

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

VISIONS OF A NEW LAND:
GOVERNMENT RECRUITMENT OF
NORWEGIAN IMMIGRANTS TO ALBERTA, 1870-1930

by

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A THESIS

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DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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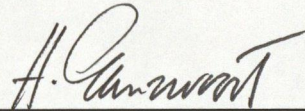
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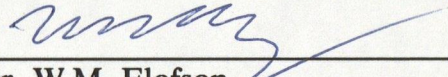
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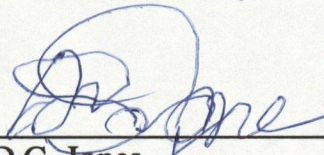
The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Visions of a New Land: Government Recruitment of Norwegian Immigrants to Alberta, 1870-1930," submitted by Wendy Lee Karhoffer in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.



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ABSTRACT

Since the creation of the Dominion of Canada in 1867, the nation's leaders have viewed immigration as a useful tool in the building and strengthening of Canadian society. Such was the case from 1870 to 1930, when Canadian government officials sought to create a progressive, Anglo-Saxon society on the newly-developing Canadian prairies. Immigration to this vast land became a key element in the government's vision for the prairies, and the recruitment of a desirable class of Norwegian immigrants to Alberta was a significant part of this endeavour.

This thesis explores why the Canadian government encouraged Norwegians and Norwegian-Americans to settle in rural Alberta from 1870 to 1930. Government officials held definite ideas about the type of society they wished to see develop in the West, and the Norwegians were regarded as being exceptionally suitable citizens, based on racial, cultural, and economic considerations.

The Canadian government launched an intensive recruitment campaign in both Norway and the United States starting in the 1870s in an attempt to secure Norwegian homesteaders for the prairie region. The success of the campaign relied heavily on the work of immigration agents who had direct contact with

prospective Norwegian immigrants in Scandinavia and the midwestern United States. Co-operation with transportation companies such as the Canadian Pacific Railway proved to be crucial to the efficient operation of the government's campaign.

The permanent settlement of the Norwegians in rural areas was the ultimate goal of the campaign. Many Norwegian immigrants found Alberta to their liking; they established productive farms and formed communities complete with religious, educational, and social institutions to meet the needs of the newcomers. Some immigrants, however, were disillusioned. The reality of the Alberta prairie did not measure up to their idealized expectations of the new land, and they chose either to return to their homeland or move on in search for their utopia. Alberta became a home for those Norwegians who remained and persisted through the often difficult years of pioneering, and offered the immigrants the freedom and independence they sought, much to the satisfaction of Canadian Immigration Branch officials.

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Respectfully dedicated to the memory of
Dr. Howard Palmer

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Approval Sheet	ii
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	v
Dedication	vii
Introduction	1
Notes to Introduction	11
Chapter One: Policy and Perceptions	13
Conditions in Norway	13
Immigration Beginnings	20
Canadian Intellectual Thought	22
Perceptions: Scandinavians and Ethnicity	29
Perceptions: Scandinavians and Economy	33
Perceptions: Scandinavians and the Public	40
Notes to Chapter One	44
Chapter Two: Recruitment	53
Recruitment in Norway	53
The Norwegian Government	58
Recruitment in the United States	68
Success	75
Notes to Chapter Two	78
Chapter Three: Settlement	86
Parties Involved	87
Site Selection	91
External Aid	111
The Community	118
Notes to Chapter Three	122
Conclusion	131
Bibliography	136

INTRODUCTION

We have here in short, a new country holding out advantages in many ways greater than were ever enjoyed by colonists of a former generation Population is the only thing the country lacks to complete the measure of its perfection.¹

Progressive sentiments such as this were prevalent in the minds and hearts of late nineteenth century Canadians as their gaze turned westward toward the untapped resources of the Canadian prairie districts. By the mid-1890s the District of Alberta in the Northwest Territories had passed through a period of dormancy and depression and now stood on the threshold of a new era of development. This promise of prosperity for the District coincided with a growing commitment to the ideals of progress and nationalism among the country's intellectuals and influential nation-builders. Circumstances seemed prime to propel the region toward its ultimate potential.

The obvious first step in initiating the exploitation of the West involved the establishment of a population base in the Territories. The important question was, what type of people would create the ideal society that was envisioned for the West? British Canadians, intellectuals, clergy, politicians, and the general public in Canada all held opinions regarding this issue. Yet perhaps nowhere was the question of the nature of the new society pondered with more

deliberation than among immigration officials--the very individuals responsible for securing the citizens who would give the West its "measure of perfection."

