until at least 1980. The Task Force thought that the farm population should be reduced to 3-4 per cent by 1990 and that farms should be run more like businesses with hired labour.

As a result, agricultural production in Canada is not increasing as fast as the nation's population. Not only is Canada withholding food from the rest of the world, it is diminishing the supply for its own people.

Politicians, statesmen and other men of good will bemoan the fact that so many in the world must die for lack of food. It is considered unfortunate but unavoidable. Scientists are paid to tell us there is nothing that can be done about it—studies "prove" there is insufficient food for the world's people, and only the privileged shall be allowed to survive. It is the duty of learned men to justify imperialism.

The fact is that only a small proportion of the world's arable land is devoted to food production. In the midst of world hunger, the ruling class of Canada decreed that the food produced by Canadians would be limited by law, to the point where Canada is no longer self-sufficient in food. They decreed that Canadian farmers would be forced from their land and that, while most of the world's children went to bed hungry, Canada's food-producers joined the ranks of the urban unemployed.

In 1961, one of four farmers' sons became a farmer himself—the other three became unskilled workers. Farmers' daughters joined the pool

of cheap labour for the service producing industries.

For those who remain on the land, it's becoming increasingly lonely. Farms get farther and farther apart. The finishing of the product takes place outside the community. The rural community only grows the grain—milling and processing are done elsewhere. The community ceases to be a community.

Apart from the National Farmers' Union, the farmers' organizations are unable or unwilling to deal with the situation.

The last farmers' strike in Alberta took place in 1946. On September 5, the Alberta Farmers' Union gave official strike notice. It was to be a 30 day strike; milk for hospitals and children was to be provided. In Wetaskiwin and Mundare, the RCMP guided trucks through the picket lines. There were a great many arrests and fines so that by September 24 there weren't many pickets, although delivery remained below normal. At Beaver Crossing, 113 cattle were scattered. There were 30 arrests and three fines. After a meeting with representatives of the federal government, the strike was declared over on October 6.

The United Farmers of Canada, Alberta section, had achieved a membership of 2,400 by 1941. They began discussions for amalgamation with the UFA. The 1942 convention changed the name to the Alberta Farmers' Union in preparation for amalgamation, which, however, did not happen until 1949. One of the problems was UFA ownership of co-operatives. The UFA divested itself of their control. A more vexing problem was that of strikes, of which the UFA disapproved. It was finally agreed that all strike proposals would be voted on by all members, but there have been no such votes held.

This new group, called the Farmers' Union of Alberta, later amalgamated with the Alberta Federation of Agriculture to form Unifarm, still in existence. The minority radicals organized locals of the National Farmers' Union (NFU) which had been formed in 1961 out of the 1944 Interprovincial Farm Union Council.

The NFU points out that while the farmers are independent producers, they cannot set the price of their product, nor negotiate the price of machinery, nor have any control over how much of and to whom their product is sold. Unorganized farmers face a few organized buyers who set the price according to standards having no relationship to the cost of production to the farmer. The NFU proposed a policy of collective bargaining to slow rural depopulation. Only a few gigantic companies buy the farmers' produce—they do not pay fair prices and they will not deal directly with producers.

The farmers in Ontario are attempting a boycott of Kraft, which controls 80 per cent of the cheese produced in Canada. Kraft has refused to deal directly with the NFU.

From the co-optation of the leadership of the Progressive movement

into the Liberal Party in the 20's to the present legislated impotence of commodity marketing boards, farmers have seen their organizations subverted by commercial and political interests. (*This Magazine*. p. 7)

The NFU is trying to avoid this. Membership is voluntary and it is considered important that the leadership not be co-opted. They are primarily engaged in seeking collective bargaining rights. They want to be able to negotiate prices of goods bought and sold by farmers, and they want to negotiate directly with the buyers. The Kraft boycott has not been effective so far. The NFU has not yet gained any appreciable power in Alberta.

## Politicians

The Social Credit government could not have run so long merely on the basis of anti-socialism. They were saved by oil. Manning, transformed into an ultraconservative, and oil made Alberta a great place for businessmen. Coal as fuel was made obsolete, and mine after mine shut down after 1946. The oil fields are mostly owned by foreign companies so there will be little permanent value for Albertans from the wealth.

Until oil was found there was little population growth in Alberta. From 1931, the increase in population was less than the natural increase. Gas and oil were found at Turner Valley in 1936 but this was used up in WW II. The present oil wealth began in February 1947, when oil was found in Leduc. This field was twice the size of Turner Valley. The first well belonged to Imperial Oil and subsequent discoveries of oil all over the province were made on behalf of British and American capital. There can be no lasting benefits to Alberta—the wealth will last only as long as the oil.

