

A Lesson in Boosterism: The Contest for the Alberta Provincial Capital, 1904-1906

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Résumé de l'article

Bien que l'année 1905 marquât une transition importante dans la vie politique des anciens Territoires du Nord-Ouest, dans les villes de l'Alberta on portait son attention non sur les grandes questions posées par l'octroi du statut de province à la région, mais plutôt sur la compétition de plusieurs communautés pour le titre de capitale provinciale. Des boosters ambitieux à Red Deer, à Calgary, à Edmonton, à Medicine Hat et dans une foule de moindres centres (Banff par exemple) aspiraient à la qualité de capitale pour leur propre ville, voire même village, comme symbole de son importance croissante et pour aider à une promotion ultérieure. Durant l'amère campagne pour devenir capitale qui suivit les élections fédérales de 1904, plusieurs facteurs furent invoqués, y compris la situation géographique, les perspectives futures et les activités commerciales des divers rivaux. Aucun de ces éléments ne se révéla décisif au moment critique. Le vainqueur, Edmonton, dut son triomphe en mesure presque égale, d'abord aux actions persistantes et agressives de ses *boosters*, et ensuite à l'insuffisance ou aux défauts des promoteurs de ses concurrents. Comme les *boosters* de Red Deer, de Banff, de Medicine Hat et de Calgary devaient l'apprendre, le succès dans la quête pour la capitale dépendait de bien autre chose que du désir. En utilisant leurs partisans politiques aux niveaux fédéral et provincial, et en poussant leur ville devant l'opinion publique, les *boosters* d'Edmonton donnèrent à leurs émules une leçon qu'ils n'allaient pas oublier de sitôt.

A LESSON IN BOOSTERISM:
THE CONTEST FOR THE ALBERTA PROVINCIAL CAPITAL,
1904 - 1906

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Alexander Bruce Kilpatrick

ABSTRACT/RESUME:

Although 1905 marked a major transition in the political life of the old Northwest Territories, attention in Alberta's urban centres was focused not upon the larger questions raised by the granting of provincial status to the area, but rather upon the issue of which of the several competing communities would capture the title of provincial capital. Ambitious boosters in Red Deer, Calgary, Edmonton, Medicine Hat and a host of smaller settlements (such as Banff) coveted capital status for their particular city, town or even village as a symbol of its swelling importance and as an aid to further promotion. Many elements were called into play during the bitter capital campaign that followed the 1904 federal election including the geographical location, the future prospects and the business activities of the various aspirants. None of these factors proved to be critical in the final decision. The victor, Edmonton, emerged triumphant due in almost equal part to the persistent and aggressive actions of its boosters and to the inadequacy or failure of the urban promoters in rival centres. As boosters in Red Deer, Banff, Medicine Hat and Calgary discovered, success in the capital quest was dependent on much more than desire. By utilizing their advocates in both the federal and provincial political arenas and by thrusting their city into the public eye, Edmonton's community boosters gave their competitors an instructional session they would not soon forget.

Bien que l'année 1905 marquât une transition importante dans la vie politique des anciens Territoires du Nord-Ouest, dans les villes de l'Alberta on portait son attention non sur les grandes questions posées par l'octroi du statut de province à la région, mais plutôt sur la compétition de plusieurs communautés pour le titre de capitale provinciale. Des boosters ambitieux à Red Deer, à Calgary, à Edmonton, à Medicine Hat et dans une foule de moindres centres (Banff par exemple) aspiraient à la qualité de capitale pour leur propre ville, voire même village, comme symbole de son importance croissante et pour aider à une promotion ultérieure. Durant l'amère campagne pour devenir capitale qui suivit les élections fédérales de 1904, plusieurs facteurs furent invoqués, y compris la situation géographique, les perspectives futures et les activités commerciales des divers rivaux. Aucun de ces éléments ne se révéla décisif au moment critique. Le vainqueur, Edmonton, dut son triomphe en mesure presque égale, d'abord aux actions persistantes et agressives de ses boosters, et ensuite à l'insuffisance ou aux

défauts des promoteurs de ses concurrents. Comme les boosters de Red Deer, de Banff, de Medicine Hat et de Calgary devaient l'apprendre, le succès dans la quête pour la capitale dépendait de bien autre chose que du désir. En utilisant leurs partisans politiques aux niveaux fédéral et provincial, et en poussant leur ville devant l'opinion publique, les boosters d'Edmonton donnèrent à leurs émules une leçon qu'ils n'allaient pas oublier de sitôt.

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During the first years of the twentieth century, Alberta was the scene of a lively competition. Dozens of developing communities, driven on by visions of grandeur, scrambled for industries, immigrants, and governmental plums with which to fuel their growth. In these years, before the urban pattern had crystallized, Alberta urban society was bluntly egalitarian; every community from a village born the day before, to an established thriving centre, had the potential, and the opportunity, of ascending to the status of metropolis. Success, measured in terms of size and wealth, was there for the grasping, but competition was fierce. Success or failure often rested not upon an advantageous geographical location, nor upon a traditional function, but rather upon the strength or weaknesses of local civic leadership. This leadership included municipal politicians and local entrepreneurs, as well as local journalists and federal and provincial politicians. Those communities with particularly dynamic individuals or groups climbed to the pinnacle of the emerging urban hierarchy while those with less energetic or less competent "boosters" fell progressively farther behind.¹

The creation of the province of Alberta in 1905 led, as a matter of course, to the question of where to locate the provincial capital. In even the most tranquil settings, this question had set off a heated debate, but in Alberta, where the stakes were particularly high, it sparked an exceptionally bitter struggle. Besides opening up a new opportunity at which Alberta boosters could aim, the prestige

¹Alan F.J. Artibise, "Boosterism and the Development of Prairie Cities, 1871-1913," in Gilbert A. Stelter and Alan F.J. Artibise, eds., Shaping the Canadian Urban Landscape: Essays on the City Building Process (forthcoming, 1980).

accompanying the title of capital made it an appealing prize. Many communities, such as Okotoks, Lacombe, Cochrane, and Wetaskiwin, expressed a desire for the capital, but only Calgary, Edmonton, Medicine Hat, and Red Deer transformed this desire into serious action.² As is well-known Edmonton secured the seat of government, but Edmonton's victory was achieved not because it held any locational advantage over its opponents, or any prior claim to the title, but rather because its boosters were more aggressive, more energetic, and more adept at promoting their city than were their counterparts in rival communities.

I

Interest in the capital was not a novelty in 1904. Calgary had made its first bid for capital status in the 1880s when local promoters had tried unsuccessfully to woo the Territorial seat of government away from Regina. Although this scheme was shelved when it became obvious that Regina would remain the capital as long as the Territories remained a single political unit, Calgarians did not abandon their hopes to see Calgary as a capital city within the near future. Beginning in 1898, Calgary politicians such as J.J. Young, publisher of the Calgary Herald and territorial representative for East Calgary, and R.B. Bennett, member for West Calgary, milked the avid interest in a capital for Calgary, gaining successive election victories with a cry for autonomy for the western half of the territories "... and above all with Calgary the capital."³ Other Calgary boosters performed important roles in keeping their city's capital ambitions in the public eye. In 1901 for example, the Calgary board of trade and the city council extended an invitation to the lieutenant-governor, the premier, and the members of the territorial legislature, to visit Calgary, ostensibly to join in the May 24th celebrations. The agenda,

²It is probable that nearly every Alberta community at least expressed a desire for the capital.

³Calgary Daily Herald, March 20, 1901.

carefully prepared for the visitors by the board and the council, included a banquet, a grand tour of the city, and a sidetrip to the brewery, and left no doubts that the purpose of the invitation was to garner support for Calgary, and to lay the groundwork for any future claims to a provincial capital.

Calgary's chief commercial rival in the 1890s had been Edmonton, a much smaller town over two hundred miles to the north, across the Saskatchewan River from the terminus of the C.P.R. branch line at Strathcona. Throughout the decade, Edmonton's civic leaders, if they thought about it at all, made no public pronouncements regarding Edmonton's ambitions for the capital. By 1901, however, the Edmonton board of trade was openly pushing for autonomy with two provinces, a clear indication that Edmonton's businessmen entertained serious hopes for the capital. The division of the territories into two provinces would leave one seat of government open. This vacancy would be the focus of a competition between the two urban centres.

This clash of ambitions was not the first that had occurred between Edmonton and Calgary and was in fact only one stage in a long rivalry that stemmed back to the C.P.R.'s arrival in the West in 1883. At that time, the C.P.R. had by-passed Edmonton in favour of Calgary.⁴ Calgary, by virtue of its position on the C.P.R. mainline, rapidly developed into the largest city in the Northwest Territories while Edmonton had struggled along, its growth retarded by the absence of the railroad. It had become the centre of trading operations north of the Red Deer River through the sheer determination of its local leadership to build a commercial centre in spite of its initially non-existent, and later unsatisfactory, rail connections. Nevertheless, Edmonton's business leaders never missed an opportunity to accuse Calgary of attempted, or at least contemplated, sabotage of Edmonton's fortunes.

Aided by its enthusiastic boosters, Calgary had fashioned a commercial empire in the south-western corner of the Territories,

⁴The best account of Calgary's development is M. Foran, Calgary: An Illustrated History (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1978).

stretching from the American border to the Red Deer River, with occasional incursions into Edmonton's trading territory north of the river. Between Edmonton and Calgary, the future province of Alberta was effectively carved into two distinct social, economic, and geographical sections, the north and the south. As a consequence, the smaller settlements within each section, such as Red Deer and Medicine Hat, were left to their own devices in a scramble for the residue.

The field of opportunity for the smaller as well as the larger urban centres stretched dramatically as a result of Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier's pledge in October, 1904, that, if sustained in the November general election, his government would implement provincial status for the Northwest Territories. Without a doubt, the premier attraction in this bevy of fresh allurements was the chance to become the provincial capital.

Despite its obvious importance to Alberta's urban communities, the location of the capital yielded to more immediate concerns as an election issue. Both the Conservatives and Liberals stressed their proposals for building a third transcontinental railway. The Liberals supported private construction by the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway which would run through northern Alberta; the Conservatives advocated construction of a publicly - owned line following an as yet unspecified route. In northern Alberta where the G.T.P. would have the most positive impact, the Liberals won in both Strathcona and Edmonton; in southern Alberta where the C.P.R. interests were most firmly entrenched, they lost both electoral contests. This result emphasized the sectional rivalry; creating a Conservative south and a Liberal north (see Map I).

Many Calgary voters had not found the G.T.P. an appealing prospect, as it would tend to aid Edmonton at Calgary's expense; they therefore returned M.S. McCarthy, the Conservative candidate. This view was shared by the Calgary Herald, the newspaper voice of the Conservatives in Calgary. The Herald was elated by the election verdict. Refusing to heed the gloomy predictions circulating among Calgary Liberals that the city had done irreparable damage to its chances for the capital, the Herald congratulated city voters on their sensibility



and good judgement. The federal election, the paper asserted, would have absolutely no bearing on the question of the provincial capital, a matter which lay properly within the jurisdiction of the province. In the Herald's opinion, with M.S. McCarthy in the House, "...Calgary will have at Ottawa a man capable and willing to look after the interests of his constituents."⁵ His performance was expected to contrast sharply

⁵Herald, November 7, 1904, p. 2.

with the treatment Calgary had received while under Liberal management. Previously, Alberta had been represented in the House of Commons by a single member, until a 1903 parliamentary redistribution gave the Calgary district its own representative. For the previous eight years this member had been a Liberal, Edmonton's Frank Oliver. Oliver, a long time resident of Edmonton, held a typical northern antagonism toward Calgary, and consequently did not exert himself on behalf of the southern city. Such an attitude, of course, did not win many admirers in Calgary. Searching for words to describe Oliver's term as the Alberta M.P., the Calgary Herald could only ask, "What has he [Oliver] ever done for the municipality...that could not be done by an inanimate object in the Halls of Parliament?"⁶

This antagonistic attitude made Oliver a popular man in Edmonton. From his first election to the House of Commons in 1896, Oliver had worked actively to promote the interests of his urban constituents. He had been instrumental in gaining many advantages for Edmonton, including the speedy construction of a railway bridge across the Saskatchewan River which gave Edmonton its first rail connections. Over time his value to the community had appreciated as he rose to prominence within Liberal ranks, first as one of the three candidates for the ministry of the interior in 1896, and again as a potential cabinet minister in 1904. Undoubtedly, he exercised considerable influence within the Liberal administration. Undoubtedly, as an ardent Edmonton booster, he used this influence to aid his hometown.⁷ Perhaps

⁶Ibid.

⁷As the sole proprietor of the Edmonton Bulletin Oliver had actively promoted the city, but he had relinquished control of the paper in 1901 when demands on his time in Ottawa proved too pressing. Although he retained a financial interest in the paper, his promotional efforts were largely confined to Ottawa after 1902. For additional information see: W.S. Waddell, "The Honourable Frank Oliver," M.A. Thesis (University of Alberta, 1950); and Roger Barliszen, "Frank Oliver: A Western Nativist in Politics," B.A. Honours Thesis (University of Victoria, 1978). A thorough examination of landholding records for the various Alberta cities and towns would be useful in determining exactly what factors, other than political ambition and civic patriotism, motivated Oliver and boosters like him in other urban centres to promote their cities so avidly.

his passion for Edmonton can best be illustrated by the remarks he made upon the occasion of Edmonton's official inauguration as a city on November 7, 1904: "Surely, no more important place [than Edmonton] could be found. The dreams that have been in the minds of our city councillors surely will be realized that Edmonton may be, not perhaps, the first or second city of Canada, but one of the great cities of the Dominion."⁸ With such an enticing vision of Edmonton, it is no surprise that Oliver was returned by an overwhelming margin.⁹

The election gave Edmonton an enthusiastic booster on the government side of the House and left Calgary with its representative in the opposition ranks, and therefore without a direct means of influencing government decisions. Besides Edmonton and Calgary, the election also affected the fortunes of two other prospective contenders, Medicine Hat and Red Deer. West Assiniboia, the federal constituency in which Medicine Hat was located, returned Walter Scott, a Regina resident and Liberal, whose influence within Liberal councils rivalled that of Frank Oliver. In Strathcona, the federal constituency which encompassed Red Deer, Peter Talbot finished at the top of the polls. Talbot, a resident of Lacombe, held not even a passing interest in advancing Red Deer's position. Both Talbot and Scott were staunch Liberals, yet without the necessary stake, financial or otherwise, in the futures of Medicine Hat and Red Deer, neither would be an effective lobbyist.

