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Some Aspects of the Frontier in Canadian History

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SOME ASPECTS OF THE FRONTIER IN CANADIAN HISTORY

By WALTER N. SAGE

The story of the Canadian frontier is closely interwoven with that of the westward movement in the United States. For over thirty years Prof. Frederick Jackson Turner and his disciples have been pointing out the significance of the frontier in United States history, but they have only casually alluded to the development of the Canadian frontier. Nor have Canadian historians, as yet, given much prominence to the westward movement in Canada. They have paid little attention to the obvious parallels which may be drawn between the history of the United States and that of Canada.

There have been several reasons for this neglect of the comparative study of the westward movements in the United States and Canada. The Canadian West was not peopled until the American West had attracted hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of settlers. Between 1880 and 1890 the United States frontier was closed. Free land was exhausted and there existed no longer a frontier line, a "meeting point between savagery and civilization." Canada still possesses such a line, which she will in all probability retain for many years to come. In fact in all the provinces except Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia there are still frontier areas where settlement is being steadily pushed into the wilds. Readers of Louis Hémon's *Maria Chapdelaine* will recall the part which the habitants are taking in this movement.

Then, too, Canadian historians have been busily engaged in tracing the constitutional development, first of the individual colonies of British North America, and later of the Dominion of Canada. Relations with the Mother Country have been closely studied and the part played by Canada in building up the British Commonwealth of Nations has been justly stressed. Boundary disputes and other phases of Canadian-American diplomatic relations have received great attention. But Canadians have not as a rule regarded their history from the North American point of view, still less from the standpoint of an historian of the Americas who sketches the evolution of the twin continents from the North Pole to Cape Horn.

From this broader point of view the evolution of Canada from sea to sea becomes part of that movement from east to west which is usually recognized as being the greatest factor in the development of America north of the Rio Grande. Turner has shown how the "true point of view" in United States history "is not the Atlantic coast, it is the Great West." The West is a form of society rather than an area. "It is the term applied to the region whose social conditions result from the application of older institutions and ideas to the transforming influence of free land." In the progress of the United States from Atlantic to Pacific West after West has emerged as frontier has succeeded frontier. In Canada the movement has also been from east to west but with this difference. The Canadian frontier has at times entered the United States because the natural "way" to the west lay through United States territory. But the American frontier

has also in several places moved north into Canada. The "interlacing" of these frontiers is a factor in North American history which has scarcely yet been realized. The International Boundary has cut across the natural lines of settlement. This fact will perhaps become more evident as we trace the history of the Canadian frontier.

The first frontiers of Canada were Acadia and New France. Acadia was a check upon New England; New France guarded the water route to the heart of the continent. For as Turner has pointed out "French colonization was dominated by its trading frontier." French explorers and *coureurs de bois* penetrated into the Great Lakes region and discovered the portages leading to the Ohio, the Illinois and the Mississippi. They found their way to the Spanish borderlands as well as to the Saskatchewan. At the close of the Old Régime there was a line of forts linking Canada with Louisiana as well as a series of posts stretching from Montreal to the Rocky Mountains. There was a Franco-Spanish as well as an Anglo-French struggle for the heart of the continent, and Natchitoches and Nacogdoches played their part as much as did Fort Duquesne and Fort Necessity in the great contest for supremacy. It is at first sight a far cry from Port Royal and Louisbourg to Biloxi, New Orleans and Natchitoches, but the two outposts of France, Acadia and Louisiana, were connected by the other two French frontiers, Quebec and Illinois. "Nowhere in America," Prof. Herbert Eugene Bolton claims, "were the effects of the frontier in American history so clearly marked as in Acadia and Quebec." It was found impossible to keep the young habitants at home tilling the fields of the seigneurs. They would go off to the woods and become *coureurs de bois*. There is no need to tell the story of border raids between New France and New England. Suffice it to say that Acadia and Quebec were French frontiers which accomplished their destiny.