Between 1947 and 1970, Alberta's population doubled to 1,600,000. But while cities grew, small towns disappeared. And "...as the province's and ordinary man's wealth increased, so did the number of the poor." (MacGregor, 1972: 304) About a quarter of Alberta's 434,000 households in 1971 lived below the poverty level. A small part of the oil wealth has been used for social service programs. The province's assistance to the aged and handicapped is as good as that of any other province.

More roads and railways have been built. The Alberta Resources Railway runs 235 miles south from the Smoky River. It was designed to bring coal closer to Pacific ports for export to Japan.

The Mackenzie Highway, with Mile 0 at Grimshaw, runs 626 miles

north to Yellowknife to enable northern resources to be brought south.

Then there is the Great Slave Railway, the first railway to the Northwest Territories. It was begun in 1962 at Roma, Alberta, on the Peace River. It reached High Level in 1963 and was completed to Hay River, NWT, on the south shore of the Great Slave Lake, in 1965. The railway is 377 miles long with a 53 mile branch at Pine Point, NWT. It is run by the CNR.

The Great Slave Railway, basically intended for the transportation of ore from the mines at Pine Point to the smelters at Trail, B.C. will, in addition, provide lumber, grain and other traffic. Discovery in 1965 of the Rainbow Oil Field has focussed much attention on Northern Alberta and N.W.T. Large gypsum deposits in Wood Buffalo National Park are waiting to be exploited. (NAR Pamphlet. p. 7)

The railway cost \$86,000,000 in federal funds between 1961 and 1967. The contractor was Ralph F. Welch, a long time CNR contractor, who had friends in Ottawa. He got a great deal of help from the Department of Citizenship and Immigration.

Ever since the days of the CPR's Kicking Horse Pass line, in the 1880's hewn out of the Rocky Mountains by a mass labour force of Chinese and Irish immigrants, the Canadian railway industry has learned the value of immigrant labour. (*Last Post*. December, 1969)

The railway was announced by the Liberals and built while Diefenbaker and the Conservatives were in power.

Portuguese labourers were imported for the job. They were overworked, underfed, and housed in substandard conditions in the usual Canadian tradition. That same tradition continues today. Mexican farm labourers and West Indian domestic workers are allowed in to do the dirtiest work at the least wages.

In this context, it should be noted that there has been a great pretence at public debate of immigration. The racists are encouraged to speak out to validate the immigration policy the government has already decided on. In fact, the opinions of ordinary people have never had any effect whatsoever on the government's decisions regarding immigration. The state is run for the benefit of capitalists and it regulates immigration according to the needs of the ruling class. Never once in Canadian history have ordinary people's opinions on the subject had any effect whatsoever on the immigration policy.

## Ukrainians Now

The numbers of third wave Ukrainian immigrants, arriving after W.W.II, was insignificant compared to other ethnic groups. Most of them came from Germany.

After the war, there were 5,000,000 Ukrainians in Germany and Austria. They were prisoners of war or slave labourers on farms and in war industries. Some of these people did not wish to return home. There had been some collaboration in the initial stages of the war between Ukrainians and the German occupation army. These people had to leave with the Germans and they did not wish to be returned to the Soviet Union as they would then be tried as war criminals. The Ukrainian Canadian Committee was particularly keen on having these people come to Canada. All of the third wave of Ukrainian immigrants were what were called political refugees.

Explaining why some Ukrainians wanted a German victory, C.N. Suchowersky, president of the Edmonton chapter of the Ukrainian National Federation, an anti-communist organization, said "we believed the Germans would give the Ukraine self-determination." (*New York Times*. October 25, 1971)

Between 1946 and 1961, 37,132 Ukrainians came to Canada from Germany and Austria. This third wave was primarily urban rather than rural and better educated than previous immigrants. Many were professionals or craftsmen. About 80 per cent settled in the Toronto area.

Some joined already existing organizations but most felt that these were insufficiently nationalist so they formed their own fervently nationalistic group. There may have been class snobbery as well as nationalism involved in their rejection of the Ukrainians already here. With time, the nationalism cooled, and most of these groups eventually joined the Ukrainian Canadian Committee.

The third wave Ukrainians supported Diefenbaker in 1959 because he said he supported an independent Ukraine and was anti-communist. The historical peculiarity of the nationalists is that they have always looked to some foreign power to free the Ukraine. This has led them sometimes to hold positions which are as likely as not to cause harm to Ukrainian independence.