In early January, 1905, the Liberal government took its first step toward implementing autonomy by inviting representatives of the Territorial government to Ottawa to confer with a federal cabinet committee. Failing to recognize that Calgary, without a Liberal member, was labouring under a serious, though not insurmountable handicap, Calgary's civic captains bided their time during these discussions. On the other hand,

⁸ Edmonton Evening Journal, November 8, 1904, p. 3.

⁹ Oddly enough, Oliver's victory was achieved over a Conservative candidate, Richard Secord, who campaigned on promises to bring the capital to Edmonton.

Edmonton's boosters were frantic. Edmonton's territorial seat lay vacant, leaving Edmonton without a voice in the conferences. Though Oliver was in Ottawa, they worried that the territorial representatives would promote Calgary as the provincial capital. The northern city's case rested heavily upon the future, as at that time even the most partisan Edmonton booster was forced to admit that Calgary possessed superior rail facilities, and thus held the upper hand in commercial affairs. The recent pact with the Canadian Northern Railway and the negotiations with the G.T.P. to route its mainline through Edmonton, if successful, would correct this disparity, but until these lines were actually constructed, Edmonton's position was vulnerable. Afraid that the governments would only consider present conditions, the Edmonton Bulletin accused other localities of "pushing their present unfair advantage."¹⁰ Calgary not Edmonton should have been distressed, however, for Prime Minister Laurier ignored the Territorial government's advice and instead put great stock in the opinions of his Northwest Liberal members.¹¹ This decision allowed Oliver to present an uncontested, one-sided view of the nature of Alberta's urban society. Although incontrovertible evidence does not exist, Oliver was, in all likelihood, pushing for the creation of two provinces out of the Territories, and promoting Edmonton as the best choice for one of the two provincial capitals.¹²

Clearly, someone in Ottawa in January, 1905, was working in the interests of Edmonton, and was at the same time keeping those on the homefront well-informed. It could only have been Frank Oliver. By January 19, several days ahead of the official announcement, the Edmonton

¹⁰Edmonton Bulletin, January 23, 1905, p. 3.

¹¹C. Cecil Lingard, Territorial Government in Canada: The Autonomy Question in the Old North-West Territories (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1946), pp. 130-132.

¹²It is possible, as W.D. Davidson of the Albertan later claimed, that Oliver was pushing to have Edmonton named as the permanent capital. As a member of the executive of the Calgary Liberal Association, Davidson may have had access to confidential information. See: Calgary Weekly Albertan, February 22, 1905, p. 4; also Calgary Morning Albertan, February 15-22, 1905.

Journal could announce that the federal government had decided to divide the territories into two provinces. Two days later, the paper reported that "absolutely reliable sources" had divulged the cabinet's choice for the Alberta provincial capital. It was Edmonton.¹³

Rather than generating a wave of panic in Calgary, as might be expected, this announcement barely created a ripple of consternation. The Calgary Albertan passed the Journal's report off as "Edmonton's mistake." Commenting on what it felt was the absurdity of the Journal's claim, the Albertan decided that: "The Dominion parliament has no more to say about the location of the capital or capitals of the new provinces than the Edmonton Journal. That rests with the new province to decide upon." Blinded by their own self-importance, Calgary's civic promoters chose to treat the Edmonton newspaper's account as an unsubstantiated rumour. No action was forthcoming from either the city council or the board of trade, no effort was made by M.S. McCarthy in Ottawa or by any of the Liberals in Calgary to confirm or dispel this rumour, and no plans were formulated to initiate a capital campaign for Calgary. With great disdain for Edmonton's over-eagerness, the Albertan attributed Calgary's more "mature" restraint to a desire to "see the [autonomy] settlement made before the embarrassing detail of the capital...should be foisted upon the public." While conceding that the federal government would appoint a temporary capital, the Albertan refused to believe that the government would select Edmonton, and assumed that it would designate either Calgary or some non-competitive site.¹⁴ Judging by the lack of response from other Calgary boosters, this attitude prevailed throughout the city.

This strange combination of torpidity, self-deception, and naïveté was a striking contrast to the enthusiasm, energy and acumen which had spurred the city's rise to regional dominance. The results of the federal election of 1904 should have put Calgary's promoters on

¹³Evening Journal, January 19, 1905, p. 1, and January 21, 1905, p. 2.

¹⁴Weekly Albertan, January 25, 1905, p. 4.

their collective guard; instead they were cocky, complacent, and self-congratulatory. Even Frank Oliver's overshadowing presence in Ottawa did not shake their faith in Calgary's ultimate success. Infected by this attitude, the Calgary Eye Opener's Bob Edwards confidently prophesied that, "When Edmonton makes her play to become the capital of the new province she may be surprised and pained to discover that Calgary has several embossed decks up her sleeve."¹⁵ The Albertan dismissed Edmonton's claims and disparaged the city as a mere outpost on the far northern fringe of civilization. In the face of mounting evidence, Calgary would not discard its all-pervasive narcissism and acknowledge Edmonton as a serious threat; instead it touted its own position through the pages of the daily newspapers.

The importance of newspapers in such a conflict is difficult to define. Their influence on the actions of the legislators was negligible. As objective recorders they failed miserably. As agents of propaganda, however, newspapers performed a vital function. Though their influence defies measurement, the newspapers, and particularly the editorial pages were an important means to generate enthusiasm for civic projects, to reinforce community values, to unite disparate elements within the community, and to gather support for the hometown among neighbouring and distant communities. Although they could not possibly reflect public opinion accurately, newspapers effectively expressed the convictions and aspirations of at least one influential segment of the community's commercial and civic elite.

The newspapers in both Edmonton and Calgary promoted their respective homes as the best site for the capital on all possible grounds. Drawing upon the experience in various political jurisdictions in Europe as well as in North America, they sought to cover all bases. In the United States, for example, many state capitals had been chosen strictly on the basis of their geographic centrality; in Canada, Ottawa

¹⁵ Calgary Eye Opener, January 28, 1905, p. 1.

was selected as the federal capital for much the same reason.¹⁶ Thus the journals in both cities strove mightily to prove that either one or the other was the centre of Alberta in terms of either geography or population. In Europe, the political capitals tended to be the commercial centres. Accordingly, the press in Edmonton and Calgary insisted that their particular city was the centre of commerce, industry, and agriculture in not only Alberta but in the Northwest Territories as a whole.

TABLE I:

POPULATION IN SELECTED ALBERTA URBAN CENTRES, 1901 AND 1906

	1901	1906
Calgary	4,091	11,967
Edmonton	2,626	11,167
Medicine Hat	1,570	3,020
Red Deer	323	1,418
Strathcona	1,550	2,921

Source: Census of Population and Agriculture of the Northwest Provinces, 1906.

The Calgary Albertan's claim, supported by a profusion of statistics and tables, that "the future is brighter for Calgary than for any other city in the further west" was typical of this war of words. Typical also were statements that, "Calgary is the railway centre of the West" (accompanied by maps indicating railroad development) or "[Calgary is the] leading business centre" and, by inference, the city most deserving of capital honours. Since Edmonton's claims were almost identical, the Calgary newspapers did not limit themselves merely to boosting their city, but also extended their efforts to

¹⁶For a discussion of the controversy over the federal capital see: David B. Knight, Choosing Canada's Capital: Jealousy and Friction in the Nineteenth Century (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977).

denigrate Edmonton. Again, the Albertan serves as a fine example:

"[Edmonton is]...unprepared...for the capital" or "Edmonton is not the centre of any district at the present time," were only some of the more polite criticisms.¹⁷

Naturally, the Edmonton newspapers found little to their liking in the Calgary press. To the Edmonton Bulletin, the Albertan's remarks were distinguished only by their "...profound and untroubled ignorance...[which] would be conspicuous were it not eclipsed by the dazzling disregard of facts which are common knowledge from the Atlantic to the Pacific and south to the Gulf of Mexico." Both the Bulletin and its Conservative counterpart, the Journal, stressed Edmonton's position as the second largest city in the Territories. As they pointed out, adding the population of Edmonton's sister town, Strathcona, to the Edmonton totals would vault the Edmonton area over the city of Calgary as the largest urban centre in the Northwest Territories.¹⁸ This convenient device drew angry protests from the Calgary side, which maintained that adding the two communities together falsely magnified Edmonton's importance. Despite Calgary's claim to the contrary, the Bulletin asserted that once the proposed C.N.R. and G.T.P. routes were constructed, Edmonton would have the best railroad connections of any city west of Winnipeg. In addition, if the Peace River country were included in the province, as the Bulletin declared it rightfully should be, Edmonton would be "geographically central" and with all its advantages would have "strong claims to be the capital."¹⁹ Newspapers in both Calgary and Edmonton carried these attempts to prove their city's

¹⁷ Morning Albertan cited in Bulletin, January 30, 1905, p. 3.

¹⁸ There was some justification for combining the population totals for Edmonton and Strathcona since the amalgamation of these two communities received serious consideration in 1905, and undoubtedly had been discussed at an earlier date. For further information on the relationship between Strathcona and Edmonton see: John Frederick Gilpin, "The City of Strathcona, 1891-1912," M/A. Thesis (University of Alberta, 1978); and John Gilpin, "Failed Metropolis: The City of Strathcona, 1891-1912," in Alan F.J. Artibise, ed., Town and City: Aspects of Western Canadian Urban Development (forthcoming, 1980).

¹⁹ Bulletin, January 23, 1905, pp. 1-3, and January 30, 1905, p. 3.

superiority to such an extreme that in each case the competing city was portrayed as a tiny settlement with wild pretensions rather than as a bustling city with legitimate claims. Though bordering on bitterness, this dispute remained relatively sedate until January 30, 1905.

On January 30, R.B. Bennett returned to Calgary from Ottawa. Bennett had been in the national capital at a time when rumours regarding the autonomy terms abounded, and as an interested observer he had followed events carefully. From "well informed Liberal sources" he learned that the federal cabinet had chosen Edmonton as the provincial capital. Hurrying back to Calgary, Bennett arrived on the afternoon of the 30th and broke the news.²⁰ The Calgary board of trade responded immediately. At an emergency meeting called later the same day, the board devised a plan of action. First, it asked Mayor John Emerson to organize a public meeting for February 1. Recognizing the folly of its earlier carefree attitude, the board realized that extraordinary action was now necessary to overcome Edmonton's lead. At last, Calgarians fathomed that the federal government had privately selected Edmonton. Though the consequence of their indolence could have been the nomination of Edmonton as the permanent capital, it appeared as though the government would name Edmonton as merely the provisional capital. This result would be damaging enough. To concede the provisional site to Edmonton would saddle Calgary with a serious disadvantage for future efforts, yet the board did not expect the federal government to be sympathetic toward a city represented by a Conservative. A vigorous campaign was needed. A clever slogan was essential.

The board hit upon an ideal solution. Stealing a page from the Liberal book, it decided to appeal to the government on one of the central pillars of Liberal philosophy--provincial rights. Edmonton's selection, they would plead, violated the right of the province to select its own capital on the grounds that the provisional capital selected by the federal government would hold an unfair advantage over the other competitors. Since they could not very well push Calgary in as the temporary capital in place of Edmonton, the board would offer a neutral

²⁰Herald, January 31, 1905, p. 1.

site as an alternative; one that would not be a competitor for the permanent honours. Banff fit the bill perfectly.

Obviously, the Calgary board of trade's idea about a neutral location differed widely from the ideas held by many northern Alberta communities. Although proclaimed in Calgary as a neutral site, Banff in fact retained close commercial ties with the city, and was regarded by many denizens of the ranching capital as "Calgary's only summer resort."²¹ Less than eighty-five miles separated the two communities and it would be a small matter to move the seat of government from its temporary home to a permanent one in Calgary. If Banff was rejected by the federal government, however, Calgarians would be willing to accept any equally "neutral" southern point. With this in mind, the board of trade fired off a telegram to the Prime Minister:

Rumoured Provincial bill names Edmonton Provisional capital. Calgary Board of Trade emphatically protests against any competing point receiving such evidence [sic] advantage and strongly holds that unimportant place such as Banff should now be named so as not unduly influencing best final selections [sic].²²

The board maintained that its proposal was based on a concern for "fair play" for all competitors. This claim, however, was not entirely accurate. At the time, Edmonton was Calgary's only apparent rival for the provincial capital. Red Deer had voiced some desire for it, but was not yet a serious challenge; Medicine Hat had not even shown an interest. The fear in Calgary was, as Bob Edwards described it in his unique, earthy style, that, "Once she [Edmonton] got the provisional capital, it would take all hell and a whole lot of policemen to make her give it up."²³ Denying Edmonton the provisional selection would put it back on equal footing with Calgary and would leave the final decision solely in the hands of the provincial legislature. On the surface, this

²¹Herald, January 6, 1905, p. 2.

²²C.W. Peterson to Sir Wilfrid Laurier, 31 January, 1905, Laurier Papers.

²³Eye Opener, February 4, 1905, p. 1.

suggestion seems exceedingly fair, but underneath lay a cunning scheme. Calgarians fully expected that southern Alberta would receive a preponderance of seats in the new legislature. If a non-competitive point were nominated as the provisional capital, none of the serious competitors would hold the important advantage of possession. Given the depth of sectional attachment within Alberta, the capital question, when decided in the legislature, would be determined by sectional rather than political loyalties. In that happy event, Calgary would emerge as the permanent seat of government.