Officials judged the Norwegians, along with other northern Europeans, to be a highly desirable citizenry for a new progressive West. Thus, an intensive recruitment campaign was launched in the 1870s aimed at the Norwegian populations in Scandinavia and the United States. The purpose of this thesis is to examine the Canadian government's recruitment and placement of Norwegian immigrants to rural Alberta during the 1870 to 1930 period. This study goes beyond a mere description of the migration process of Norwegians to western Canada; rather, focus is placed on those views held by many immigration officials about the type of society they deemed desirable for the West. As well, this study examines the response of the Norwegian immigrants to this new western society they had now become a part of.

The visions for a new West which filled the minds of Dominion government immigration officials and associated personnel of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) were rooted in racial theories and societal ideals prevalent among the Anglo-Saxon majority in nineteenth century Canada. Such ideas were carried over into the formulation of government policy regarding immigration and played no small part in the decision to recruit Norwegian settlers.

Changing conditions in Norway had also encouraged the citizens of that country to re-examine their visions of the type of society they desired. The 1800s had ushered in a state of intense dissatisfaction for the peasants regarding their lot in Norwegian society. Emigration increasingly came to be regarded as a

viable means of bringing their visions to fruition. Similarly, a significant number of Norwegians who had earlier abandoned their homeland for life in the United States found that the American "Utopia" had vanished by the close of the nineteenth century; as a result, they also began to examine the possibility of emigration.

In the United States, as in Norway, the timely summons of immigration recruiters for the Canadian West corresponded well with the Norwegians' desire for a new start. Similarly, the image of western Canadian society as advertised by the recruiters matched the type of environment many Norwegian immigrants envisioned as their ideal home. The question remains as to whether or not the reality of the Alberta society which emerged in the twentieth century complemented, to any close degree, the initial visions held by either party.

This study differs from existing works on Norwegian immigration to Canada in that it explores the immigration process in terms of the perceptions and expectations of the host society and immigrant group, rather than concentrating on the external forces of the movement alone. Too often, immigration studies have focused on the "external facts" of the lives of immigrants, leaving little to be said "of their internal lives, of their perceptions, attitudes, and aspirations."² The bulk of scholarly studies on Norwegian immigration to North America supply the necessary detail on the "external facts" of the movement. The majority of these works deal with the American side of the process; Norwegian studies has proved to be a popular area of inquiry in the United States, with Minnesota being a major centre for such research.³ Exhaustive works on the immigration process

and the adaptation of Norwegians in America have been completed by leading authorities such as Theodore C. Blegen, Carlton Qualey, Kenneth Bjork, Odd S. Lovoll, and Ingrid Semmingsen. Their monumental studies document the movement of Norwegian immigrants to the United States from the arrival of the first immigrants in 1825 to the dwindling numbers in the mid-twentieth century and they laid the groundwork for future studies of more specific nature.⁴

In contrast to the plethora of works available on the Norway-to-America migration, a relatively modest compilation of scholarly writing exists on Norwegian migration to the Canadian West.⁵ However, it does exhibit a great diversity of form and theme. Gulbrand Loken's From Fjord to Frontier virtually stands alone as the comprehensive study of the establishment of the Norwegian community in Canada, comparable to the type of work produced by Blegen and others in the United States.⁶ Loken's book covers a broad spectrum of themes and permits only a brief examination of the role of the Canadian government in the recruitment process. The author has chosen rather to devote more of his study to the contributions made by Norwegians to Canadian society--especially in the field of Lutheranism--and to the persistence of ethnic ties in the community.

A significant portion of Canadian academic writing on Norwegian immigration to Canada is focused on specific issues related to the movement and appears primarily in article or essay form. The majority of articles deal with the pioneering experience of the immigrants: where they went, how they became established, and their participation in social systems such as education, politics, religion, and the like. In short, much of the existing literature on Norwegian

immigration to Canada tells of the community contribution and acculturation aspects of the immigration process. Jorgen Dahlie, a prominent scholar in the field of Norwegian studies in Canada, has contributed numerous articles on Norwegian involvement in education and politics. His work is significant in that he raises important questions concerning the personal thoughts and perspectives of the Norwegians in the conversion to a new culture. However, such concepts demand more indepth study.