The other side continued to organize, albeit on a different level. After 1946, the Association of United Ukrainian Canadians (AUUC) held national festivals, formed women's branches, branches for the Canadian-born, began libraries, summer camps, set up cultural ties

with the Ukraine, and raised funds to assist post-war reconstruction in the Ukraine. In 1947, they began the *Ukrainian Canadian*, an English language magazine for children of left-wing Ukrainians. The women's branches are primarily concerned with making costumes, cooking for the many banquets, gathering funds through dinners and craft sales, putting on craft and decorated egg displays.

While the ties with the Communist Party remain, the AUUC appears to have been de-politicized and is primarily a cultural/social organization.

The children of Communist parents appear to be alienated from politics and have deviated from their parental party affiliation. ... Upward social mobility may also have been instrumental in causing them to reject their family political affiliation. Ukrainian Communists have generally held low-paying jobs and have had little hope of improving their economic status. (*Slavs in Canada*, 1968: 29)

Now that there is increasing trade between Canada and the Soviet Union, this may change. It is already acceptable to be a communist businessman. At the same time, with the re-appearance of working-class radicalism, the children of Ukrainian communists are as likely as anyone else to find that their history is not quite what they were led to believe.

John Kolasky, a Canadian student in the Ukraine, was expelled from the USSR in 1965. This began a series of debates about the correct line among Ukrainian Canadian communists. Only Kolasky was expelled from the Communist Party—dissidents who did not make their doubts public were allowed to remain.

In 1965, the two Ukrainian language newspapers merged to form *Life and Word*, put out in Toronto. At no time since the war have the left-wing Ukrainian groups achieved any importance except in the lives of individuals.

When my husband was alive (he died one and a half years ago) he read *Life and Word* aloud to me, because I am illiterate, I only know how to sign my name and a bit of arithmetic. From this paper I learned a lot about world events. Now I have no newspaper and it's very hard because only from friends do I find out what's happening in the world, because the radio doesn't talk about things like that. It is very hard to be illiterate. (Han'ka Feschuk. *Life and Word*. October 23, 1972. Translated from Ukrainian.)

(Mrs. Feschuk was born in Alberta in 1903.)

The Labour Progressive Party existed from 1943 to 1959, after which time it was once again called the Communist Party of Canada. From 1946, Tim Buck says the Communist Party tried to keep Canada out of the U.S. drive towards a third imperialist war. The Party saw as its main tasks: disarmament, banning nuclear weapons, Canadian independence. The new slogan of the Party was "Keep Canada Independent."



Defeating the warmongers and their political servants, particularly the right-wing social democrats, the working class will win its ideological independence from the capitalist class. (Buck, 1952: 219)

In 1954, the Party thought that the way to fight for Canada's independence was to elect a parliamentary majority which would be dedicated to preserving our sovereignty. The Communist Party has fallen upon strange days and is now more interested in respectability than rebellion. Considering the turbulence of their history, perhaps one cannot blame them.

Following the denunciation of Stalin in the USSR, much soul-searching took place among Canadian party members. They concluded that they had been wrong in following Stalin's line so slavishly, but that they were still the vanguard of the working class.

The Ukrainian nationalists have generally been more successful in terms of money and status than the communists, both as groups and as individuals. They have three senators: W.M. Wall (Conservative) 1955-1962; John Hnatyshyn (Conservative) 1959-1967; and Paul Yuzyk (Conservative) from 1963. Yuzyk was appointed during the Diefenbaker era.

(The Diefenbaker era also saw the first Indian senator, an Italian parliamentary secretary, and the first Ukrainian cabinet minister, Michael Starr. In 1957, Ellen Fairclough was sworn in as Secretary of State for the Conservatives thus becoming Canada's first woman cabinet minister.)

William Hawrelak was mayor of Edmonton from 1951 to 1964. Although he was forced to resign because of corruption, he may not have been a bad guy.

Though he was probably not directly responsible, there seemed to be an improvement in the way the city officials behaved towards the general public. If a Ukrainian or Pole used his language on a bus, the conductor did not hold it as his duty any longer, to be a sort of policeman as well as a bus driver nor did he demand that he speak English on his bus. (*The Ukrainian Pioneers in Alberta*. p. 78)

Hawrelak was again elected mayor in 1974. He died of a heart attack in November 1975. His estate was valued at \$14,000,000, most of it in real estate.