The board did not rely exclusively upon the telegram to further this end. It also planned to send a delegation to Ottawa to support its proposal. This was the purpose of the mass meeting. On the afternoon of February 1, the board met with the city council to discuss the meeting's agenda. This cooperative effort must have been extremely productive, for the meeting held that evening was effectively stage-managed by Mayor Emerson and C.W. Peterson, the Secretary of the Board of Trade. The Ottawa delegation, including Emerson, R.J. Hutchings, Col. J. Walker, and Dr. Rouleau, was formed with the meetings unanimous consent. As recognition of the need for political pull as well as civic push, Peterson and Emerson guided the gathering to add four prominent Calgary Liberals: W.D. Davidson, publisher of the Albertan and executive member of the Calgary Liberal Association; C.A. Stuart; Dr. C.J. Stewart, the defeated Liberal candidate for Calgary in the 1904 federal election; and W.H. Cushing, former mayor of Calgary. Armed with information proving Calgary's superiority as a capital site, the delegates were to persuade the government that Edmonton's claims were invalid.²⁴

Although the mass meeting had been an impressive display of community solidarity, the board and the council were not without their critics. Many Calgarians agreed with the criticism advanced by the Eye Opener's Bob Edwards. Edwards suggested that the meeting erred by not including the mayors of Innisfail, Olds, Macleod, Lethbridge, Cardston, and Medicine Hat in the deputation. Assuming that Edmonton was being

²⁴Herald, February 2, 1905, p. 1.

rewarded for its loyal support of the government, Edwards reasoned that, "no hybrid group of politicians from this town will make them change their mind. Calgary's protest applies too obviously to this city alone."²⁵ A valid point, and one which the organizing bodies took into consideration. While not stretching to the lengths suggested by the editor of the Eye Opener, the board and council did make conscious efforts to lend a more provincial flavour to Calgary's proposal. Telegrams from the chairman of the mass meeting, Mayor Emerson, and from the city council attempted to fuse Calgary's interests with those of the "people" of the province, requesting Laurier to delay his decision until "...an expression of the people can be conveyed to your government through a delegation now leaving the West."²⁶ In order to bring these claims of representing "the people" more into line with reality, C.W. Peterson sent a letter on February 2 to every board of trade in the Alberta district, explaining Calgary's position and encouraging both northern and southern communities to rally around the Calgary standard.²⁷ In addition, representatives from the city were dispatched throughout the south to whip up enthusiasm for Calgary among the laggards.

The failure to solicit support for Calgary earlier had weakened the city's position. Its promoters were determined not to repeat this mistake. Leaving nothing to chance, Peterson sent copies of his letter to all the federal cabinet ministers, to the senators and members of Parliament from the Northwest Territories, and to the important newspapers in the province. This move was intended to lay the groundwork for the delegation before it reached Ottawa. Concerned that the federal government might strike at the south's stronghold and shape the provincial constituencies to favour Edmonton, Peterson beseeched the cabinet ministers to divide the constituencies "...scrupulously on a basis of actual population."²⁸ Later events would justify this apprehension.

²⁵Eye Opener, February 4, 1905, p. 1.

²⁶H.E. Gillis to Sir Wilfrid Laurier, February 2, 1905, Laurier Papers.

²⁷Herald, February 3, 1905, p. 4.

²⁸Ibid.

The response to Peterson's letter in southern Alberta was tremendous. Not surprisingly, a public meeting in Banff on February 3 unanimously endorsed the Calgary board of trade's "neutral point" proposal. Lacking a dynamic business element of its own, Banff's hopes for the capital depended wholly upon Calgary's sponsorship. The response from points without a direct material interest in the proposal was equally emphatic. The Macleod and Raymond boards of trade sent telegrams to Ottawa supporting the Calgary board's actions, and the Liberal associations in Innisfail, Bowden, Olds, Didsbury, Carstairs, Crossfield, Airdrie, Gleichen, Cochrane, and Cammore each cabled Ottawa asking the federal government to name a non-competitive site as the provisional seat of government.

With the active financial support of the city council (which voted to completely defray the costs of sending the delegation) and with the fervent belief in the justice of their cause, Calgary's delegation left the city on February 3 in high spirits. Caught up in the enthusiasm, the Calgary Herald boldly proclaimed that, "...Calgary starts today with the upper hand in the contest. The district has every reason to feel that the capital will come to Calgary, though it may mean a long fight...." The Albertan was more skeptical of immediate success but nonetheless optimistic for victory in the long run. With quiet confidence, it discussed Calgary's prospects: "If Calgary succeeds in getting an even start, then our chances are good and we should win out. If the committee is not successful and Edmonton gets away in the lead, all that is left for us to do is to get out and overtake them. That is all."²⁹

The departure of the Calgary contingent provoked a chain reaction among Alberta's other ambitious communities; the first and most violent came from Edmonton. Since mid-January its boosters had slipped into inertia. The question of the capital had been ignored in council meetings; the board of trade had busied itself with other affairs; and Frank Oliver had returned home from the political wars in the east. The news of Calgary's mass meeting, however, galvanized the citizens of Edmonton

²⁹ Weekly Albertan, February 8, 1905, p. 4.

into action. As soon as the accounts reached him, Oliver dashed back to Ottawa. Mayor Kenneth MacKenzie responded by calling a public meeting to deal with the Calgary threat. Many in the business community attended the crowded gathering and voiced support for a delegation that would effectively counter Calgary's latest advance. From long and bitter experience, Edmontonians had come to suspect Calgary's motives. Pleas for "fair play and no favours" sounded admirable, but aroused deep suspicion as they were coupled with cries to "Protect the interests of the Calgary district." For those few who were unconvinced, Calgary newspapers such as the Herald supplied ample proof of the southern city's duplicity. The Herald would claim that Calgary advocated a neutral site so as "...to give every city and town contending for the permanent capital honours fair play," yet in almost the same literary breath it would exclaim that "There are so many sound reasons why Calgary should be named as the seat of government for the western province that the citizens are anxious to place the [f]acts before the members at Ottawa, who must decide the question" (a notable departure from the newspaper's earlier stand in which it had maintained that the federal government had no business in the matter). The Edmonton meeting nominated a delegation specifically to combat Calgary's deputation to prevent it from subverting Edmonton's privileged position, and to shatter the myth of fair play.

Other northern settlements picked up Edmonton's battle cry of "justice [for Edmonton] in the consideration... of the capital."³⁰ Both the Wetaskiwin Post and the Strathcona Plaindealer upheld the "justice" of Edmonton's claims, and at the same time denied Calgary any serious consideration as the capital. The St. Albert town council went so far as to wire the Bishop of St. Albert, who was in Ottawa, asking him to offer the Edmonton delegation as much aid as possible. This behaviour was, of course, encouraged by the Edmonton press which sought to promote this belief in Edmonton's monopoly on virtue. Exuding altruism, the Edmonton Journal ascribed Edmonton's interest in the capital not to "a grasping desire for all the good things" to be doled out under the terms

³⁰Evening Journal, February 4, 1905, p. 2.

of the autonomy settlement but rather to a "faith in the magnificent resources, the incalculable riches to the great country north of Alberta, the region of the Peace and the Mackenzie."³¹ Not to be outdone by Calgary, Edmonton's promoters claimed that the development of the province, and in particular, the development of the north country, depended on Edmonton securing the capital.

Edmonton was not the only community to claim philanthropy as a motive for it seeking the capital. Red Deer, a small community located ninety-four miles north of Calgary and ninety-eight miles south of Edmonton on the Edmonton branch of the C.P.R., also adopted this tactic. Using the controversy between Edmonton and Calgary to its advantage, Red Deer presented itself as the compromise choice. Describing the town's position, the Red Deer News explained that, "...the claims of each [Edmonton and Calgary] seems to be so strong that it would not be wise public policy to decide between them, but instead of offending either, just appoint the capital at the beautiful little town of Red Deer, about half-way between."³² In a letter to Laurier, John J. Gaetz, the vice-president of the Red Deer Liberal Association, elaborated on this same theme. As Gaetz pointed out, Red Deer would not be a poor selection. Situated near the centre of the province (if the north country was not included), and possessing an attractive natural setting as well as a number of small, but prosperous industries, Red Deer would be more than a mere compromise, it would make a capital of which any province could be proud. In true booster tradition, however, Gaetz conveniently inflated Red Deer's population figures to around 2,000 (see Table I), in the hopes of making a greater impression on the Liberal leader than the town's actual population justified.³³ And as if to prove that it could match the extravagant declarations of its counterparts in Calgary and Edmonton, the Red Deer News established a number of grandiose titles for

³¹Ibid.

³²Red Deer News cited in Weekly Albertan, February 15, 1905, p. 4.

³³John J. Gaetz to Sir Wilfrid Laurier, February 4, 1905, Laurier Papers.

the young town, including the rather pompous "acknowledged railway and judicial centre of the central district."³⁴ The fact that Red Deer was little more than a stopover on a C.P.R. branchline did not trouble the paper, for the town was now in the running for the capital.

Until it received C.W. Peterson's letter during the first week of February, 1905, the Red Deer board of trade had been remarkably quiet, and had left the local papers to push Red Deer's candidacy unaided. The letter forced an instant transformation in the board's attitude causing them, in what was becoming the accepted fashion, to hold a mass meeting. The meeting agreed to cooperate with Calgary, but only on the condition that Red Deer received recognition as a competitor for the permanent site. Initially, this meeting also decided that it was not necessary to send a delegation to Ottawa as the town could depend on J.T. Moore, a local merchant already in the east on business, to look after its interests.³⁵ Upon reflection, however, the board chose to emulate Red Deer's larger rivals; on February 9, a small two-man delegation left Red Deer to join Moore in Ottawa. The spectacle of these three Alberta delegations descending on Ottawa was the object of much comment in the nation's capital during those dull winter days. Edmund E. Sheppard, editor of the Toronto Saturday Night, captured the amusement with which most easterners regarded the delegations when he commented that, "For the peace of Ottawa it is to be hoped that the wild and wooly western deputations from Calgary, Edmonton and Red Deer are quartered at different hotels and that efforts are made to prevent their meeting."³⁶ Though westerners considered the missions in a more somber frame of mind, they admitted that all three converging on Ottawa at once was a curious sight,

³⁴ Red Deer News cited in Weekly Albertan, February 15, 1905, p. 4.

³⁵ Red Deer News cited in Evening Journal, February 16, 1905, p. 4.

³⁶ Toronto Saturday Night cited in Evening Journal, February 23, 1905, p. 2.

as illustrated in a contemporary cartoon (see Figure 1).³⁷

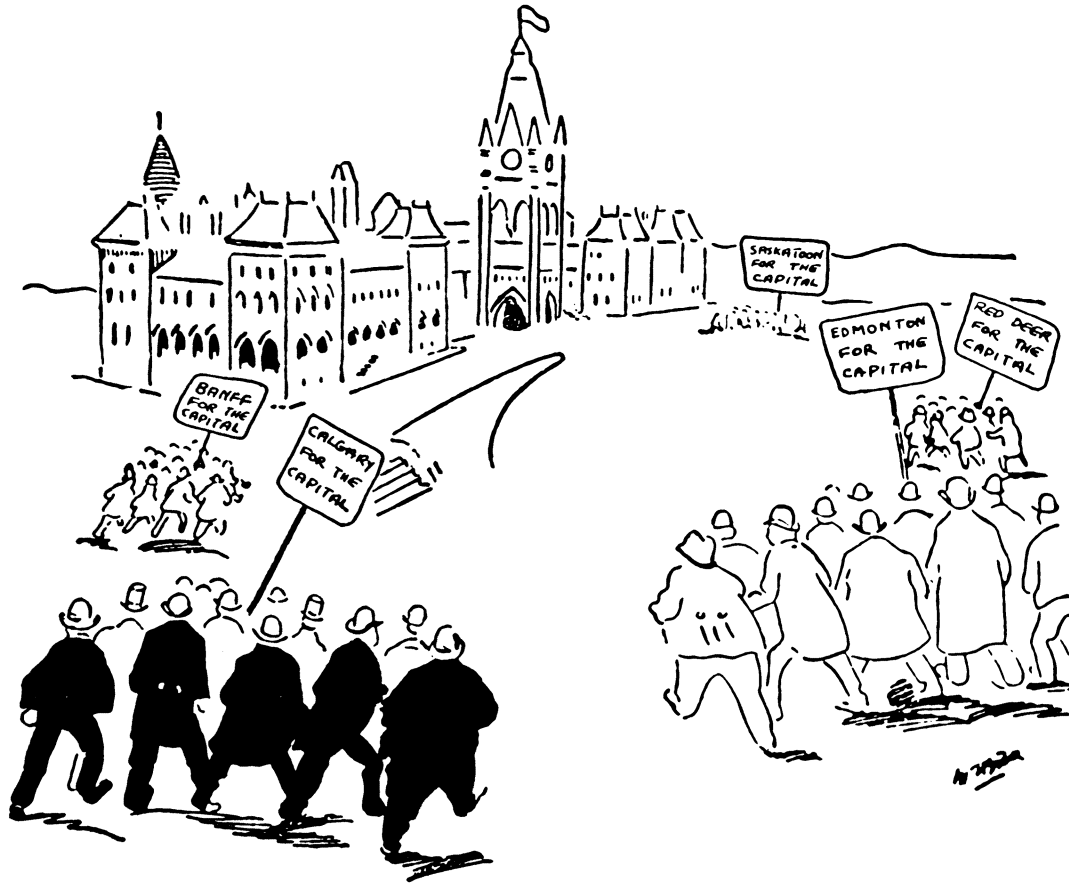


Figure 1: *"See the Mighty Hosts Advancing,"*
Saskatoon Phoenix, March 3, 1905.

The three delegations were very nearly joined by a fourth, a delegation from Medicine Hat. That it was not is a classic case of

³⁷ This cartoon contains two confusing items. First, Banff did not send a delegation to Ottawa; its interests were promoted by the Calgary representation. Second, the Saskatoon group refers to a similar capital controversy shaping up in Saskatchewan. See Jean E. Murray, "The Provincial Capital Controversy in Saskatchewan," in *Saskatchewan History*, V (Autumn, 1952), pp. 81-105.

promotional incompetence. It was not that the idea had never crossed the minds of Medicine Hat's civic leaders, for it had; it was that they were persuaded not to send a delegation with surprising ease. They had been careless from the time that they had first learned of Calgary's action. Breaking with the recent tradition, the Medicine Hat board of trade and the town council had decided not to call a public meeting or even to hold an emergency joint session. When it finally came, Medicine Hat's course of action was decided at a regular council meeting. Both organizations rebuffed Calgary's recruiting efforts in the south, announcing that as Medicine Hat was a full-fledged candidate for the capital, they could not in all conscience support a neutral point proposal. At the scheduled session on February 6, 1905, the council composed and sent a telegram to West Assiniboia's M.P., Walter Scott, expressing the town's desire for the capital and its willingness to send a delegation to Ottawa if necessary. On February 8, Walter Scott replied from Ottawa: "Very much doubt utility of sending delegation at present. Will wire or write later."³⁸ Scott's reply should have been the cause of some consternation in Medicine Hat, yet incredibly it was not. Confronted with this astounding advice, the board and the council merely chose to acquiesce.

This unfortunate behaviour was based on a misconception that Walter Scott was actively working for Medicine Hat, and that contradicting his advice would only injure the town's prospects. The Medicine Hat News, for example, believed that, "Negotiations [for the capital] have been in progress for some time, and when the deputations from Calgary and Edmonton arrived at Ottawa they doubtless found the Government fully posted regarding Medicine Hat's stand in the question."³⁹ In truth, Scott's attention was riveted on Saskatchewan, where Regina, his hometown, was struggling to retain the provincial capital. To throw his weight behind Medicine Hat would be to divide his influence between the two arenas, and to risk weakening his case for Regina; this was a gamble

³⁸ Medicine Hat News, February 16, 1905, p. 2.