Areas of study outside the ethnic-specific realm of Norwegian immigration shed valuable insight into the hows and whys of large-scale immigration. Revealing works have been done on the activities of the Canadian government Immigration Branch. Lars Ljungmark and Mauri Jalava have written papers exploring the role of the Canadian government in Scandinavian recruitment. Jalava in particular examines how the government accommodated immigration policy to suit the Scandinavian campaign in his article "The Scandinavians as a Source of Settlers for the Dominion of Canada: The First Generation, 1867-1897."⁷ He introduces the notion that the government approached Scandinavia with an "idealized image" of who they were recruiting.⁸ Jalava's essay, however, is but a brief illumination of areas for future study. He acknowledges the abundance of such research on the American side of the issue, but notes the need for closer study of the selective immigration policies of the Canadian government.⁹

Other historians have made inroads into the history of Canadian government immigration activities in the American Midwest. In the 1960s, Karel

Bicha and Harold Troper investigated the relationship between the Canadian Immigration Branch and midwestern "American" farmers. Bicha's book The American Farmer and the Canadian West, 1896-1914 appeared in 1968, and Troper's well-known work Only Farmers Need Apply: Official Canadian Government Encouragement of Immigration from the United States, 1896-1911 came out four years later. Both studies outline the work of Canadian immigration officials in the American Midwest, the degree of success they encountered, and the possible reasons behind such success.

The field of study represented by these books proves to be instructive to the student of specific group migration. The Canadian officials observed by Bicha and Troper encountered Norwegian immigrants in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, the Dakotas, and virtually all of the Midwest on a frequent basis. In following the actions of the officials, light is also shed on the role of Norwegians as agriculturists in America. A careful analysis of this role can in turn lead to a better understanding of how the agrarian background of the Norwegian influenced the Canadian official's perception of this immigrant group.

This study attempts to combine the best offered from both the ethnic approach to immigration history as demonstrated by Loken, Dahlie, and American scholars, and the more political approach examining immigration policy implementation used with great skill by Bicha and Troper. From such a fusion is created a study which focuses on the images and motives of government officials that led to the active recruitment of Norwegians, and the reaction of the Norwegians to the final outcome of the recruitment campaign.

Previous inquiry into Canada's handling of Norwegian immigration has been confined by certain problems: availability and credibility of source material tops the list. Statistical information on "Norwegians," as distinguished from "Scandinavians," prior to 1900 is lacking. This hampers the efforts of scholars curious about the specifics of Norwegian immigration in its earliest years, and results in many works being carried out on Scandinavians in general. Beyond this, there is simply a dearth of primary sources dealing with the Norwegian element in the West. Existing sources must be treated with caution, as well. Government documents and CPR papers may be very subjective in their presentation of events or in the information they choose to disclose. Troper warns that:

[government Sessional Papers] are essentially a product of self-evaluation and self-serving editors. As a result these reports are often edited to convey only that notion of immigration work the authors wish to make public, and do not reveal much about those routine activities of the government organization which are essential for complete understanding.¹⁰

It is necessary to temper such bias with other available sources, such as the words of the immigrants themselves. Yet personal accounts found in diaries, memoirs, and oral interviews present biases of their own. Interpretations of how immigrants are perceived by others in society as well as by members in their own ethnic group may be coloured, especially where the informant may be of the same nationality as the group under discussion. Often these types of works present a "romanticized" image of the early pioneers. Jorgen Dahlie suggests that

within scholarly studies, such perceptions have need of historical evidence to back them up.¹¹

Another problem arises from the "invisible" or inconspicuous nature of Norwegians in the West. The ease with which they "blended in" and assimilated to the western Canadian milieu may have caused them to be overlooked by scholars interested in ethnic issues. This slight may be enhanced by the quiet guardianship Norwegians keep over their heritage and by the modest claim that their lives and contributions to Western society were unimportant or hardly worth mentioning.¹²

This work will attempt to overcome the challenges such obstacles present by employing a judicious choice of source material and by illustrating that the Norwegians figured prominently in the minds of government immigration officials and did indeed fulfill a significant role in the development of a progressive society in Alberta. Chapter One, "Policy and Perceptions," depicts the state of immigration policy in Canada as it existed at the outset of the government's Norwegian recruitment campaign in 1870, and how it facilitated the targeting of specific immigrant groups. It also examines the views held by government officials of the type of society they desired for western Canada and their perceptions of the class of immigrant needed to achieve it. The general sentiment among officials and the Canadian public was in favour of the Norwegian filling this role in the West. The thought processes, ideologies, and stereotypes that supported this impression are discussed at length.