But the French had to face serious opposition from the English in the fur trading regions. The Hudson's Bay Company finally maintained its posts on Hudson Bay in spite of the heroic efforts of d'Iberville and his companions. It is true that the Peace of Ryswick left the French in control of all the English forts save one, but the Treaty of Utrecht handed over all the Hudson Bay Territory to Great Britain. The English company extended its influence in land by means of the journeys of Kelsey and Hendry. Henry Kelsey in 1691-92 penetrated into the Saskatchewan region, and Anthony Hendry in 1754-55 reached the country of the Blackfeet. But La Vérendrye and his sons carried the French fur trade from Lake Superior to Lake Winnipeg and on to the upper Missouri and to the far-away Saskatchewan. The fall of New France, however, put an end to this attempt to hold the heart of the continent.

Both in Canada and the United States the fur traders went far beyond the frontier of settlement. After 1763 the Montreal traders, who later formed themselves into the North West Company, pushed on beyond the Saskatchewan, explored the rich Athabaska and Peace River regions and brought back a rich harvest of furs. Alexander Mackenzie made his way to two oceans; David Thompson, explorer and geographer, discovered two passes across the Rocky Mountains and traced the whole course of the Columbia River in the reverse order, from its mouth to its source; and Simon Fraser made his descent of the river which now bears his name. In the United States the traders made use of the old French trails in the Ohio and Mississippi regions, then ascended the Missouri, following in the main

the route of Lewis and Clark, and explored the passes of the Rocky Mountains. The "mountain men" as they were called opened up the fur trade of the West, but were none too successful in their competition with the British companies. Astor's venture on the Pacific coast ended in failure, and the American fur trade was distinctly the loser in the War of 1812. In British North America the hold of the fur companies, especially that of the Hudson's Bay Company which became in 1821 by its absorption of the North West Company the undisputed master of the field, was not broken until 1870 when the newly formed Dominion of Canada took over Manitoba and the Northwest Territories. In the United States the farmer's frontier steadily invaded the trader's frontier, and by 1841 broke into those Indian lands to the west of Missouri and Arkansas which under the title of the Permanent Indian Frontier were to be kept forever as the red man's domain.

Leaving to one side the fur trader's frontier we return to the frontier of settlement in what is now the Dominion of Canada. The first English speaking frontier in Canada was in Nova Scotia. It was really an extension of the New England frontier northward into the newly conquered territory which had been ceded to Great Britain by the Treaty of Utrecht. By that treaty Acadia "within its ancient boundaries" became British but Cape Breton and Prince Edward Island remained in French hands. The foundation of Louisbourg proved a new hornets' nest to the hardy New Englanders, who had already displayed their prowess in previous wars by capturing Acadian strongholds. In 1745 Pepperell of Maine joined forces with Admiral Warren of the British Navy to capture that fortress, only to see it handed back three years later. The foundation of Halifax in 1749 and the settlement of the Germans in Lunenburg were the real beginnings of the British colonization of Nova Scotia. The expulsion of the Acadians, however just or unjust it may have been, was merely an incident in the history of this frontier. The Acadians were still an outpost for France and France still hoped to recover what she had lost in 1713. But Louisbourg was recaptured in 1758 and the conquest of Canada brought an end to French rule in North America. Settlers came to Nova Scotia from New England and imparted a distinctly American tone to the life of the new frontier. But the Scottish Armada arrived in time to rescue Pictou County from the fell clutches of Benjamin Franklin's Philadelphia Company.

From 1763 to 1774 there was practically no boundary between Canada and the other British colonies in North America. New England, the Middle Colonies, the Southern Plantations, Nova Scotia and Canada were all bound up in one commercial system. But there were two areas which might be termed frontiers, Vermont and the Ohio Valley. Vermont was founded in what had been debatable land between French and English. Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys, true products of the American frontier, maintained their New Hampshire grants against the machinations of the Governor of New York, at the same time keeping an eye open towards Canada. In the Revolutionary War Vermont took the side of the Continental Congress but Allen also entered into negotiations with Great Britain, thus attempting to play off one side against the other. Needing the St. Lawrence outlet for her trade Vermont was attempting to secure free trade with Canada.

The Ohio Valley was a more difficult problem. This was the natural frontier of the Middle Colonies and Virginia, but the British by the Proclamation of 1763, had excluded settlement in this region which was to remain Indian Territory. Thus the American colonists were barred from

expansion into the vast hinterland which had so recently been wrested from the French. The French who remained on the Illinois were desirous of trading down the Mississippi, although Louisiana was now in Spanish hands. British and Canadian merchants from Montreal practically ousted the traders of the Middle Colonies from the Indian Territory. The British authorities found it increasingly difficult to keep order in this region and, as disaffection in the thirteen colonies of the Atlantic seaboard grew, the Imperial Government at length decided to transfer territory between the Ohio and Mississippi rivers to the province of Quebec. This was done by the Quebec Act of 1774 and provided the American colonists with another grievance.