³⁹ Ibid., February 9, 1905, p. 2.

Scott would not take. Besides, with his colleague, Frank Oliver, pushing hard for Edmonton as the capital of Alberta, Medicine Hat would be an embarrassment to Scott if it pressed its claims. Dissuasion was his only recourse. No doubt Scott's relief was sincere when he later offered his congratulations to the Medicine Hat News: "I assure you that it has been a source of gratification and pride to me to observe that my Medicine Hat constituents have preserved their sanity in this respect [in the capital question]." ⁴⁰

By preserving their "sanity," Medicine Hat's boosters had spoiled the town's chances for the capital. Their decision to rely upon Walter Scott instead of promoting the town through their own efforts removed Medicine Hat from contention. The ease with which Scott turned away their first hesitant advance exemplified the lack of enthusiasm and persistence which had scotched Medicine Hat's capital campaign at the outset. This lassitude left a wake of disappointed and disillusioned supporters. As one irate Medicine Hat resident complained to the editor of the Medicine Hat News: "The fact that we had sent a delegation to Ottawa to press our claim for the capital would be an advertisement to the Dominion that we were a live town.... The fact that we did not send a delegation...goes to prove that--well Mr. Editor, I would rather not say it just yet." ⁴¹ What should be said, however, is that after this very brief, very unpleasant experience in the capital chase, Medicine Hat's promoters abandoned all hopes for the capital and turned to other interests. ⁴² In effect, the town eliminated itself, leaving the field to its three more vigorous competitors.

⁴⁰ Ibid., March 2, 1905, p. 5.

⁴¹ Ibid., February 16, 1905, p. 4.

⁴² Medicine Hat was particularly interested in becoming the headquarters for the Strathcona Horse mounted infantry regiment. Beginning in January, 1905, the town exhibited surprising energy in pursuing this prize. The town organized and sent a delegation to Ottawa in June, 1905, to meet with the Minister of Militia and the Prime Minister. While in Ottawa, the delegation was aided enthusiastically by none other than Walter Scott. Medicine Hat was later named as the headquarters.

Calgary's delegation arrived in Ottawa well ahead of the others, but did not receive an audience with the cabinet until after Frank Oliver had reached the prime minister. Fearful that Laurier, with his fondness for compromise, might succumb to pressure from the Calgary delegates and disqualify Edmonton as the capital site, Oliver played the one card he knew Calgary could not trump; an appeal to party interests. Oliver succeeded in convincing Laurier, once again, that Edmonton was the best possible choice for the capital. Depriving Edmonton of the capital at this stage, he warned the beleaguered Liberal leader, would "act as a slap in the face" to the many loyal Liberal supporters in the north, and at the same time would occasion great rejoicing among the great many "opponents of the government" in the south. Anticipating any qualms that Laurier may have held about appointing a capital on purely political grounds, Oliver assured the prime minister that Edmonton's qualifications for the title were far superior to Calgary's. As Bob Edwards had predicted, the failure to include representatives from other southern communities in Calgary's contingent weakened its influence and allowed Oliver to attack it as a selfish, grasping attempt by Calgarians to wrest the capital from its proper location. Summing up his position in a letter to Laurier, Oliver hammered his point home:

The claims of Edmonton are entirely superior to those of Calgary; but supposing the conditions were equal otherwise, I submit that your government is still in honour bound to give the preference to where your friends are in the large majority, as compared with the place where your opponents are in the majority.⁴³

The image of the urbane, rather reserved Sir Wilfrid Laurier confronted by the obstreperous member from Edmonton can only evoke sympathy for the prime minister's plight. As Edmund E. Sheppard noted, "Sir Wilfrid has already had considerable difficulty in roping the, 'wild steer of the western plains'; as Mr. Oliver is affectionately called, on ordinary party divisions. One can imagine the rampage that will ensue on the floor of the House if Edmonton is not named the capital of the

⁴³ Frank Oliver to Sir Wilfrid Laurier, February 9, 1905, Laurier Papers.

province of Alberta. It will take two sessions at least to get Mr. Oliver back into the corral again."⁴⁴ It is no surprise then that Laurier opted for Edmonton. When Calgary's delegation received an interview on February 10, the Liberal committee answered the delegates with a bland promise to give their proposal "full consideration." The Oliver touch was evident. Two days before Edmonton's delegation received an audience, Oliver assured Edmonton city council that Edmonton's prospects were extremely good. Over the next few days, other Liberal sources confirmed Edmonton as the provisional capital. It was almost as if the boosters back in Edmonton need not have bothered. With Frank Oliver pulling strenuously for his hometown, a provisional capital in Edmonton was almost a foregone conclusion.

Calgary was not so favourably endowed in the political field. M.S. McCarthy was a newcomer to the House, a raw political recruit with little experience in the ways of Ottawa lobbying. As a Conservative, he obviously had little means of affecting the Liberal government's decision; yet his subsequent actions suggest that he was neither sufficiently aggressive nor sufficiently decisive to compensate for his political handicap. In fact, McCarthy's record during the first two months of 1905 is a catalogue of missed opportunities. He made no effort to advance Calgary as a candidate for the capital in January, at the crucial point before Edmonton had seized the opportunity; a mistake of which his confreres in Calgary were equally guilty. But McCarthy compounded the error by not acting on the first rumours of Edmonton nomination; R.B. Bennett and not McCarthy, had spread the alarm, suggesting that Calgary's M.P. may not have been aware of such rumours. As late as the first week of February, McCarthy had not decided whether Calgary should "create much local agitation" or whether "it would be better to see that the candidates in the first local fight...are men who will support our wishes in the matter."⁴⁵ He left the decision, like many others, in the hands of the Calgary board of trade. As a northwest M.P., McCarthy could have

⁴⁴Saturday Night cited in Evening Journal, February 23, 1905, p. 2.

⁴⁵Herald, February 10, 1905, p. 1.

demanded his right to consultation and if refused, he could have presented his case to the public, thereby putting pressure on the Liberals either to state their reasons for selecting Edmonton and thus subject them to public scrutiny, or to name a neutral point as the provisional capital. He could have at least made the effort, but he did not. At the very least, he could have pushed Calgary's cause during the delegation's interview with the cabinet, yet he seems to have done little more than introduce the delegates to the Prime Minister. Unfortunately for Calgary, McCarthy was not so "...capable and willing to look after the interests of his constituents" as the Herald had hoped.

If Calgary lacked an aggressive representative in Ottawa, Red Deer's member was entirely passive, at least on Red Deer's behalf. Peter Talbot, Strathcona district M.P. made no secret of his desire to see either Edmonton or Strathcona named as the Alberta provincial capital.⁴⁶ Talbot attended Red Deer's session with the cabinet, but did not support its claims. He had, in fact, already formed a working partnership with Frank Oliver. As a consequence, there was little the Red Deer delegates could do to enhance their position. In common with the Calgary situation, Red Deer's predicament was largely the result of earlier inaction. Less than one-sixth the size of Edmonton or Calgary, Red Deer's hopes at this late stage were faint at best, but with Talbot working against it in political circles, the town's cause was hopeless.

Throughout the delegations' sojourn in Ottawa, the newspapers on the homefront carried on their capital campaigns with unmitigated ferocity. The Calgary Herald initiated a round of maps and population figures that attempted to prove the superiority of Calgary's claims.

⁴⁶It is rather curious that Strathcona, one of the larger towns in the province, did not make any public attempt to secure the capital. Perhaps promoters in the town recognized that if Edmonton gained the capital it would benefit Strathcona as well, while at the same time, if Strathcona entered the competition the possibility existed that a third contestant could walk away with the seat of government while Edmonton and Strathcona squared off. In any event, it is a question that begs an answer.

Recognizing that no stretch of the imagination (or of the Alberta map) would put Calgary in the geographical centre, the Herald certified Calgary as the centre of Alberta's population. Maps were published showing concentric circles of 100, 150 and 200 miles radius, emanating from Calgary and from Edmonton. Together with the accompanying population tables, these maps proved, to the Herald's satisfaction, that Calgary was the centre of population. So ludicrous did this dispute become that at one point, the Edmonton Bulletin published an unaltered version of the Herald's map, under a different title and accompanied by a new set of tables, in support of Edmonton's claims.⁴⁷ The Herald sneered back: "If the province was extended to the North Pole and every member of the remote Indian tribes were added to those of the white settlers Edmonton would not yet be the centre of Alberta's population."⁴⁸

Sardonic retorts echoed back and forth across the pages of the Calgary and Edmonton dailies. Curiously, the Red Deer papers chose, in the main, to stand on the sidelines and allow the journalistic giants to battle it out; perhaps they felt that their involvement would prejudice Red Deer's position as a compromise choice. Even without Red Deer's participation the controversy rapidly expanded beyond the borders of Edmonton and Calgary as Alberta's other newspapers lined up behind one city or the other. The alignment was strictly along sectional lines and illustrates the depth of sectional pride and attachment in Alberta. Not being competitors in the struggle the other communities could view the capital controversy with a great deal more humour, although this raillery often concealed serious conviction. In the south for example, the Nanton News professed its support for Calgary on the slightly frivolous grounds that Calgary was a "royal entertainer." At various times Nanton, with its teeming population of 382 (in 1906), chastised both Edmonton and Calgary for their greedy competition and presented itself as a meritorious

⁴⁷ See maps entitled "Relative Importance of Calgary and Edmonton Districts," in Herald, February 3, 1905, p. 3; and "Edmonton, the Actual Centre and the Logical Capital," in Bulletin, February 15, 1905.

⁴⁸ Herald, February 15, 1905, p. 2.

contender for the capital. The Medicine Hat Times, in a gesture symbolizing the town's exit from the capital race, magnanimously withdrew Medicine Hat's capital claims and came out in favour of Calgary. Additionally, the Lethbridge News called upon southern communities to unite so that the capital would not gravitate toward Edmonton, "...or somewhere nearer the north pole." The north country was equally endowed with preachers, who agitated for a capital crusade, and pretenders, who mercilessly lampooned the competition. Tiny Vegreville, population seventy-eight, and Lesser Slave Lake, a trading post, proclaimed their suitability for at least the provisional site, while the Athabaska Landing (population 407 in 1906) weekly announced that, "We can knock the tar out of either Banff or Edmonton as capital of the new province." In a more serious vein, both the Strathcona Plaindealer and the Wetaskiwin Post urged Edmonton's selection, but the Post tendered its advice to other northern communities to "get busy" and pull together for Edmonton as the capital. Fearful that Calgary might yet be successful, the Post asked anxiously, "What is Edmonton doing?" It should have known better.⁴⁹

Speculation about the provisional site was ended on February 21, 1905, with the introduction of the Autonomy Bill, in which the federal government named Edmonton as the provisional capital of Alberta. Rather than quelling the sectional and local passions, this decision only served to fuel the bitter contest. Southern Alberta was infuriated, but Calgary was particularly incensed. Frustrated beyond reason, the Calgary Herald conjured up visions of a dark alliance between the Roman Catholic Church and the G.T.P. railway, and pointed an accusing finger at St. Albert Bishop Emile J. L'egal and G.T.P. President Senator G.A. Cox.⁵⁰ Evidence

⁴⁹Newspapers in both Edmonton and Calgary paid strict attention to the opinions expressed by newspapers in the smaller satellite communities, and frequently reprinted articles gleaned from the pages of their smaller brethren. These quotations, for instance, may all be found in either the Edmonton Bulletin or Evening Journal. See Bulletin, February 8, 1905, p. 3, and February 20, 1905, p. 5; also Evening Journal, February 28, 1905, p. 1, March 2, 1905, p. 1, and March 10, 1905, p. 3.

⁵⁰Herald, February 21, 1905, p. 2.

of the paper's hysteria is supplied by the fact that Frank Oliver escaped mention in its scathing attack. This omission becomes more staggering when it is compared to the Herald's accusations that the Liberals had sacrificed the principles of representative government by selecting Edmonton. The federal government, the Herald charged, had told the Calgary delegates that if their city had voted Liberal in the 1904 election, this result might have been different. The Herald's charges were close to the mark, but it is unlikely that a member of the government would have been so foolish as to confide in the Calgary Herald or, for that matter, in any Calgary resident. Despite correctly identifying the injurious party, the Herald could not correctly identify Frank Oliver as the major culprit. Emotions in Calgary reached such a pitch that the normally staunch Liberal Albertan turned on the government, labelling the decision as "unfair," "unpatriotic," "cowardly," and even "traitorous."⁵¹ Despite their ideological differences, the two Calgary journals united in their condemnation of the Liberal government and agreed that the "sacred right" of the province to select its own capital had been ignored.

What was Edmonton's reaction to the furore in Calgary? It was certainly not one of surprise at Calgary's response, and it was definitely not an attitude marked by great concern: "It is foolish," the Edmonton Journal haughtily decreed, "for Calgary to cry out like a spoilt child and use nasty terms [such] as 'Edmonton's cowardice'...."⁵² Most Edmonton residents paid little heed to what the Edmonton Bulletin described as Calgary's howls of "baffled greed."⁵³

II

Once they had exhausted their emotional storehouse, Calgary's

⁵¹Weekly Albertan, February 22, 1905, p. 4.

⁵²Evening Journal, February 23, 1905, p. 2.

⁵³Bulletin, March 2, 1905, p. 6.

boosters calmly assessed the city's position and arrived at the familiar but erroneous conclusion that Calgary held the upper hand in the race for the permanent capital. Although they were willing to admit that Edmonton held a temporary advantage, they did not consider it to be of any real consequence.⁵⁴ With a little more energy and a great deal more effort, they were confident that Calgary would secure the permanent honours. This supreme confidence rested upon the assumption that southern Alberta contained a much larger population than the northern half of the province and therefore that it would receive a majority of the legislative seats. Since this majority would control the legislature, and therefore the provincial government and since the Alberta Bill had named Edmonton as the capital only "unless and until the Lieutenant-Governor in Council of Said Province otherwise directs....," this control translated into the opportunity to pick the permanent capital of Alberta. This presumptuous attitude was bolstered by rumours, passed along to Calgarians from "reliable" Ottawa sources, which insisted that thirteen or fourteen of the twenty-five provincial ridings would be established in southern Alberta. As if to corroborate this confidence, the Edmonton papers gloomily forecast that the south would overbalance the north in the legislature.