Msgr. Basil Kushnir of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in Winnipeg was elected in 1973 to succeed Anton Melnyk of Munich as president of the Ukrainian World Congress.

The government-in-exile in Munich has existed since 1922. In 1973, it celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Ukrainian National Council, whatever that may be. Mary V. Beck, director of the Ukrainian Information Centre in Detroit, did a promotional tour for this group in

Canada. In 1975, another U.S. resident, Mykola Stepanenko, did a promotional tour for the Ukrainian government-in-exile, but this may not be the same government.

Although these fringe lunatic groups will probably exist forever, there isn't so much nationalistic fervour around these days. The third wavers who were at first hostile to the "watered down nationalism" of the previous immigrants, have mostly joined the Ukrainian Canadian Committee.

At present the Committee has 28 organizations and six paid employees. Basil Kushnir has been president since 1940. Most of the executive live in Winnipeg since the headquarters are there. Charges that the Committee is undemocratic are countered by saying there is no direct membership, only group affiliation.

Among their accomplishments, the Committee claims the unveiling of the statue of Taras Shevchenko in Winnipeg in 1961; establishment of the Taras Shevchenko Institute in 1963; translation of the complete works of Shevchenko in 1964; promotion of Ukrainian in schools.

There was a bizarre incident in Toronto in 1972 when the Committee protested Kosygin's visit to Canada. The police apparently overreacted and some people were trampled. For a change, right-wingers were screaming about police brutality.

The event they called the Second World Congress of Ukrainians held in 1973 was protested by the AUUC.

The ideology of this Congress belongs to the Ice Age of the past. It has no place in the world of today and tomorrow. ...It seeks to exploit ethnic culture for all the wrong reasons, and to subvert those values that promote peace and friendship. This is not a Congress that represents the best in the Ukrainian heritage. This is not a Congress that speaks for all Ukrainians. (*Toronto Globe and Mail*, October 29, 1973)

## Multiculturalism

There are many arguments in these days of multiculturalism about the pros and cons of assimilation. I think that assimilation is a false issue. Culture grows out of the history and economic realities of a nation. Those who move to a new country live within its economic realities and make its history. They change the culture at the same time they become part of it. Even when they are forced to live in ghettos, the ghetto then becomes an integral part of the culture of the nation which forced its creation. Culture does not exist in a vacuum by itself—culture is based on economy and history.

This does not mean that Ukrainian Canadians cannot have a

sympathetic interest in the Ukraine. We can provide much moral support and be informed—but as Canadians.

I think the Ukrainian-Canadian community is a microcosm of Canadian society—all the ideologies, politics, religions can be duplicated. It's true that a lot of old country religious quarrels have been dragged in by the heels. But the native-born element which is predominant today has no use for this kind of transplant. And, of course, there's always the lunatic fringe among people who believe they are the repositories of everything that is right. (Mitch Sago. *Edmonton Journal*. May 18, 1971)

It is absurd to suppose this lunatic fringe will have anything to do one way or another with Ukrainian independence. Ukrainian independence will be achieved by the people of the Ukraine, not some group of exiles, long since divorced from reality.

The only reason these organizations still exist is not to do anything about the Ukraine, but to further their position in Canada. The correct position to hold *in Canada* is that the Ukraine should be anti-communist. Holding this opinion results in business success and financial gain *in Canada*. Ethnics still cannot be Canadians; but they must hold the correct Canadian position on the land of their ancestors.

This is changing among the native-born, who no longer measure people's value by how much they are for or against the Soviet Union. This development was somewhat retarded by the government propaganda about multiculturalism, because there were millions of dollars to be made by holding the correct ethnic position.

It all started with the B and B commission to which many people made representation proving that there were people other than French and English in Canada. This appeared to surprise the Commission greatly and they didn't know what to do about it.

On September 23, 1971, a draft of a program for multiculturalism was approved by the federal Cabinet with a budget of \$2.9 million for 1972-1973. Trudeau told the House of Commons that while there were two official languages in Canada, there was no official culture.

In March 1973 a new budget of \$10.1 million was approved for 1973-1974 and a 102 member Canadian Consultative Council on Multiculturalism was appointed. The Honourable Stanley Haidasz, B.Ph., L.Ph., M.D., P.C., M.P. was appointed the minister of multicultural affairs.

Nobody got very excited about this development. Everyone expected that like all other government programs, it would prove to be only an expensive sop to keep people quiet. Stanley Haidasz was a poor choice of minister and in 1974, he was fired but not replaced. Multiculturalism has now been moved from the Secretary of State's office to the Ministry of

Labour. Most of the money was given to anti-communist groups and to academics.