The American Revolution had a profound effect upon the history of the Canadian frontier. The Ohio Valley was lost, Canada and Nova Scotia remained British and the boundaries of the United States were fixed by the Treaty of 1783. But the British retained their control of the Western Posts and the fur trade until after the signing of Jay's Treaty in 1794. During the period between 1783 and 1796 when the posts were finally surrendered there were various proposals for the creation of an Indian buffer state between the United States and British North America. This new state would have been officially neutral but in reality it would have become a sort of British fur trading preserve. As it was, the depot of the North West Company remained at Grand Portage in what was technically United States territory until it was moved in 1801 to Kamanistiquia where Fort William was constructed during the years 1802 to 1804. It was not until the conclusion of the War of 1812 that the control of the United States over the "Old North West" was finally assured and the Indian power there broken. Tecumseh fought gallantly but failed to check the advance of the American settlers on the Wabash frontier. Defeated by William Henry Harrison at Tippecanoe in 1811, Tecumseh made his last stand at the Battle of the Thames (Moraviantown) in 1813. With him perished his dream of a great Indian confederacy which would keep the American frontiersmen behind the line of the Wabash.

But the most important result of the American War of Independence was the bending of the American frontier towards the north. The United Empire Loyalists, the "Tories" of the revolutionary period, were in the main native born Americans who had left all to maintain their British allegiance. They settled in the Maritime Provinces and in Canada. With them came certain Germans who had been employed to fight in the British cause, the so-called "Hessians" who also received lands in the colonies. Two new provinces were created, New Brunswick and Upper Canada. Nova Scotia, and Quebec—renamed Lower Canada when the old province was divided by the Constitutional Act of 1791—both received Loyalist settlers. The advent of the Loyalists made Canada English speaking as well as French speaking. The Loyalists who came to Upper Canada seem to have been drawn from the frontier rather than from the towns and cities of the Atlantic seaboard. The men of the seaboard more naturally gravitated to the Maritime Provinces.

The effect of the coming of the Loyalists upon the development of the Canadian constitution has often been pointed out. They were accustomed to self-government and chafed under the Quebec Act. As a result representative institutions, which already existed in Nova Scotia, were rapidly set up in the other provinces. But the social and economic effects of the Loyalist migration were equally far-reaching. They hewed out homes

from the backwoods and overcame the immense difficulties which confronted them. They advanced the frontier, especially in Upper Canada, and formed a ribbon of settlement along the St. Lawrence and the lower lakes. Eight townships were surveyed in the autumn of 1783 along the St. Lawrence River, commencing from the western boundary of Longueuil, the most westerly of the French seigniories. Five more townships were opened up from Fort Frontenac (Kingston), towards the Bay of Quinte. Later to accommodate the last comers three more townships were surveyed at the western end of the Bay of Quinte. Highland Scots from the Mohawk Valley settled in Glengarry, Dutch and Germans from New York near Kingston, and the Niagara settlement was made up of Loyalists from western Pennsylvania and southern New York. Butler's Rangers, made up of loyal frontiersmen, was disbanded, and many of its officers and men obtained land in the Niagara peninsula. Nor should we forget the two settlements of the Six Nations Indians at Deseronto and in what is now Brant County, Ontario.

After the Loyalists came other immigrants, many of them from the United States. Most of them were seeking cheap land. Among the most interesting of these settlers were the Pennsylvania Dutch who took up lands in what are now York and Waterloo Counties. There was also an important immigration from the British Isles. Highlanders came to Glengarry, Stormont, Lanark and Baldoon, to mention only a few of the Scottish settlements. Colonel Talbot, that picturesque figure noted for his hatred of teetotallers and women, formed the settlement which bore his name. Governor Simcoe, like Sir James Douglas of a later day, was a "king of roads." Yonge Street and Dundas Street are his permanent memorial. But for years water communication was easier than travel over the corduroy or plank roads. Even before the War of 1812 Upper Canada was well opened up for settlement. It has been reckoned that three-fifths of the settlers in Upper Canada during the period 1795 to 1813 were non-Loyalist Americans.