Perhaps this constant stream of reassuring news was the sedative that lulled the Calgary boosters back into an inert state. For some reason, their newly formed resolutions to pursue the capital with more energy and action dissipated quickly. Neither the board of trade nor the city council took any decisive action for more than a week following the introduction of the Autonomy Bill and the simultaneous announcement that Edmonton was the provisional capital of Alberta. When the board finally did take action on March 1, it was in the rather lame form of a suggestion to city council. The board proposed the formation of a committee with the sole purpose of bringing the capital to

⁵⁴One accomplishment that W.D. Davidson claimed for the delegation was that it had prevented Edmonton from securing the permanent capital. See Weekly Albertan, March 1, 1905, p. 7.

to Calgary,⁵⁵ and asked city council to nominate several of its members immediately, to augment the board's six appointees: Herald publisher J.J. Young, Albertan publisher W.D. Davidson, W.H. Cushing, and the President, Vice-President and Secretary of the board. For some reason, this committee never passed beyond the formative stage.

While it had attempted to initiate a capital committee, the Calgary board of trade had failed to take measures to protect what appeared to be Calgary's strength in the controversy, the anticipated southern preponderance in the legislature. Aside from discussing the questions and deciding at its meeting on February 28 that the electoral distribution was best left to the supreme court, the board seemed to take very little interest in the matter. They firmly believed that the distribution had already been decided in Calgary's favour despite other rumours that the federal government had acted on the advice of Oliver and Talbot.⁵⁶ So seemingly indifferent did it and the city council become that they completely failed to take heed of an ominous shift in the expectations of the Edmonton Bulletin.

By the first week of March, 1905, the Edmonton Bulletin had altered its earlier pessimistic prediction to one of slightly guarded optimism. No longer was the paper bemoaning the fate of northern Alberta. It now declared that the result of the electoral distribution was unpredictable because the votes of the north and the south were so evenly balanced.⁵⁷ The Bulletin may have modified its position from either bravado, optimism, or insight, but the paper's persistently close affiliation with Frank Oliver leads to the suspicion that its renewed hope may have been based on confidential information received from Edmonton's man in Ottawa. Oliver, as always, was working aggressively in the interests of Edmonton.

⁵⁵ Archives of the Glenbow-Alberta Institute, C.W. Peterson to City Clerk, March 1, 1905, Calgary, City Council Correspondence.

⁵⁶ Evening Journal, February 28, 1905, p. 2.

⁵⁷ Bulletin, March 3, 1905, p. 3.

He sought to complete the coup by handing mastery of the provincial legislature over to the northern Albertans, and more particularly to the promoters of Edmonton. In this design he was aided tremendously by two factors. In the first instance, Laurier handed Oliver, together with Peter Talbot, the task of carving the electoral boundaries in the new province, and Oliver, never one to miss an opportunity, used this one to strengthen Edmonton's grasp on the capital. Second, Calgary supporters, by remaining silent and not pressing for an independent commission, made it easy for Oliver to mould the Alberta electoral map as he pleased.

It was no accident that Oliver and Talbot were given exclusive control over the Alberta distribution. Through a lack of evidence makes it difficult to prove, it seems likely that Laurier intended, as he later claimed, to refer the demarcation of the constituencies to a bipartisan committee, composed of Oliver, Talbot, McCarthy, and John Herron, the latter the Conservative representative for the constituency of Alberta.⁵⁸ The Liberals had used this bipartisan approach to determine the electoral boundaries in the 1903 parliamentary redistribution, and, it is more than likely that Laurier had originally intended to use the method again. The secretive nature of these political negotiations means that no record of the proceedings has survived, but all available evidence suggests that Frank Oliver was the man behind the shift in Liberal policy.

As early as February, 1905, Oliver and Talbot had decided that they would, if at all possible, see that northern Alberta received the majority of seats.⁵⁹ At first, this objective seemed as if it would be exceedingly difficult if not impossible to accomplish, especially as southern Albertans kept producing statistics that seemed to prove that the south held the greater population. As late as February 16, Peter Talbot was doubtful that he and Oliver could give the legislative majority

⁵⁸Canada, Parliament, House of Commons, Debates (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1905), p. 7923.

⁵⁹Peter Talbot to A.C. Rutherford, February 16, 1904 [incorrectly dated], Rutherford Papers.

to the north: "We will do the best we can in the matter of redistribution but I have grave fears."⁶⁰ These fears sharpened as J.T. Moore of the Red Deer delegation argued that, based on the vote totals for the 1904 election, the south contained the larger population. Try as they might, neither Oliver nor Talbot could detect any errors in Moore's calculations.

Around this time, Laurier must have asked Oliver and Talbot to prepare the provincial electoral schedules by consulting their Conservative colleagues from Calgary and Alberta. Both Talbot and Oliver realized that since most available data indicated a greater population in the south, McCarthy and Herron would be intransigent, pushing to have the majority of the constituencies located south of Red Deer. For the good of Edmonton, the Conservative pair had to be excluded from the discussions. Based on the arguments later advanced by Oliver and Laurier in the House of Commons, this end was accomplished by Oliver convincing Laurier that, despite all efforts, the Conservatives had remained hostile to Liberal entreaties for a joint discussion. Subsequently, McCarthy and Herron were to deny that they had ever been approached by the Liberals on this subject. Had even McCarthy and Herron rejected the alleged Liberal offers for a bipartisan conference, it would still seem incredible for Laurier to turn the electoral distribution over to two politicians with such an obvious interest in the outcome. Yet he did.

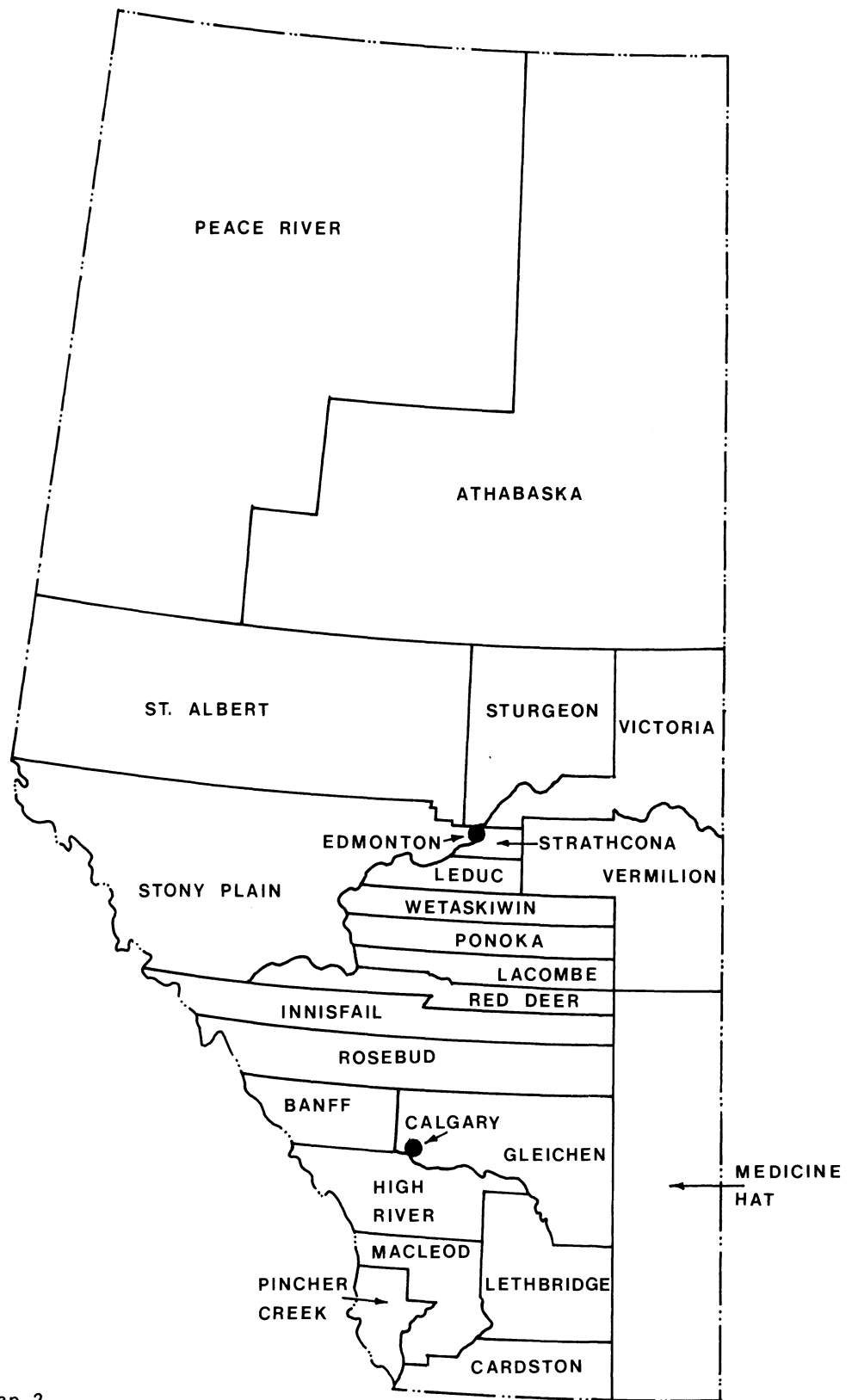
Herron and McCarthy were not the only obstacles Oliver had to surmount. With the exception of the always acquiescent Talbot, the other Northwest Liberal M.P.'s advocated placing the electoral division under the jurisdiction of a judicial commission. It was not an unusual suggestion since numerous precedents existed within the British Empire for submitting the divisions to an independent or judicial committee. Oliver was adamant, however, that the decisions would be made by the government, or more accurately, by himself. Talbot reported that there was "hard fighting."⁶¹

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., February 21, 1905. In the House of Commons both G.E. Foster (Conservative, North Toronto) and R.S. Lake (Conservative, Qu'Appelle) accused Oliver of overriding the wishes of his Liberal colleagues. See Canada, Debates, p. 7840 and p. 7895.

Again, through either persuasion, or more likely through sheer bullheaded insistence, Oliver won out. Given this much room to manoeuvre, he would not permit further interference in his scheme. No one was consulted regarding the divisions; not F.W.G. Haultain, the Territorial premier, not the territorial members representing the constituencies affected. Delegations from the various Alberta districts were not invited to Ottawa, or even given the opportunity to present their views. Once he had cleared the political hurdles in Ottawa, Oliver, with the eager assistance of Peter Talbot, set about arranging the Alberta constituencies to suit his and Edmonton's mutual purpose.

Discarding the 1901 census as hopelessly out of date, Oliver and Talbot searched for statistics which would allow them to claim a greater population for northern Alberta. What they came up with was an amorphous collection of facts and figures which fell under a variety of vague headings, such as geographical considerations and community of interest, as well as several categories of questionable validity, as indices of population, including votes cast in previous elections, numbers of post offices and schools, grain acreage, and elevator capacity. The advantage of this variegated data was that in all principal categories the north outstripped the south; data that favoured the south was ignored. Armed with this corroborative information, Oliver made his division; thirteen seats to the north, twelve to the south (see Map 2). Moreover, five of the northern constituencies (St. Albert, Sturgeon, Victoria, Stoney Plain and Strathcona) radiated from Edmonton much like the spokes of a wheel. This arrangement represented a radical departure from the territorial constituencies which had, for the most part, divided the present province into a series of parallel east-west strips, extending from the B.C. border to the former boundaries of West Assiniboia and Battleford (as Rosebud and Innisfail continued to do). Oliver's decision was more than mere caprice, of course, for it allowed Edmonton residents to stand for election in six constituencies, and meant that Edmonton would have, at the very least, six committed supporters in the provincial legislature. Careful calculations also entered into his division of the vast territory north of Edmonton into two constituencies



map 2

PROVINCIAL ELECTORAL DIVISIONS, 1905

(Athabaska and Peace River) despite a population that warranted only one representative, thus adding two more members to Edmonton's parliamentary phalanx. Of the five remaining northern constituencies, two (Vermilion and Leduc) at their nearest points ran within a very few miles of Edmonton, and were certain to support the city. On the other hand, Calgary city constituency was completely enveloped by one riding (Gleichen) and totally isolated from the rest. Oliver's intent was clear--to minimize Calgary's influence in the south as much as possible.

Calgarians remained blissfully unaware of Oliver's scheme until May, 1905. In the meantime, they were in no hurry to pursue the capital question. The phlegmatic McCarthy, for example, did not comment on the federal government's choice of Edmonton until March 28. And then, he advanced but a few criticisms before announcing that he would prove his case over the next few weeks when the capital clause came up in committee.⁶² When he should have been raising a cry both inside the house and out, McCarthy chose not only to confine his efforts to parliament, but additionally to wait until the appropriate time, as dictated by procedural rules, to launch his attack. It would be an equally long period before McCarthy attended to the electoral distribution. Even then, he was not prodded into action by his constituents. This inactivity was a serious mistake. While Frank Oliver was still simply the M.P. for Edmonton, it was possible, with the expenditure of a certain amount of time and energy, to check his influence with the government. Once he entered the cabinet, and his opinions were imbued with the prestige and authority of office, this opportunity vanished.

A vacancy in the cabinet had been opened on March 1, 1905, by the resignation of Clifford Sifton, the Minister of the Interior. For the remainder of March, the post lay vacant, while westerners speculated about Sifton's successor. It was obvious that he would have to come from the west, which narrowed the field down to one of two men, either Walter Scott or Frank Oliver. To most observers, it would seem that if Oliver were chosen, Calgary and Red Deer would suffer, yet

⁶²Canada, Debates, p. 3358.

neither community anticipated this outcome and pressed its case. Evidence suggests that they were victims of their own delusions. When Laurier appointed Oliver to the cabinet during the first week of April, the announcement was not greeted with horror or anguish in either Red Deer or Calgary, but was welcomed. The Calgary Herald rejoiced, believing that Oliver could no longer favour Edmonton. As Edmonton district M.P., he had been understandably biased toward his constituents, but as Minister of the Interior, the Herald gloated, Oliver was responsible for a much larger constituency, the Territories, and could not exhibit his partisan leanings. Through further use of this twisted logic, the Herald arrived at the dubious conclusion that Oliver would now support Calgary as the provincial capital. How unfortunate for poor Edmonton, the Herald crowed, "Calgary will have gained a friend and Edmonton lost an enthusiastic champion."⁶³ How unfortunate for poor misguided Calgary was more to the point, for the Herald did not bargain on Oliver's continued energetic support for his hometown.