What the Liberals appear to be doing is trying to build a power base by subsidizing certain ethnic organizations and pretending that one or two groups can represent all the members of that ethnic group. Not all the results are bad, any more than the *Canadian Farmer*, begun by the Liberals to win Ukrainian votes, had an entirely bad effect. On the contrary, multiculturalism can even be called progressive.

The trouble is that it was supposed to obscure the French Canadian presence. There is supposed to be this "third force" in Canada apart from the French and English. There is no third force. In 1961, 26 per cent of the population, or 4,701,232 people, were of ethnic origins other than French and English. These other ethnic groups have as much in common with the French and English as they have with each other—there is no way they can act together to constitute a third force. In addition, no ethnic community, and certainly not Ukrainians, are a homogeneous group. There is no one group which can be said to represent Ukrainians in Canada. The Ukrainian Canadian Committee makes this claim, but only a politician wouldn't immediately recognize the absurdity of such a claim.

The contributions to Canadian society made by immigrants should be recognized and honoured. The trouble is that the political game benefits politicians more than it benefits the people. Left wing organizations and newspapers get very limited grants from the multicultural foundations, if they get any at all. The multicultural game mainly benefits those who have friends in high places.

What difference has it all made to Ukrainians? Where are they now and what are they doing? In 1961, population figures for selected cities were as follows:

CITY	TOTAL POPULATION	NO. OF UKRAINIANS	% UKRAINIANS
Winnipeg	475,989	53,918	11.3
Edmonton	337,568	38,164	11.3
Calgary	279,062	8,033	2.9
Vegreville	2,908	1,518	52.2

In 1971, out of Edmonton's population of 438,425, about eleven per cent or 58,475 were of Ukrainian descent.

In 1971, Ukrainians made up 2.7 per cent of Canada's population. This comprised 580,660 people, most of whom were born in Canada. Ukrainian is the fifth largest nationality in Canada after British, French, German, Italian.

In 1971, 81.7 per cent of Ukrainian Canadians had been born in

Canada. One would expect, therefore, that in terms of income, education, and occupation, Ukrainian Canadians would be much the same as other Canadians.

Statistics on occupation show that in 1971 Ukrainian Canadian men were underrepresented in managerial and professional occupations, while a disproportionately large number were farming as compared to all other Canadians. These occupational differences can be explained by the fact that more Ukrainians live in the prairie provinces. There is no difference between the occupations of Ukrainian men in the prairie provinces and other men living in the same area. This explanation does not suffice for women. Ukrainian Canadian women are underrepresented in managerial, professional, and clerical occupations, and overrepresented in agriculture, even when compared with women in the prairie provinces. In addition, slightly more Ukrainian women work outside the home than do other Canadian women.

In 1901, 96 per cent of Ukrainian Canadians were rural, but since then all groups except for Indians and Eskimo are more than half urban. In 1951, 50 per cent of Ukrainian Canadians were rural; by 1961 this had dropped to 35 per cent. John Porter (1971: 75) considers this to be downward mobility as people move from farming to unskilled labour.

The income of Alberta's Ukrainian families was slightly lower than the average in 1961 in spite of the fact that more Ukrainian women worked outside the home. Those who gave up Ukrainian culture had a higher income than those who did not. (Hobart et. al., 1966) No income figures by ethnic group are available from the 1971 census.

Only slightly over half of Canadian Ukrainians went to traditional churches in 1961. Most of the loss has been from the Greek Catholic Church.

There have been some attempts made in Alberta to preserve something of Ukrainian history. The replica of a pioneer house at Elk Island Park was built largely through the efforts of Peter Svarich. There was a Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village two miles east of Elk Island Park on Highway 16. The idea originated with Wasyl Czumer many decades ago. A farmer named Frank Lakusta donated 23 acres of his farm for the project and was president of the museum's board of directors. It was officially opened June 23, 1974. Guests at the official opening included Mayor Ivor Dent of Edmonton and Olexander Pidsukha, a poet and playwright from Ukraine. The museum then met with financial and other difficulties and was closed in 1976. It may open again under government ownership; in the meantime, another Village has been built at Shandro.

There are some smashing dance groups and orchestras which occasionally tour the province. In general, being Ukrainian is not supposed to be something to apologize for. The pages of the *Ukrainian*

*Canadian* are filled with pictures of happy people in colourful, colourful costumes. The picturesque thatched houses are museum pieces. The early history of Ukrainians in Canada is often presented as a compendium of anecdotes about happy primitives.