One result of this northward movement of the American frontier, accompanied as it was with the extension of settlement into the "Old North-West," was the rise of the "expansionists of 1812." Prof. Julius Pratt has shown how an understanding was reached among the politicians of the American frontier, the so-called "War Hawks," that the acquisition of Canada was to be balanced by the annexation of the Floridas. The north-western frontier was to expand into Canada, the southern frontier was to embrace Florida and possibly a portion of Mexico. It was this pressure from the frontier rather than the Berlin Decrees, the Orders in Council, and the Nonintercourse Acts which brought about the War of 1812. The "War-Hawks" were launching "a double-barrelled scheme of territorial aggrandizement." The apathy of the northeastern states, the incompetency of the American generals, and the heroic stand of the Upper Canadians, backed by the few available British regulars, frustrated the American attempt to capture Canada.

The Treaty of Ghent inaugurated a new era in the history of the American Middle West and of Upper Canada. After the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars immigrants poured into both regions. But there were several important points of difference. The Middle West was largely populated from the Atlantic seaboard, especially from New England, New York and the Southern states. Upper Canada was reinforced by immi-

grants from the British Isles. There was relatively little movement into Upper Canada from Lower Canada or the Maritime Provinces. The movement from the Maritime Provinces was to New England; but there was no noticeable migration from Lower Canada. Then, too, the Louisiana Purchase had given the United States a hinterland which Canada lacked. The fur trading empire of western British North America was not open to settlement from Canada. Even if it had been, ways of communication were too difficult. The natural move was from Upper Canada to the Middle West of the United States. Prof. Duncan McArthur has estimated that during the decade of the 1830's only one-third of the British immigrants into Upper Canada remained in that province. The remaining two-thirds sought homes in the Middle Western states. It should be remembered that the Western Peninsula of Upper Canada was then the far west of Canada, and that the boundary between Canada and the United States turns to the northward when it leaves Lake Erie. There is a fair field for research on the problem of migration from Upper Canada to the states of Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota and the Dakotas.

In a word the Canadian frontier moved into the United States. It was the only possible course open to it. Canadians felt the westward urge, but there was then no Canadian West open for settlement. The lure of free land took them as it did hundreds of thousands of United States citizens into the fertile prairie lands of the Mississippi Valley. The westward development of Canada was as thoroughly blocked for a generation as the westward movement of the United States beyond the Mississippi had been before the Louisiana Purchase. But Canada was in a far worse state. The United States from 1783 to 1803 had plenty of good land into which to expand. Settlement had not really reached the Mississippi in 1803. But settlement in Upper Canada had reached the line of the Detroit and St. Clair Rivers long before the Canadian West was thrown open to settlement by "Canada's Louisiana Purchase" in 1870. The Canadian Shield proved an effective barrier to expansion northward and westward in Canada. It was only when the Canadian Pacific Railway pierced the "bad lands" north of Lake Superior that a way was opened for settlers from Eastern Canada and Europe to the fertile plains of Manitoba and the Territories. The earlier Canadian railways and especially the Grand Trunk, which had its terminals in Portland, Maine, and Chicago, Illinois, actually assisted in the building up of the American Northwest. As Professor Paxson has remarked; "The Grand Trunk, a Canadian road. . . . was, after its completion in 1853, as important in the development of the American Northwest as though it were the possessor of a roadbed entirely within the United States."¹ And so it was that the Canadian frontier crossed the line. We shall show a little later how it returned to Canada when the United States frontier advanced north of the forty-ninth parallel.