The confidence that Edmonton's newspapers held in Oliver remained unshaken. Though he had been chosen to replace Sifton, they did not believe that he would take leave of his senses and support the weaker claims of Calgary. As the Journal noted, "...his intimate knowledge of conditions will cause him to throw his influence on the side of his native city...."⁶⁴ Though Oliver was indeed as fair and as responsible as the Herald had maintained, the Bulletin reminded the Calgary paper that his virtues did not extend to blind generosity. Therefore, Oliver's appointment did not guarantee that he would pass over Edmonton to present Calgary with either the permanent seat of government, or an unjustified preponderance of seats.⁶⁵

Oliver had done nothing to encourage Calgary's expectations and had in fact made it quite apparent that he planned to do everything within his new power for Edmonton. Referring to his past exploits on

⁶³Herald, April 11, 1905, p. 2.

⁶⁴Evening Journal, April 10, 1905, p. 4.

⁶⁵Bulletin, April 22, 1905, p. 6.

behalf of his Edmonton constituents, Oliver promised to perform still greater promotional feats for the city. But would his position as a cabinet minister interfere with his ambitions as a city booster? The answer to this question had to be an emphatic no, for although as the Minister of the Interior he recognized the need for impartiality, as an Edmonton patriot, he had to admit that, "there is a warm corner in my heart for Edmonton."⁶⁶ If they had not yet felt the flame, Calgary and Red Deer were about to discover how red-hot this corner really was. Yet Calgary's newspapers still clung to the belief that Calgary would wrest the capital from Edmonton. Clearly, if they could, it would be in spite of, and not through, the efforts of Frank Oliver.

Slowly, the message sunk in. By late April, the Calgary Liberals were anxious enough to request a meeting with Oliver, a step that should have been taken months earlier. Ironically, this meeting followed a civic banquet in Calgary at which Calgarians had showered accolades upon the head of the newly acclaimed Minister of the Interior. The Liberal meeting, however, was a different affair. In a vain attempt to stave off what was now the inevitable, the Calgary Liberals urged Oliver to refer the electoral distribution to a judicial commission or some other non-partisan, independent body. Oliver refused, arguing that as the federal government would have to bear responsibility for the division, no matter who proposed it, it would be better for the government to fashion the boundaries itself. Appeals on the grounds of the party's interests in southern Alberta could not move him, for when Edmonton's interests were involved, Oliver was pertinacious. But where had the Calgary Liberals been in February, in March, or in early April, when such efforts might have yielded palpable results? At the end of April when they finally acted, it was too late to confront Frank Oliver. By then, even the Calgary Herald harboured its doubts, and reconsidered its earlier verdict asking, "...is there a man in the west who knows Mr. Oliver who believes he will be one whit less for Edmonton as against

⁶⁶ Evening Journal, April 13, 1905, p. 1.

Calgary in the future?"⁶⁷ As expected, the paper did not receive any takers.

Calgary's worst fears were realized when Oliver unveiled the electoral schedules in the House of Commons. Southern Alberta was appalled. Reactions among the southern press ranged from disbelief and indignation to hostility and outrage when they discovered that as well as giving the north one more seat, Oliver had installed Edmonton as the electoral hub of the province. The demands for a revision by a judicial board, which sprang up all over the south, were mirrored in newspapers such as the Lethbridge News, the Macleod Gazette, the Pincher Creek Rocky Mountain Echo, and the Raymond Chronicle. A desire to see justice enacted was not the sole impetus behind this cry, for most, if not all southerners believed that a realignment by an impartial board would result in a preponderance of seats for the more populous south. The stimulus for the protest was, then, a sense of grievance. Doubtless, most southerners agreed with the editor of the Cardston Star that, "... Frank Oliver wasn't asleep when the redistribution of seats for the new province was being dished up! He has manipulated the carving knife with all the honours pertaining to a veteran lamb-slasher."⁶⁸

In Calgary, the effects of Oliver's adept carving were devastating. The north now controlled the local assembly, giving Edmonton an iron grip on the seat of government, and damaging Calgary's hopes to a near critical point. Despite the Albertan's attempts to attribute Calgary's objections to a higher motive, the length and the volume of the city's protests point directly to bitter disappointment over the capital as the cause of its outburst. Particularly galling to Calgarians was the fact that their city, though the largest in the territories, received only one seat while some northern areas with less than half the population of Calgary had received equal representation.⁶⁹ It was, however,

⁶⁷ Bulletin, April 28, 1905, p. 3.

⁶⁸ Cardston Star cited in Evening Journal, May 31, 1905, p. 2.

⁶⁹ Peace River, Athabaska, and Stony Plain, to name but three.

much too late to secure any change in the distribution. With little else to applaud, Calgarians could still cling dismally to the belief that the city would stage a comeback.⁷⁰

As if unhinged by this sudden, severe shock, the Herald revived its wild accusations concerning a Catholic plot, charging the federal government with seeking to transform Alberta into a French-Canadian province. Undeterred by a lack of proof, the paper insisted that naming Edmonton, the centre of anti-Protestant sentiments, as the provisional capital had been but the first step in a process, which had culminated in the electoral distribution, to turn control of the province over to "foreigners."⁷¹ These fabrications provoked two types of responses, depending on the location of the respondent. One type, a mixture of ridicule and disbelief, could have come from anywhere in the province outside of Calgary; in this particular instance, it came from the Medicine Hat News: "A French Canadian province, forsooth! It is time to laugh."⁷² The other, coming from the Herald's compatriots inside the city, was a mixture of disbelief and anger. Outwardly at least, the Albertan and probably the rest of Calgary's business community maintained that the distribution had been a serious but not fatal blow to Calgary's changes for the capital. To nurse these delicate hopes along to fruition required careful, sensitive decisions, not wild denunciations and intemperate actions. As the Albertan claimed, with ample justification, "[the Herald] is assisting more than any outside enemy would in wrecking the chances which we have for ultimate success in getting the capital."⁷³

In its more lucid moments, the Herald questioned the right of the federal government to draw up the constituencies and demanded that it appoint a commission to redistribute the seats from the sparsely populated north to the more populous south. This time the paper experienced

⁷⁰Weekly Albertan, May 11, 1905, p. 4.

⁷¹Herald, May 8, 1905.

⁷²Medicine Hat News, May 11, 1905, p. 2.

⁷³Weekly Albertan, May 11, 1905, p. 4.

no difficulty in identifying the instigator of this "outrageous gerrymander." It was the "Hon. (?) Frank Oliver," the paper asserted, who had sacrificed what few principles he had in attempting to ensure Edmonton's success.⁷⁴ The Calgary Eye-Opener was equally aghast. Bob Edwards decided that, "Oliver's much-heralded honesty is a bit of a fake," and that the Minister himself was nothing more than "an Edmonton four-flusher."⁷⁵ Although the Albertan was much more restrained, it admitted that the division was a "bitter disappointment" and that it was saddened to see the Liberal party stoop to such questionable conduct. The south had not received a fair deal from the government, the Albertan concluded; its requests for a non-competitive point had been rejected, its appeals for an impartial commission had been rebuffed, and now it was subjected to a gerrymander that violated the spirit of Liberalism.⁷⁶

In the face of this heavy opposition, Laurier wavered. Oliver and Talbot had assured him that the population north of Red Deer was greater than that of the south, yet complaints from Calgary described the distribution as grossly unfair. Puzzled, and more than a little disturbed, he summoned Talbot to explain the discrepancy. On May 19, Talbot spent the entire morning convincing Laurier that by every available criterion, including votes cast in previous elections, homestead entries, grain acreage, elevator capacity, and numbers of post offices and schools, the distribution was fair. At the conclusion of the meeting Laurier had cautiously accepted Talbot's argument, but with one important reservation: he felt that it would be better to submit the Oliver-Talbot schedules to a commission of judges.⁷⁷ It seems, however, that this question did not come up immediately, and that for the time being, the prime minister's troubled conscience was set at ease. A second communication from the Calgary Liberals soon shattered his shaky confidence in the schedules,

⁷⁴Herald, May 13, 1905, p. 1.

⁷⁵Ibid., May 16, 1905, p. 9.

⁷⁶Morning Albertan, cited in Canada, Debates, p. 7805.

⁷⁷Peter Talbot to A.C. Rutherford, May 19, 1905, Rutherford Papers.

and Talbot was summoned to a second meeting with Laurier on May 28. This time Talbot proved more persuasive, and at the end of an hour Laurier's faith in his Alberta M.P.s seemed to have been restored, although he still favoured the idea of a judicial committee.⁷⁸ Either Laurier proposed such a plan to the Minister of the Interior and Oliver objected with such vehemence that Laurier withdrew his proposal, or Laurier never suggested it at all; at least the Liberals never publicly mentioned the judicial commission. While Laurier found Talbot's information convincing enough that he bolstered his defence of the schedules in the House with it, his hesitation is significant. What it illustrated, above all, was the tangible results that could be secured through comparatively little effort. With only a letter and a telegram the Calgary Liberals had caused Laurier to question the Minister of the Interior's advice. Significantly, when Laurier wanted confirmation he had gone, not to Oliver, but to Talbot. If the Calgarians had sustained pressure on the prime minister, if they had sent another delegation to Ottawa or if they had exerted themselves just a little more, they might have secured a more favourable distribution. The opportunity presented itself to the Calgarians, but they did not capitalize on it.

Outside of these letters, and the plethora of supportive articles in the local dailies, civic leaders in Calgary were content to leave the protests to M.S. McCarthy. If they were hoping for strong, effective action they were disappointed. Staying within the rigid parliamentary program, McCarthy did nothing to advance Calgary's claims or to strengthen Calgary's position until June 20, 1905. Once roused from his apparent hibernation, he led the Conservative onslaught, but for McCarthy, and for Calgary, it was a case of much too little, much too late. As far as they went, McCarthy's efforts in the House were adequate. But outside the chamber his actions fell far short of what was required. Though he loudly condemned Liberal policy he did little to influence it.

As a Northwest M.P., McCarthy held a moral right to consultation

⁷⁸Ibid., May 28, 1905.

on the Alberta constituencies. Ethics and success, however, do not always go hand in hand. When it became apparent, in the months after February 21, that some Liberals did not feel morally obliged to consult him, McCarthy still did not try to push his way into discussion. Instead, he waited for an invitation from the government, an invitation that Oliver conveniently "forgot" to issue. If Frank Oliver was as partisan as many Calgarians claimed, McCarthy must have suspected that he would fix the constituencies in Edmonton's favour, yet McCarthy waited patiently for the finished product. That he did not pester the government over the issue makes McCarthy partially responsible for the outcome. Coincidentally, Oliver made this same point when defending his distribution in the House. In "advising" the government, as Oliver euphemistically described his role, he and Talbot had been safeguarding the interests of their constituents, thereby performing their duty as representatives.

They [McCarthy and Herron] have their responsibility as we have ours, and perhaps they will say that we refused their offer to consult with regard to the matter. If they do not, then they must take the responsibility, just as well as we, of there having been no general discussion. We have no more responsibility in that respect than they.⁷⁹

In his designated turn, McCarthy attacked. On June 20, in a speech of over two hours length, he questioned the ability of Oliver and Talbot to arrive at a fair and impartial division, challenged both the validity and accuracy of their figures indicating a larger population for northern Alberta; he claimed that southern Alberta contained the larger population by the substantial ratio of 120,834 to 69,021, suggested that a more suitable alignment would give fifteen seats to the south and ten to the north, and ended by proposing an amendment that called for the demarcation of the constituencies by a judicial commission.⁸⁰ Without the necessary voting power in the House, however, there was little the Conservatives or McCarthy could do to alter the provisions of the Autonomy Bill, or to change the pattern of the Alberta electoral

⁷⁹Canada, Debates, p. 7774.

⁸⁰Ibid., pp. 7754-7771.

schedules. By the same token, the Liberals could treat Conservative objections with flippancy. Oliver dismissed both McCarthy's calculations and arguments as "absurd," having "no basis in fact." But to further discredit McCarthy, if that was necessary, Oliver and Laurier jointly charged that his preoccupation with the electoral schedules was due only to a fear that Edmonton might profit from the distribution. On the other hand, the only consideration that had ruled the Liberals plan, Laurier claimed, was one for "justice and fair play." By that logic, McCarthy was a rabid partisan. Coming from the Liberals and especially from Frank Oliver, this was an ironic accusation.

Needless to say, McCarthy's amendment was soundly defeated, but it was not the only attempt to overturn the distribution. On June 23, 1905, Conservative leader Robert Borden proposed an amendment that would have altered the balance of power, giving thirteen seats to the south and twelve to the north. It, too, was defeated handily. Following this motion, W.J. Roche (Conservative, Marquette) put forward an identical amendment; it met the same fate. Third reading for the capital clause only brought a weak protest from McCarthy before it was read into the record. After two months, the Conservatives' arguments for a reassessment of the constituencies and for a relocation of the capital were exhausted; their time had run out, and with it the hopes of Calgary to effect a change. On July 5, 1905, the Alberta Bill passed from the House of Commons to the Senate. In the Senate, Calgary's cause was championed by the influential owner of large tracts of land in the city, James Loughheed, who moved two amendments to the bill. In a Senate dominated by Liberals, his efforts were futile. On July 20, the Alberta Bill received royal assent.

While the debates over the electoral schedules raged in the House of Commons, the Calgary Albertan was coming to some definite conclusions about the local board of trade. What the paper noticed was what had become increasingly obvious since February; that is, compared to Edmonton's organization the Calgary board was, to put it mildly, sluggish. Edmonton's board of trade had not rested upon its city's seeming successes, and after both the nomination of Edmonton as the

capital, and the unveiling of the Alberta constituencies, it had released a barrage of information both to justify the government's decisions and to counteract any adverse publicity created by southern protests.⁸¹

The secretary of the Edmonton board had kept a watchful eye over newspaper reports describing either Edmonton or the north, and at the first sign of disparaging commentary or sympathy for Calgary, he shot off a reply correcting the author. In this way, the board ensured that Edmonton received nothing but favourable press, and that Edmonton's claims were presented in the best possible light, in not only the Canadian, but the American newspapers. In contrast, the Albertan commented, with great exasperation, that, "We hear nothing from the Calgary Board of Trade upon matters such as these. It might be well if the Calgary Board of Trade be informed that there is a capital fight on at the present moment."⁸²

Despite these numerous calls for action throughout June, July, and August, neither the Calgary board of trade nor the Calgary city council responded with anything resembling an effective performance. The board's only visible effort, a ludicrously late invitation to the members of the House of Commons to visit Calgary and the west, extended in June while the capital controversy was passing out of the House of Commons, caricatured Calgary's lacklustre campaign. At the board's annual banquet, speaker after speaker promised a good fight for the capital, but from the results produced, these promises were hollow. Calgary's civic leaders seemed disoriented and very unsure of what was necessary to overtake Edmonton. In this prevailing confusion, they even praised McCarthy's performance as a particularly commendable one, or as the Eye Opener described it, "as an especially effective and unanswerable [one]."⁸³ If McCarthy were to be the model for Calgary's future efforts,

⁸¹The Edmonton board of trade, in fact, complained that the north had not received a sufficient allotment of seats to allow for its rapid development. It also chastised the south for not spurring greater growth although it had held far superior rail connections for over twenty years. See Evening Journal, April 27, 1906, p. 1; and Weekly Albertan, June 8, 1906, p. 6.