Ethnically, the Brits and their descendents run the country. The French are kept in their place, and the "one-third neithers" put on those smashing festivals with the colourful costumes. (*Last Post*, September, 1973)

## A Personal Statement

I was born in 1940 on a farm near Woking, Alberta. Woking is a rural hamlet in the Peace River Country, about 60 miles north of Grande Prairie. When I was a child, there were three stores, two elevators, a restaurant and a hotel. Now there is only one store, one elevator, one garage. The hotel has been moved elsewhere. Like a great many rural towns, there are many boarded up buildings and the whole place is suffused with desolation. The farms are getting larger and there are abandoned farmsteads all along the road. Ours is one of them. The land is rented by a neighbour. The house has been vandalized; the barn sags more than ever and seems about to collapse.

In the summer of 1973, I drove through some of the Ukrainian district east of Edmonton and the situation was about the same—abandoned houses, dying towns. Lamont is a pretty and prosperous looking town, but the rest—Mundare, Hilliard, Chipman, and others—are ghosts of their former selves. The churches still stand. Among the widely separated farms, and looking down on the boarded up stores, the churches stand in all their glory. There are always at least two: one Orthodox and one Catholic. Sometimes there are more, but there are never fewer than two. Along the roads, one can find the rotting remains of the original cramped log cabins.

Now they are building a museum, as well they should. Perhaps they should make a museum, while they are at it, for all of rural Alberta.

My parents came from Polish-occupied Belorussia, now part of the Belorussian SSR. They came from near Brest, which is near the border with Poland and the Ukraine. Although the village is geographically in Belorussia, my parents' language and name is Ukrainian. That is just as well, as Belorussian is not an official nationality in Canada. These are the kinds of anomalies that point out the absurdity of a too-fervent nationalism. Nationalism is about economics and democracy, not about mystical ties of blood.

When I went to school, I did not know who I was. Or rather, I knew who I was but didn't know how to say it in English. The teachers sneered at us

oddly-dressed Slavs, and treated us as lower forms of life. I thought then that all Ukrainians were poor, or that all poor people were Ukrainians. I also thought that all Communists were Ukrainians. But it was not quite that clearly thought out. People who dressed and spoke like us were "our people;" everyone else was English.

Most of our parents could not speak English and even fewer could read it, so we had to do their form filling and letter writing as well as our own. I remember trying to fill out the school registration form. I asked my mother what religion we were and she said we were of no religion; but the teacher wouldn't have that. Eventually, some kid found out the translation of the Ukrainian word for Orthodox. But why Greek Orthodox? We were sure we weren't Greek. The teacher said the word "orthodox" was an adjective and could not be a religion. Of course, the word "catholic" is also an adjective; nevertheless, it is also a religion, but we didn't know that and neither did the teacher, who called us ignorant.

Then there was the problem of nationality. One school assignment required each of us to draw a flag of Canada and write under it what country our parents came from. We didn't know. We told the teacher our parents came from the Old Country, but she said that wasn't good enough. My mother told me they came from Russia, and I told others, so we all dutifully wrote under our Union Jacks that our parents came from Russia. It seems absurd now, looking back, to remember those Canadian kids writing under a British flag that their Ukrainian and Belorussian parents came from Russia. No wonder we were confused.

When I was 15 and in a Vancouver school, many of the other students walked up to me and asked me what nationality I was—for reasons I cannot even guess at now. This threw me into a state of confusion. Sometimes I said Russian, sometimes Ukrainian, sometimes Belorussian. What I actually was, was a terrified fat kid off the farm who didn't have the nerve to tell them I was a Canadian.

Teachers were no help. At Woking, we learned history from a red book called *The British Empire and its Neighbours* in which we were informed that the sun never sets on the British Empire, and that Metis people inherited the worst characteristics of both whites and Indians. There was nothing in the book about Alberta, and altogether the book had nothing whatsoever to do with the country we lived in, but described some never-never land none of us had ever seen. The teachers, who called us ignorant, were too ignorant too explain.

And so we grew, not knowing what was wrong with us, but knowing there was something wrong—something so terrible no one would even speak to us about it. The punishment for speaking Ukrainian in school was the same as for writing swear words on the toilet wall—the strap.