The first settlement in what is now Western Canada was the work of that idealist, Thomas Douglas, fifth Earl of Selkirk. It cannot be considered as a westward extension of the Canadian frontier but rather as an isolated attempt at colonization. The original Selkirk settlers came from Scotland by way of Hudson Bay. There was little connection with Canada although the Selkirk Settlement cut directly across the route of the North West Company from Fort William to the Upper Country as it was commonly called. The struggle between the Nor-Westers and the

¹ Paxson, Frederic L., *History of the American Frontier*, 1924, p. 405.
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Selkirk settlers led to bloodshed at Seven Oaks in 1816 and to Selkirk's capture of Fort William. The Hudson's Bay Company became involved because Lord Selkirk was a prominent shareholder in the company. Unseemly wrangles in the courts of Upper and Lower Canada followed, where Selkirk and the partners of the North West Company hurled charges and countercharges at each other's heads. Selkirk's health became undermined and he returned to England. He died at Pau in the south of France on April 8, 1820. The union of the North West Company with the Hudson's Bay Company followed in 1821 on terms more liberal to the Nor-Westers than Selkirk would have been willing to grant. After Selkirk's death the settlement languished. In the reorganized Hudson's Bay Company "the interests of the fur trade once more predominated." Governor George Simpson who was in charge of the fur trade in America expressed himself thus in a letter dated May 29, 1882: "Every Gentleman in the Service both Hudson's Bay and North West is unfriendly to the Colony."¹ Until 1826, the year of the great floods, the very forces of nature seemed to be against the colonies. But the tide of fortune turned and the settlement enjoyed a series of bountiful harvests. In 1834 the sixth Earl of Selkirk reconveyed the colony to the company in return for £15,000 of Hudson's Bay Company stock. Under the Company's rule the settlement progressed slowly. It lacked an outlet to the south until the tide of American settlement began to surge up the Mississippi to the Red River Valley. But by that time Canadian politicians and newspaper editors were launching their campaign for the cession of the Hudson's Bay Company's territories to Canada.

One of the remarkable features of the westward movement in the United States is the jumping of the frontier in the late '30's and early '40's across the Rocky Mountains to Oregon and California. This jump had a profound effect upon the history of the Canadian frontier. From 1818 to 1846 Great Britain and the United States maintained a condominium over the Oregon country. The nationals of both countries enjoyed a legal right to trade in the entire territory stretching from the northern boundary of California to the southern limits of the Russian possessions in Alaska. As a matter of fact the Hudson's Bay Company really controlled the country until the advent of the American settlers in the early '40's. Missionaries from the United States had arrived in the late '30's, but the undisputed "Emperor of the Columbia" was that Irish-Scottish-Canadian, Dr. John McLoughlin, who from 1825 to 1846 ruled over this vast territory from Fort Vancouver (now Vancouver Washington). In 1843 the American settlers in Oregon assisted by a few French Canadians set up a Provisional Government until such time as the United States Government should be prepared to take over Oregon. In 1845 Dr. McLoughlin and James Douglas, chief factors of the Hudson's Bay Company, made terms with the Provisional Government which now admitted the necessity of maintaining the condominium pending the settlement of the boundary question. The Oregon Treaty of 1846 provided a settlement which was, in the main, suitable to both parties. The Hudson's Bay Company, foreseeing the termination of their régime in Oregon, had in 1843 founded Fort Victoria on the southeast corner of Vancouver Island. As a result Great Britain retained all of Vancouver Island.

The discovery of gold in California led to a great influx of immigrants to that territory which had just been wrested away from Mexico. In 1850

¹ Simpson to Colville, May 20, 1822, *Selkirk Papers*, 7623 (Canadian Archives), quoted in Martin, Chester, *Lord Selkirk's Work in Canada*, 1916, p. 171.

California was admitted as a state of the Union. A gold mining frontier was thus created which was to extend northward to British Columbia and Idaho and eastward to Nevada, Colorado and New Mexico. A "mineral empire" had been discovered which was to stretch throughout mountain states and northward into Canada. This mineral frontier was destined to play a great part in the development of British Columbia and the coal regions of Alberta.

The first British settlement west of the Rocky mountains was Vancouver Island which was ceded by the Royal Grant of 1849 to the Hudson's Bay Company for purposes of colonization. The company had learned from bitter experience in Oregon that settlement was necessary if her hold was to be maintained north of the International Boundary. The Governor and Committee attempted to secure the whole territory west of the mountains as a colony, but the British Government would only cede Vancouver Island. The colony of Vancouver Island was a company preserve where settlement was in the main confined to officers and retired servants of the Honourable the Hudson's Bay Company. There was one independent settler, Captain W. Colquhoun Grant of the Scots Greys, but he soon left to seek his fortune elsewhere. Coal mines were developed at Fort Rupert and Nanaimo, and a flourishing trade in coal with California commenced. The Puget Sound Agricultural Company, an adjunct of the Hudson's Bay Company, carried on farming operations around Victoria. There were small settlements at Sooke, Metchosin and Nanaimo. A royal governor, Richard Blanshard, was sent out, but he found little to do and soon retired to England, with more dignity than solvency. The Hudson's Bay Company had promised him a land grant, but James Douglas, chief factor in charge of the fur trade west of the Rocky Mountains, explained to him that the grant belonged to the office and not to the occupant. Douglas was appointed governor in 1851, and the colony progressed but slowly.