⁸²Morning Albertan cited in Evening Journal, June 9, 1905, p. 2.

⁸³Eye Opener, July 29, 1905, p. 1.

Calgarians were indeed in trouble. Still, the Albertan would not discard its eternal optimism. In late June, the Albertan proclaimed yet another in its endless series of fresh starts, deciding that, "Calgary has lost nothing yet. The contest for the capital begins from this moment, and we can win out in the final struggle."⁸⁴ In common with most Calgarians, the Albertan realized that victory would come about only through a change in tactics, and an "honest, vigorous effort." The paper added a novel twist, however, by claiming that Calgarians were wrong in assuming that everyone north of Red Deer favoured Edmonton as the capital: "People far north of Red Deer regard Calgary as their local centre and will support this city in the struggle for the capital."⁸⁵ One wonders, then, why all the fuss over the electoral divisions?

III

Southern Alberta and the Conservative party had based their objections to the divisions on the strength of the south's greater population. The results of the federal census taken the following year, 1906, highlighted the inaccuracy of this argument. As southerners claimed, the census districts of Alberta and Calgary in the south (which, with a few minor variations, correspond to the federal constituencies) did hold a larger population than the northern districts of Edmonton and Alberta North (see Table II). Strathcona straddled township 38, the line dividing north Alberta from south Alberta. During the debates in the House and throughout the capital controversy, southern politicians and the southern press had assumed that the majority of Strathcona's inhabitants lived south of township 38. Reference to Table III, however, will point out how misleading this claim really was. Even if the population of township 38 were included in south Strathcona, the north would still hold an overwhelming majority of the district's population.

⁸⁴Weekly Albertan, June 29, 1905, p. 4.

⁸⁵Ibid.

TABLE II:

ALBERTA'S POPULATION BY CENSUS DISTRICT, 1906^(a)

District	Population
Alberta	38,868
Calgary	42,247
Edmonton	40,071
Strathcona	59,278
Alberta North	4,948
Provincial Total	185,412

Note: (a) The census districts of Alberta, Calgary, Edmonton and Strathcona closely resemble the electoral divisions established under the 1903 parliamentary redistribution (see Map 1). Alberta North consists of those territories politically unorganized in 1902 but included in the new province.

SOURCE: Census of Population and Agriculture of the Northwest Provinces, 1906.

TABLE III:

POPULATION OF STRATHCONA DISTRICT, 1906,
AS DEFINED BY TOWNSHIP 38^(a)

Division	Population
North of township 38	48,582
South of township 38	6,266
Within township 38	4,430
Total Strathcona District	59,278

Note: (a) During debates in the House of Commons, township 38, which cut through the Strathcona district, became recognized as the dividing line between north and south Alberta.

SOURCE: Census of Population and Agriculture of the Northwest Provinces, 1906.

Out of a total provincial population of 185,412 in 1906, the North contained 93,601 residents compared to the South's 91,891 inhabitants (see Table IV). One of two conclusions can be drawn from the census

TABLE IV:

ALBERTA'S POPULATION, 1906
NORTH VERSUS SOUTH_(a)

Northern Alberta		Southern Alberta	
Census District	Population	Census District	Population
Alberta North	4,948	Alberta	38,868
Edmonton	40,071	Calgary	42,247
Strathcona (pt)	48,582	Strathcona (pt)	6,266
Northern Total	93,601	Southern Total	87,381
Within Township 38		4,430	
Provincial Totals		185,412	

Note: (a) Northern Alberta consists of all land within the province lying north of township 38. Similarly, the designation southern Alberta refers to all land within the province lying south of township 38. Debates concerning the Alberta schedules in the Federal House centered around this division, yet the government and the opposition seldom specified whether or not the population of township 38 was included in their calculations. Therefore the inhabitants of this township cannot properly be included in either the northern or the southern Alberta figures.

SOURCE: Census of Population and Agriculture of the Northwest Provinces, 1906.

data. Either the Liberals were correct in claiming that the North held a greater total population than the South in 1905, and thus were justified in giving the North the greater number of seats, or they were incorrect and the South contained the bulk of the population in 1905, but that the Liberals were justified in providing for such rapid

development that by 1906, the North held the preponderance of the population. Either way, the electoral distribution cannot be interpreted as a gerrymander, at least not in terms of total population.

While in one sense the Alberta electoral distribution was not a gerrymander, in another it can only be seen as a blatant manipulation of the electoral map to suit a particular purpose. By departing radically from the local boundaries established by the territorial redistribution of 1902, Oliver successfully shaped the northern Alberta political landscape to maximize his hometown's influence in the provincial legislature. As the former territorial constituencies tended to isolate Edmonton from its commercial hinterland, Oliver rearranged the map so that several ridings pivoted on the Edmonton city constituency, allowing the provisional capital to extend its political control out over the surrounding countryside. In addition, "the honourable member from Edmonton" bestowed two seats upon the former Athabaska district, when the population in the area justified the granting of one member at the very most. Oliver claimed that by giving two seats to the Athabaska district, he was representing the geographical diversity of the area, and providing for the massive influx of settlers which was sure to follow the incoming railroad. One small matter that he passed over was that the Liberals did not intend to give separate representation to that portion of the Athabaska district included in Saskatchewan. Of course, in a vote on the location of the Alberta provincial capital, the Athabaska members were certain to support Edmonton.

Besides boosting the fortunes of Edmonton, Oliver's division successfully neutralized Calgary's political clout within southern Alberta. Under the territorial regime, Calgary had received two political representatives; under Oliver's guiding hand its representation was reduced to one. Moreover, Calgary was quarantined from its trading area by a surrounding constituency, a situation which provoked the angry outburst from outraged Calgarians. As the Calgary Herald had said in late June:

There is no justification for the gerrymander. If Alberta submits to the outrage it will be in the same spirit that the

highwayman with a pistol at his victim's head commands.⁸⁶

Well, southern Alberta had submitted, and Frank Oliver, the political highwayman, was about to pilfer Calgary's pockets.

IV

Not content with establishing Edmonton as the provisional capital, or tailoring the constituencies to Edmonton's specifications, Oliver sought to eliminate the slight element of chance by pushing an Edmonton supporter for Alberta Premier. Oliver's choice for the position originally had been A.C. Rutherford,⁸⁷ but he later changed his mind and supported Peter Talbot.⁸⁸ Both Oliver and Talbot had written to Rutherford in March and April pledging their support for the Strathcona lawyer as the provincial Liberal leader, and hence as the premier of the province. Now they wanted him to step aside in favour of Talbot, but Rutherford would not be coerced, even by the offer of a position in the Senate. So determined did Rutherford become that Talbot backed down to avoid a split within the provincial party, and persuaded his supporters not to present his name at the Liberal convention in August. No doubt, had Rutherford represented an obstacle to Edmonton's ultimate success, Oliver would have risked the schism and with the support of "our friends at Ottawa" attempted to replace him with Talbot or some other equally enthusiastic Edmonton supporter. That Oliver did not attempt to oust Rutherford was due to his recognition that Rutherford was "an Edmonton man."⁸⁹ Without opposition and presumably with Frank Oliver's blessings, Rutherford was acclaimed as party leader at the

⁸⁶Herald, June 23, 1905, p. 2.

⁸⁷Frank Oliver to A.C. Rutherford, April 18, 1905, Rutherford Papers.

⁸⁸Frank Oliver to Sir Wilfrid Laurier, August 18, 1905, Laurier Papers.

⁸⁹Peter Talbot to Sir Wilfrid Laurier, August 7, 1905, Laurier Papers.

Liberal convention in Calgary in August, 1905.

The choice of Rutherford as Liberal leader marked both the passage of the Alberta capital question into the provincial arena and the end of Frank Oliver's extremely active role in the affair. Before he had bowed out, Oliver had handed the capital to Edmonton on a silver platter, a platter which by virtue of its tarnish served its purpose much more effectively. Rutherford was to take up where Oliver had left off. By all expectations, this would not be an easy task. Red Deer, and particularly Calgary, were counted on to provide a terrific struggle, and it would take a considerable amount of skill to parry their threats. In fact, the inability of Red Deer and Calgary to mount any sort of serious threat made Rutherford's task comfortable, pleasant, and almost facile. This inability was not readily apparent in September, 1905, and accordingly, as soon as he became premier Rutherford took steps to strengthen Edmonton's position.

September 2, the day after Alberta's official inauguration, Lieutenant-Governor G.H.V. Bulyea called upon Rutherford to form a government. Within his cabinet, Rutherford attempted to balance the competing urban interests in the province by appointing members from each of the four largest urban centres: C.W. Cross of Edmonton as the Attorney-General, W.T. Finlay of Medicine Hat as the Minister of Agriculture, W.H. Cushing of Calgary as the Minister of Public Works, and L.G. DeVeber of Lethbridge as Minister Without Portfolio. The presence of three southerners in the cabinet seemed to forbode a change in fortune for southern Alberta, and, in particular, for Calgary. This was only an appearance. In all likelihood, Rutherford had exacted a pledge from Finlay and Cushing to support Edmonton as the capital if it were necessary to make the decision a matter of government policy.⁹⁰ The Eye Opener's

⁹⁰The other southerner, L.G. DeVeber, regarded his selection as only a brief pause on his way to the senate. As DeVeber explained to Rutherford, he would stay only until such a time as "we will be able to ascertain who of the new blood will rise to the surface and one of them may step into my shoes." L.G. DeVeber to A.C. Rutherford, July 12, 1905, Rutherford Papers.

Bob Edwards certainly thought so when he referred to the Minister of Public Works as the Honourable Mr. Edmonton Gulp Cushing" ("whether the people of Calgary will Gulp him down remains to be seen....")⁹¹ In addition, the Calgary Herald concluded that if Cushing and the two others were members of Rutherford's cabinet, they must have bargained their support for Calgary in return for their posts. Rutherford's refusal before the provincial election to discuss by which method the government would resolve the capital question seems to bear this suspicion out. Furthermore, though the Alberta Conservatives had, at their founding convention, included a plank in their platform calling for an open vote, the Liberals had sidestepped the issue by ignoring it altogether, suggesting that the government wished as free a hand as possible. If the question were a matter of government policy, the principle of cabinet solidarity would take hold, but until the election results gave him an alternative Rutherford would not make a public announcement. As a result, rumours circulating around the province marked the government as committed to Edmonton, rumours which the government, with the exception of W.H. Cushing, did not deny.

Among those convinced that the Liberal government was pledged for Edmonton was the Calgary Herald. Throughout September and extending into October, 1905, the Herald unleashed a constant barrage of vitriolic attacks upon Frank Oliver, the federal government, the provincial Liberals, the city of Edmonton, and the northern half of Alberta in general. These attacks, calculated to discredit Edmonton in any way possible, covered the whole spectrum from the merely fallacious to the brazenly wild. The Herald's report of the inauguration ceremonies in Edmonton described how the events were interrupted by a raging snow-storm (on a perfect autumn day), and how, throughout the city, the French tricolour had waved arrogantly above the British Union Jack.⁹² The

⁹¹Eye Opener, September 9, 1905, p. 1. Later, during the election campaign Edwards changed his mind and supported "Old Cush," as he then referred to the former "Mr. Edmonton G. Cushing."

⁹²Bulletin, September 8, 1905; and Calgary Albertan, September 6, 1955.

Albertan was little better, remarking in a jealous fit that, "It seems out of keeping that such an impressive celebration [as the inauguration ceremony] is being held at such a second-hand town."⁹³ Few in Edmonton took these barbs to heart. Equally convinced that the government was sworn to Edmonton, the Edmonton newspapers ignored the capital question (apart from dispensing caustic comments in reply to the Herald's diatribes) and focused upon the nomination of candidates for the coming provincial election.

In October, Premier Rutherford informed the province that November 9, 1905 would be election day. Without a record to defend or promote, Rutherford's government and the Liberal party campaigned in most of the province on the issues of Alberta's separate schools system and the federal government's natural resources policy. In Calgary and Edmonton, however, the paramount issue was the location of the provincial capital. At public meetings in Edmonton, C.W. Cross assured the crowds that the government would leave the capital in Edmonton.⁹⁴ At the same time, his Conservative opponent, W.A. Griesbach, stated that all thirteen northern Conservative candidates supported Edmonton, and therefore that the political hue of the government or of Edmonton's M.P. would not affect Edmonton's chances for the capital. But with Conservative leader R.B. Bennett haranguing crowds in Calgary, insinuating that a Conservative government would establish Calgary as the capital, Edmontonians treated Griesbach's promises with a healthy dose of skepticism. The Edmonton Bulletin left no doubt about which party it felt would deliver on its election promises. In no uncertain terms, it described a vote for Griesbach as a vote for Calgary.⁹⁵

In Calgary, the Minister of Public Works, W.H. Cushing, served notice that he would work energetically to bring the seat of government to the city. This pledge was enough to win the support of the Calgary Albertan. Quick to recognize the advantage of having a

⁹³Morning Albertan cited in Evening Journal, September 6, 1905, p. 2.

⁹⁴Bulletin, November 7, 1905, p. 1.