After high school I had a long spell during which I was afraid to look in mirrors for fear there would be nothing there. I did not exist, my people

did not exist, and I could not be a Canadian. I resolved the problem by going to Australia. I worked there for a few years and convinced the people I knew that it was typically Canadian to be tall and blonde and have a long name. The only other time I felt like a Canadian was in the Soviet Ukraine. This point though was not of enormous importance. Even if those books hadn't mentioned immigrant Ukrainians, if they had talked simply about farmers, I still would have recognized my people. All farm kids have some of the same feeling of homelessness, disorientation and non-existence these days. I went to my niece's graduation some years ago to hear the teachers making speeches about huge factories and air pollution to a bunch of farm kids from around Sexsmith, Alberta, whose problem was dust, long rides on buses, and lack of industrialization.

We are all Canadians. People coming to a new country usually do so for economic reasons. They do not wish to keep all the traditions of the old country; they left the old country precisely because these traditions proved inadequate. But some things were better than in the new country. The new immigrants, therefore, try to keep what they consider good out of their culture, at the same time taking on those portions of the new culture that they find useful. One of the first things they want to learn is the language for without speaking the new language they have great economic difficulties. Most of the Ukrainians came here already speaking three or more languages. Everyone but the English is aware that it is possible to learn a dozen or more languages without forgetting the original one. Therefore, there is no intrinsic conflict between learning English and speaking Ukrainian.

But the immigrants were isolated and actively prevented from learning the new language, while at the same time, vilified for continuing to speak the old language. I have forgotten Ukrainian, my father's cousin in Argentina said, and never learned to speak Spanish. Racism means that the new immigrants are forcibly isolated from both the old and new cultures. In many cases, the second generation is culturally even worse off. They are still not allowed into the dominant culture, but teachers and preachers have taught them contempt for their parents and their parents' culture. They are left in a limbo of nothingness—with no culture, no language, no history.

The question is not whether or not there is going to be assimilation. Immigrants become part of this country as soon as they arrive, and neither they nor the Canadians can pretend they do not exist as an integral part of the country. They must become part of the economic structure immediately in order to survive. A non-racist culture would not demand total submission from the new arrivals—it would allow and incorporate some of their ways. Becoming a Canadian in a non-racist Canada would not imply contempt for everything the immigrant



generation represented.

The danger is not of the immigrants' retaining their old culture. However much they try, it is impossible, for they have left behind the things upon which that culture was based. The danger is in that terrible purgatory of acculturation in which immigrants exist for one or two generations, and native people for over a hundred years. They are forcibly separated from the old ways, and they are not allowed to take on the new. They have no culture, no language, no tradition.

Canada is not a cultural mosaic; instant assimilation is demanded. The punishment for failure is immediate and brutal. But it's getting better. Isn't it getting better? In 1976 it became possible for the first time to make a living by telling anti-Ukrainian jokes. The acculturation of Ukrainians is ridiculed as vile, proceeding from an intrinsic inability to instantly become WASP's. There is no community to protect people from the brutality.

I think at some time there was a community at Woking but no one can tell me precisely when it was. At first they were all poor together and when they weren't labouring or resting, they talked and sang together. But very early, the community was riven by the communist/religious rivalry as well as various personal rivalries. Poverty doesn't ennoble—it makes people grasping and mean and petty.

During the war, the political squabbles were set aside for a time as people rallied together to send aid to the Soviet Union. Perhaps there was a community then.

At some time there must have been a community; people talk of it with such nostalgia. I get small doses of nostalgia myself on bad days.

I remember the story telling. People sat around our house a lot in the winter and told stories. Peasants don't have access to mass media so they develop the spoken language to a high art. I remember being engrossed and fascinated. Some people told stories better than others—my favourite was Harasimuk. He was also an excellent carpenter and many of those abandoned buildings on our homestead were his handiwork. He died many years ago.

Sometimes people read. Since some were illiterate, the literate read to others. I remember people gathering to hear Harasimuk or my mother read serial stories from either *Ukrainian Life* or *Ukrainian Word*. The only story I remember was one about a boy named Yurko Krook.

I remember the laughter. As with story-telling, wit is highly prized among people who must make their own amusement and entertainment.

I remember the singing. I have never heard any music so haunting and beautiful in all my years of wandering since those days. That must have been after 1947 and before 1952, so it couldn't have lasted long. There was still the religious/non-religious cleavage but politics wasn't taken quite so seriously any more. The anti-, non-, and semi-religious often

gathered at our house to talk, read, and sing.

Again, without mass media, singing was developed to an art by some people. Everyone could sing but some were better than others. They sang folk songs, love songs, songs of grief and remorse, revolutionary songs, religious songs. Although they sang religious songs, Mr. and Mrs. Bombier were my favourite because they could sing harmony.