The discovery of gold initiated a new era in what is now British Columbia. The rush to the Fraser diggings in the spring and summer of 1858 was a movement of the mining frontier north into British territory. Victoria became the San Francisco of the new gold fields. The British Government established a new colony on the mainland upon which Queen Victoria bestowed the name "British Columbia." James Douglas became governor of the new colony but was forced to sever all connections with the Hudson's Bay and Puget Sound Agricultural Companies. Other gold fields were discovered, especially in Cariboo. Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, Secretary of State for the Colonies, sent out a special detachment of Royal Engineers under the command of Colonel Richard Clement Moody. There were few disturbances of the peace, the chief being the so-called "Ned McGowan War," a recrudescence of the disputes which had occurred in California between the Vigilantes and the Law and Order Party. Douglas and Moody were ably assisted by Judge Matthew Baillie Begbie whose justice was strict and swift. The lawless element was never allowed to get the upper hand, and the miners early learned to respect and to uphold British justice. The capital of the colony, named New Westminster by Queen Victoria, was built on a site on the lower Fraser River selected by Colonel Moody. To give better communication to the Cariboo mines Governor Douglas, assisted by the Royal Engineers and private contractors, built the Cariboo Waggon Road, the "Appian Way of British Columbia."

But the golden stream dried up in the late '60's and the two colonies were faced with bankruptcy. When Douglas retired in 1864 separate

governors were appointed for the colonies, but the upkeep of two sets of government officials for a population which did not number more than 15,000 was altogether too great. As a result the colonies were united in 1866 at the fiat of the Colonial Office. But it was soon evident that British Columbia must either join the new Canadian federation or else throw in her lot with the United States. After much negotiation British Columbia joined the Dominion of Canada in 1871. One of the chief terms of union was that Canada should undertake the construction of a transcontinental railway which would link British Columbia with the eastern Canadian railway systems.

The taking over of the Hudson's Bay Company's territories in 1870 and the entrance of British Columbia into federation in 1871 initiated a new phase in the development of the Canadian frontier. Even before the Canadian Pacific Railway was built settlers came into Manitoba by the Mississippi and Red River routes. Many of these settlers were from eastern Canada. The Red River Rebellion of 1870, unfortunate and unnecessary as it seems to us now, called attention to the new province of Manitoba. Lord Wolseley's expedition made its way overland from Canada and reached Fort Garry only to find that Riel and the rebels had fled. The Dominion Government acquired title to the lands of the province by two treaties with the Indians made in the year 1871. The Indians received what was known as "treaty money," an annual payment from the federal authorities of so much per head to each man, woman and child of the tribe. The half-breeds received "scrip," that is, the right to receive one hundred and sixty acres of land in any district which was opened for settlement. The half-breeds usually sold their "scrip" to speculators for paltry amounts. The speculators in their turn kept the land idle awaiting a rise in prices. The system of subdivision which prevailed in the western United States was adopted by the Government; sections, one mile square, containing 640 acres subdivided into quarter sections of 160 acres. Thus did the American frontier once more make its influence felt in Western Canada.

Law and order were personified in the Canadian prairies by the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, established in 1873. These police built forts at strategic points from Red River to the Rocky Mountains, and ejected the American whiskey traders. Several of these police posts, e.g. Calgary, Macleod, Medicine Hat, Regina, Battleford, have become important towns and cities in Alberta and Saskatchewan. As a result of the work of the police the Canadian frontier in the North West was saved from scenes of violence. The only serious trouble was the Rebellion of 1885 which was due as much to the lethargy of the federal authorities as to the grievances of the Indians and half-breeds. Louis Riel, the rebel leader, seems to have been suffering from religious mania. Many of the soldiers from eastern Canada who were sent out to suppress the rebellion remained as settlers on the prairie; those who returned to the east took back with them grand tales of the fertility of the soil of the plains. So were the bonds between east and west strengthened.