⁹⁵Ibid., November 9, 1905,

Calgary champion in the cabinet, and perhaps realizing that Calgary could not afford to repeat its 1904 election error, the Albertan asked Calgary voters, "Can Calgary afford to defeat Mr. Cushing?"⁹⁶ As far as the Herald was concerned, the answer was yes, it could and it should. Convinced that the federal Liberals were "...directed toward the destruction of that commercial and industrial supremacy that Calgary enjoys by reason of her natural advantages and the energy of her people," and persuaded that the provincial Liberals were mere puppets directed by the Ottawa machine, the Herald saw the election as a chance for Calgarians to vent their disgust and anger on the heinous Liberal party.⁹⁷ Naturally, as a non-partisan organization the Calgary board of trade did not officially take sides in this political dispute, but then, it did not take any action in the campaign either. Since mid-September, the board had discussed organizing a more effective publicity effort, but nothing had materialized. Now, in the midst of a crucial campaign, the outcome of which could profoundly affect Calgary's chances for the capital, the board decided that any effort toward the capital would be premature until after the election.⁹⁸

The election ended in a smashing Liberal victory. The Liberals swept all thirteen of the northern seats and took a further ten out of a possible twelve in the south, for a total of twenty-three of the twenty-five provincial seats. Another result, and one that southern Albertans found particularly interesting, and at the same time infuriating, was that the South had outpolled the North 12,741 votes to 10,403. As well, several southern constituencies recorded vote totals well in excess of many northern ridings (see Tables V and VI). To many disgruntled southern Albertans, these results provided concrete proof for their accusations of a gerrymander.⁹⁹ The Albertan demanded a redistribution giving at least fourteen seats to the south, and failing this, called

⁹⁶Morning Albertan cited in Herald, November 4, 1905, p. 2.

⁹⁷Herald, November 4, 1905, p. 2.

⁹⁸Weekly Albertan, October 5, 1905, p. 5.

⁹⁹Herald, November 10, 1905, p. 2.

TABLE V:

THE PROVINCIAL ELECTION IN NORTHERN ALBERTA
NOVEMBER, 1905^(a)

Constituency	Total Vote
Athabaska	--
Peace River ^(c)	151
Stony Plain	539
Ponoka	639
Leduc	756
St. Albert	766
Wetaskiwin	814
Sturgeon	930
Vermilion	955
Strathcona	1,063
Lacombe	1,137
Victoria	1,163
Edmonton	1,490
Northern Alberta Total	10,403 ^(b)

- Notes: (a) Northern Alberta consists of all those constituencies located north of Red Deer and thus north of township 38.
- (b) Total vote figures are compiled from twelve out of thirteen constituencies. As Athabaska returned a Liberal by acclamation a vote was not necessary.
- (c) The original Peace River election was overturned. This result refers to the new election held in February, 1906.

SOURCE: Canadian Parliamentary Guide, 1908.

TABLE VI:
THE PROVINCIAL ELECTION IN SOUTHERN ALBERTA
NOVEMBER, 1905 (a)

Constituency	Total Vote
Cardston	679
Banff	696
Lethbridge	811
Innisfail	815
Gleichen	942
Macleod	957
Red Deer	1,071
Medicine Hat	1,080
Rosebud	1,120
High River	1,300
Pincher Creek	1,384
Calgary	1,886
Southern Alberta Totals	12,741

Notes: (a) Southern Alberta consists of all those constituencies located south of township 38, including the Red Deer riding.

SOURCE: Canadian Parliamentary Guide, 1908.

for a popular vote on the capital question or a postponement until after a census had been taken. In light of the election, the paper and many Calgarians pleaded, "It seems only fair and just that the selection of the capital should not be left to the present legislature."¹⁰⁰

Part of Calgary's grievance arose from the actual legislative membership. While Calgary residents had been elected in two constituencies, no less than seven members intimately connected with Edmonton had been returned from the "wheel" around the northern city;

¹⁰⁰Weekly Albertan, December 27, 1905, p. 4.

seven solid votes for Edmonton as the capital, courtesy of Frank Oliver.¹⁰¹ The outcome of the election illustrated more than the effectiveness of Oliver's scheme; it reflected the diversity of opinion existing in Calgary, and the unity of purpose prevailing in Edmonton. Calgary voters seemed undecided about their city's best course of action. Cushing was elected over R.B. Bennett by a narrow margin, but only after several disputes regarding spoiled ballots. In Edmonton, Cross received one of the largest majorities in the province. Apparently, Edmonton voters had accepted the Bulletin's argument and had decided that Edmonton's future success lay with the Liberal party.

The Liberals overwhelming mandate gave Rutherford the opportunity to manoeuvre. Shortly after the election he announced that the ratification of the capital would be achieved through an open vote in the legislature. This decision offered Calgary a glimmer of hope. If the city's boosters could conduct an aggressive campaign, they might secure enough support among the individual members to turn the open vote in Calgary's favour. Regrettably, from a Calgary standpoint, the city's boosters did not respond.

November and December passed without the slightest sign of life from the Calgary board. Seemingly, Calgary's promoters were determined to repeat their previous errors by relying solely on the city's political representative. In this instance, that representative was already resigned to Calgary's fate. To secure the capital, W.H. Cushing explained to all who would listen that Calgary needed not only unanimous support from the South, but, as well, it required a number of votes from the North; neither, he believed, would be forthcoming.¹⁰² Such a

¹⁰¹The seven members were: W.F. Bredin (Athabaska), a former resident of Edmonton; J.R. Boyle (Sturgeon), an Edmonton alderman; C.W. Cross (Edmonton), an advocate in the city; H.W. McKenney (St. Albert), a member of the Edmonton Club and President of the Edmonton branch of the Catholic Mutual Benefit Association, as well as an Edmonton resident; J.A. McPherson (Stony Plain), director of the Edmonton exhibition; A.C. Rutherford (Strathcona); and M. McCauley (Vermilion) a former mayor of Edmonton. The two Calgary residents elected were: W.H. Cushing (Calgary) and C.A. Stuart (Gleichen).

¹⁰²Bulletin, December 11, 1905, p. 3.

despondent M.L.A. was not what Calgary needed, but then, working alone there was little he could have accomplished. Even the Calgary Herald was infected by this pacifistic spirit. Rather than aggressively attacking Edmonton, as it had done in the past, the Herald attempted to soothe the northern city's animosity toward Calgary. The Herald's explanation, accompanied by laudatory comments about Edmonton, was that Calgary did not hold Edmonton's citizens responsible for the disgraceful behaviour surrounding the selection of the provisional capital, but blamed the group of unscrupulous federal politicians who had "prostituted" the functions of government.¹⁰³ Evidently, Calgary's swan song was going to be barely audible.

Calgary's booster spirit, sapped by the long fight for the capital, was replaced by this mood of resignation. Visible efforts to organize support for Calgary among members of the provincial legislature were not made, and although over the years, Calgary promoters had attracted many industries to their city by offering tax exemptions, bonuses, and land grants, they did not offer any inducement to attract the profitable industry of government. By January, 1906, Edmontonians were openly debating which site within the city was best for the capital buildings.¹⁰⁴ Although these remarks drew weak protests from Calgary, most southerners accepted the inevitability of Edmonton as the permanent capital. The Lethbridge Herald, for example, decided as early as January 3, 1906, that, "The only capital Calgary is likely to possess is just the simple capital C."¹⁰⁵

All this defeatism did not bode well for Red Deer; as Calgary's vocal efforts waned, Red Deer's chances grew proportionately dimmer. As the self-proclaimed compromise choice the town required a fierce

¹⁰³ Herald, January 12, 1906, p. 2.

¹⁰⁴ Evening Journal, January 10, 1906, p. 7.

¹⁰⁵ Lethbridge Herald, January 3, 1906, p. 2. Lethbridge never evinced a public interest in the capital. The Herald explained away this lack of interest: "Lethbridge is the only sane place in Alberta. All the rest are capital crazy. Anybody knows Lethbridge would be the capital by snapping its fingers, but we don't want it. We are going to be the commercial capital not the political capital."

struggle between Calgary and Edmonton in order to advance its claims, but with Calgary virtually conceding the capital, there was no deadlock to break. After ten months of comparative silence on their aims, presumably waiting for the right moment to step in, Red Deer's promoters had their platform demolished before they could implement it. This was not Red Deer's only difficulty. J.T. Moore, the Red Deer M.L.A. who had been voted in as the man most likely to secure the capital for Red Deer, abdicated his responsibility. While January turned into February, and February into March, and while the time for garnering political support for Red Deer slowly elapsed, Moore was in the east attending to personal business. His absence provoked angry comments, but little activity from Red Deer's less mobile promoters. The solution would have been to take matters into their own hands, but Red Deer's civic leaders did not seem to be aware of it. Surely the Red Deer News expressed the sentiments of Red Deer's boosters when it spluttered with indignation at Moore's extended absence:

Now upon the eve of the opening of the first provincial parliament when according to our system everything is being considered and arranged ready for government recommendation and parliamentary action for the year...we must ask with pain and indignation, where is his [sic] our vaunted champion? And when we learn that he is away in eastern Canada and is not likely to return until a few days before the meeting of the house, when it will be too late to do anything except indulge in a few harmless oratorical fireworks, we feel we have been deceived as a people, our member is about to become the laughing-stock of the province and is about to drag us down in undergoing his own humiliation.¹⁰⁶

What was needed, the paper prescribed, was a public meeting at which Moore's resignation could be demanded and a new effort organized.

Despite the urgency of the moment, Red Deer's promoters took over two months to respond. On April 16, 1906, with a vote on the capital pending in the legislature, Red Deer brought the members of the legislature to the town for a grand tour and a banquet, in the hope that some would be induced to cast their votes for Red Deer. It was a vain attempt to

¹⁰⁶Red Deer News, February 13, 1906, p. 2.

stave off the unavoidable. At the banquet, Medicine Hat undermined Red Deer's position by offering free gas, free water and free land for the capital buildings, the first city or town in the province to do so.¹⁰⁷

What was intended to be Red Deer's showcase had fizzled.

From January through to April, 1906, Edmonton's board of trade and city council were as inactive as their counterparts in Calgary and Red Deer, but then, they could afford to be. Edmonton had the provisional designation, and one of Edmonton's ardent supporters was Premier of the province, another was the Attorney-General. The capital was taken for granted in Edmonton, but as Bob Edwards noted, "This is not to be wandered at, since Calgary has not made the slightest effort in that direction."¹⁰⁸ Although Edmonton's path to the capital seemed to lie unimpeded, Rutherford was not complacent, and took precautions to ensure Edmonton's success. As the House would likely divide along sectional lines in the open vote, Rutherford reduced southern representation by selecting the speaker from a southern constituency, C.W. Fisher of Banff.¹⁰⁹ In addition, the voting pattern in the House when the issue was finally resolved suggests that Rutherford may have induced several southern members to vote for Edmonton. Obviously, an open vote did not necessarily mean that the members would be left entirely to their consciences.

Aside from some feeble attempts by Calgarians to resurrect

¹⁰⁷ This offer was made by W.T. Finlay. There is some question whether or not Finlay was serious. The offer was included in Finlay's after dinner speech and may have been an attempt to enliven an otherwise dull ritual. In the debates in the legislature following Cushing's motion, Finlay maintained that a land grant should not be a factor in the final selection. Such an offer, he said, was an insult to the people of the province. See: Bulletin, April 18, 1906, p. 1, and April 26, 1906, p. 2.

¹⁰⁸ Eye Opener, cited in Bulletin, March 29, 1906, p. 7.

¹⁰⁹ Rutherford's first choice for the speaker was also a southerner, R.A. Wallace of High River. Wallace had been defeated in a December, 1905 recount, and Rutherford had replaced him with Fisher. Of course, to pick a northern representative for speaker would have evened out the electoral disparity in the legislature.

the claims of Banff, the controversy was over; the rest was pure anti-climax. On March 26, 1906, the Calgary Herald sadly conceded defeat. Although Calgary held the superior claim, the Herald mourned, it had been sacrificed for political ends. The paper, however, completely exonerated Calgary's booster community and placed the blame on malevolent outside forces, more particularly on Frank Oliver and the Liberal party. Insisting that posterity would reveal the tragic error of passing over Calgary, it advised Calgarians to quit the bitter campaign and co-operate with Edmonton to secure Alberta's promising future. With this official declaration of surrender, all that remained of the controversy was the formal ratification of Edmonton as the permanent provincial capital.

The opportunity to close the matter was provided on April 25 by W.H. Cushing's half-hearted motion to move the permanent seat of government from Edmonton to Calgary. His speech supporting this action contained a rather belated offer of a twenty-five acre grant for the capital buildings. Not to be outdone, C.W. Cross replied for Edmonton and on behalf of his constituents countered Cushing's offer with another of two or three sites in Edmonton. Predictably, Cushing's motion was defeated. The voting pattern was not strictly along sectional lines as W.T. Finlay (Medicine Hat), J.A. Simpson (Innisfail), and J.P. Marcellus (Pincher Creek) voted with the north, but this defection had been predicted by the Albertan as much as one month before the vote.¹¹⁰

Cushing's motion did not quite end the matter, for it was followed by token efforts from J.T. Moore on behalf of Red Deer and C.A. Hiebert (Rosebud) on behalf of Banff. Neither motion was brought to a vote.¹¹¹ The Alberta Act had established Edmonton as the capital, "Unless and until the Lieutenant-Governor in Council of said province otherwise directs," therefore, by default, Edmonton became the permanent capital of the province of Alberta.

¹¹⁰ Bulletin, April 26, 1906, p. 2; Morning Albertan, March 24, 1906, p. 2.

¹¹¹ Bulletin, April 26, 1906, p. 2.

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Edmonton had won the fight as much through the failure of rival boosters as through the efforts of its own local politicians and promoters. Medicine Hat had not risen to the occasion, and was eliminated in the first skirmish. Red Deer's promoters chose to play a coy game, and were trapped by their lack of decisiveness. From the election of 1904 on, Calgary's promoters had proven inept, imprudent and, at times, inactive. McCarthy and Cushing gave a lacklustre performance, the board of trade and city council procrastinated far beyond the point of caution, and even the stalwart Calgary Herald failed to give enthusiastic support when it was most needed. Perhaps the most fitting epitaph for Calgary was provided by J.J. Young, the publisher of the Herald: "The trouble with some Calgarians is that things have come too easy. The town has grown more by reason of its fine situation, natural advantages and big industries, than by the collective enterprise of its citizens, though that enterprise has at times been by no means lacking."¹¹² On the other hand, Edmonton's boosters had acted aggressively at the most opportune times. Wielding his political influence with great effect, Frank Oliver had secured every possible advantage for Edmonton. His political successor, A.C. Rutherford, had used the provincial legislature shrewdly to cement Oliver's work, and the Edmonton board of trade, the Edmonton city council, the Edmonton Bulletin, and the Edmonton Journal had energetically supplied the necessary support. Edmonton had indeed given Calgary a lesson in boosterism.

¹¹²Young was interviewed in the Evening Journal, March 30, 1906, p. 7.