It wasn't all nice. People took part in and exacerbated the differences between my mother and father just for amusement. My father left for the last time on the morning of my seventh birthday but I remember very little of it so I could not have considered it an important event.

I remember my sister leaving. My sister was the warmth that protected me from the harsh drabness of cold and poverty. When she went to work in Grande Prairie, she came home almost every weekend, but it wasn't the same, nor was anything ever the same again.

Most of the time when I remember the farm, I think of the cold, the difficulty of everything. There was the constant carrying of wood and water, hauling straw for the cattle, and many other endless, boring tasks. There were also regular medical emergencies. (The romance of nature might be tolerable if it didn't include toothaches.) My older brother nearly died of tonsillitis; my little brother had his finger amputated by a rope, I had appendicitis. I don't want to remember how many times I stood on that road, fat kid crying, waiting for a car to flag down—please, it's my brother, he has to go to hospital....

I remember how eager I was to go to school. Finally the day came and I rushed the miles and into the school, red-cheeked and eager, not bothering to remove my coat and boots at the door. There was the teacher writing something on the blackboard and some older girls talking to her. When I burst in, she looked at me distastefully, and, turning to the girls, asked in contemptuous tones: and *what* is *that*?

These are the things I remember when I am bitter, and there is much bitterness to remember. But there are also the songs and stories. There is Mrs. Bombier's voice, long since silenced in death, sounding across the years in a half-remembered dream of other days.

The first generation too, must feel some of the same combination of nostalgia and bitterness. For whatever happened to them here, however hard they had to work, they were more successful than they could have been in the Old Country.

There is now a resurgence of ridicule against Ukrainians, along with a general stepping-up of racism against all non-Anglo groups in Canada. However, those Ukrainian who prospered have been accepted as part of the country. They helped to do the dirty work; now they have been forgiven.

Life could be good now in Alberta. Infant mortality in 1971 was only 19.0 per 1,000 live births. Life expectancy in 1968 was 69 years for men

and 76 for women. Too many of this generation are succumbing to the disease of a disintegrating society—alcoholism, and there is a growing drug problem. And still, life is better.

Our family survived quite well. After my parents separated, we children were brought up by my mother. My father worked in logging camps for some decades and is now retired. My mother is crippled and lives in Grande Prairie. She has finally got the old age pension—all her life she feared she wouldn't live long enough to have a steady monthly income. When my sister took her for a medical check-up the doctor remarked that although she couldn't walk, she had a healthy heart. Doctor, my mother asked, what good motor if wheels no good?

My sister Rose and her husband live on a farm about 20 miles from Grande Prairie. Almost everyone in the area has to get some other job to supplement the farm income. Rose and Don started driving the school bus when their first son started school so he wouldn't have to walk out to the highway. He graduated years ago, as have the next two children, but Rose and Don still drive the school bus.

My brother Mike and his family live on Vancouver Island. He drives cat in various logging camps and is really good at his work. The nature of his work has caused chronic back problems and a hearing deficiency, but he is satisfied with his life—they are in good financial circumstances and the three children are growing up healthy.

My little brother teaches school at the Northern Institute of Technology in Edmonton. He is married with two children. I am the only failure in the family, having neither a family nor a house.

The immigrants endured what could not be cured, knowing from experience that it could be worse. Most of them learned that the first immigrant generation had to pave the way for their progeny. (*Slavs in Canada*, 1966: 16)

Their lives are nearly done and there is nothing we can do to change what they lived through. But we can and should understand their lives for they are our history. We cannot make a future if we are unaware of our past. They don't want us to live as they did. They do not want us to take on their culture—but they do want us to understand and respect it.

Pierre Berton writes about the people whom he considers heroes—the mass murderers who plundered what others built. These men are not glorious. My people were glorious—the little men and women who built this country. I offer no heroes. There were no heroes, there were only ordinary women and men who built great monuments and accomplished awesome deeds.

I have identified for myself and, I hope, for others, our ancestry. They were the farmers and workers who built Canada. They were the farmers and workers, men and women, who struggled for a better life for

themselves and for us, and got it for us. They succeeded in spite of capitalism, not because of it, and it left them broken. We can continue what they began. They made mistakes; we can learn from their errors. But we can learn more from their struggle than from their successes or failures. They struggled against injustice, dreamed of freedom, democracy, a better economic order.

I do not plead, therefore, on behalf of the immigrant generation. They suffered, but they also had their dreams. I plead for us, the Canadians of today, who have lost both the suffering and the dreams.

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