As early as 1875 Manitoba was beginning to receive immigrants from continental Europe. Six thousand Mennonites, who had left Russia because they would not perform military service, arrived in that year and took up lands along the Red River. In 1876 a colony of Icelanders came to the shores of Lake Winnipeg. The prairies in Canada, as in the United States, were destined to be filled with a polyglot European population. English

speaking settlers from eastern Canada and the United States came in increasing numbers. By 1881 the total population of Manitoba was over 60,000 and Winnipeg had nearly 8,000 inhabitants. The English speaking population had increased from 5,000 to almost 40,000.

The building of the Canadian Pacific Railway between the years 1881 and 1885 coincided with the construction of the Northern Pacific Railway in the United States. The Northern Pacific, the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fé, and later the Southern Pacific and the Great Northern railroads cut across the "cow country" which stretched from the Rio Grande to Canada. The open American frontier was destroyed at a time when the Canadian Northwest was being thrown open to settlement as a result of the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Settlement advanced through Minnesota and the Dakotas to the International Boundary, and the old Canadian frontier which had lost itself in the United States found itself again in Manitoba and the North West Territories. The American frontier also moved north into Canada and settlers left the prairie states to take up homesteads in the Canadian Northwest. It is noteworthy that the first Canadian Pacific passenger train ran from St. Boniface to the International Boundary at Emerson, where it could communicate with the American lines in Minnesota.

But the Canadian Pacific Railway by its route around Lake Superior brought immigrants from Europe and settlers from eastern Canada and the eastern United States direct to the prairie wheat fields. At last eastern and western Canada had direct railway communication through Canadian territory. This overcame to a great extent the barrier of the Canadian Shield. It did not entirely overcome it since the lands north of Lake Superior were not suitable for agriculture and there was perforce a break between the settlements in old Ontario and in new Manitoba. None the less the railway gave the Dominion a unity which it had previously lacked.

The last decade of the nineteenth century and the first fourteen years of the twentieth witnessed the peopling of the prairies. Manitoba's population increased from 152,506 in 1891 to 461,394 in 1911. Saskatchewan had a population of 91,279 in 1901 and 492,432 in 1911. Alberta recorded 73,022 in 1901 and 374,295 in 1911.¹ "The years 1901 to 1911, in brief, form the *decas mirabilis* of Canadian expansion. The immigration movement . . . which had previously run well under 50,000 per annum, rose rapidly to over five times that volume, eventually passing 400,000 in a single year."² From 1896 onward a steady stream of American settlers came into the prairies. In 1905 two new provinces, Saskatchewan and Alberta were formed out of the old North West Territories. The men of Iowa, Minnesota and the Dakotas crossed the line and found new homes in Saskatchewan and Alberta. It is possible to-day to find in the Peace River country families who left the United States, pioneered in Saskatchewan, and who are now opening up the "last best West" in Peace River.³

The influence of the American frontier has been most marked in the Prairie Provinces. As in the western States it has been a case of a debtor west and a creditor east. The result has been the same, the rise of agrarian political parties and the formation of co-operative societies. Two of the Prairie Provinces have Farmers' Governments in office to-day. Some

¹ *Canada Year Book*, 1926, p. 90.

² *Ibid.*, p. 93.

³ Professor A. L. Burt, of the University of Alberta, is the authority for this statement.

of the leaders in these movements have come from United States, although the majority seem to be of British birth (including Canadians, of course, under this category). The Canadian wheat pools have demonstrated the economic power of the western farmers. On the whole it is not perhaps too much to say that the western Canadians have profited from the mistakes as well as the successes of the American frontier.

The Canadian frontier is not yet closed. There are still good agricultural lands waiting to be opened up; there is still a frontier line past which settlement has not progressed. This line in Canada has to be pressed northward rather than westward, although there is available land yet in the west. Possibly in a generation or so from now the frontier may cease to exist; that will depend upon the potentialities of the northern sections of Canada. When the Canadian frontier is closed Canada will then be in a similar condition to that in which the United States is to-day. The heroic age of the frontier will be over, and Canadians will have lost something which they can never regain.