Chapter Two, "Recruitment," explores the activities of the government officials in the implementation of their visionary scheme, once they had determined that the Norwegians were desirable immigrants. The Canadian government found it necessary to co-operate closely with private business to bring their vision into fruition, and found a willing partner in the CPR. This chapter illustrates the manner in which recruitment officials' use of persuasive tactics incorporated the Norwegians' visions of the ideal settlement site, with positive results. Finally, the success of the campaign both in Norway and the United States is evaluated.

The third chapter, "Settlement," compares the reality of the settlement encountered in rural Alberta with the mental visions that both the Norwegian immigrant and Canadian official possessed at the outset of the recruitment process. One of the criticisms levelled at the social science methodology is that it "threatens to completely muffle the earthy or dissonant sounds of human encounters in history."¹³ An attempt has been made to avoid this pitfall by allowing the voices of the Norwegian settlers to be heard in this chapter. Using sources such as interviews, diaries, reminiscences, and local histories, the immigrants are given the opportunity to express their reactions to the "promised land," the Alberta frontier, and the extent to which their visions were realized. Lastly, the motives of the Canadian government and the CPR in ensuring the acceptable and successful settlement of the Norwegian people are questioned in this final step in the recruitment campaign.

At the outset of the Norwegian recruitment and settlement campaign, the government, its associates, and the Norwegian immigrants all possessed idealized visions of the type of society they hoped to build or encounter in the Canadian West, visions based on long-standing beliefs, traditions, and perceptions stemming from two different cultures. Their definitions of success were different, their measures of success were different, their motives were different; yet their visions strived for a common end. This thesis documents how the visions of the two sides crossed paths and complemented each other to bring this common goal into reality in rural Alberta.

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

¹Timely Remarks by Septimus Field and Letters from Western Canadian Settlers (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1898), pp. 8, 18.

²Michael Karni, "History 'From the Inside Out'," Spectrum, Minneapolis and St. Paul: Immigration History Research Centre, Vol. I, No. 1, January 1975, pp. 1, 3.

³Much of the credit for continued interest in Norwegian-American studies belongs to the Norwegian-American Historical Association, founded in 1925. Mention of the Association and the work of Norwegian-Americans in the field of immigration research is made in Ingrid Semmingsen's article "Norwegian Emigration in Nordic Perspective: Recent Migration Research," Norwegian Influence on the Upper Midwest, Ed. Harald S. Naess, Proceedings of an International Conference (Duluth: University of Minnesota, 1976), pp. 6-11.

⁴See T. C. Blegen, Norwegian Migration to America: The American Transition (Northfield: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1940) and Norwegian Migration to America, 1825-1860 (New York: Arno Press, 1969). For a description of Norwegian immigration from 1825 to 1925, see Carlton Qualey, Norwegian Settlements in the United States (Northfield: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1938; rpt. New York: Arno Press, 1970). For information on the migration of Norwegians within the United States from 1847 to 1893, see Kenneth Bjork, West of the Great Divide: Norwegian Migration to the Pacific Coast (Northfield: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1958). For a sweeping study encompassing the movement from 1825 to the 1960s, see Odd S. Lovoll, The Promise of America: History of the Norwegian-American People (Duluth: University of Minnesota Press, 1984). For a study of the 1825 to post-World War One period, see Ingrid Semmingsen, Norway to America: A History of the Migration (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1978); subsequent reference under Norway to America.

⁵Researchers interested in the Canadian version of Norwegian immigration are familiar with the problem: "there is a wealth of published material on Norwegian settlement in North America, but little of it pertains directly to Canada." Jan Harold Brunvand, Norwegian Settlers in Alberta, Mercury Series, Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies, Paper No. 8 (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1974), p. 2.

⁶Gulbrand Loken, From Fjord to Frontier: A History of the Norwegians in Canada, Generations: A History of Canada's People's Series (Toronto:

McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1980). Subsequent reference under From Fjord to Frontier.

⁷Jalava's article is published in Edward W. Laine, ed., Scandinavian-Canadian Studies (Ottawa: Association for the Advancement of Scandinavian Studies in Canada, 1983).

⁸Jalava, p. 9.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Harold Martin Troper, Only Farmers Need Apply: Official Canadian Government Encouragement of Immigration from the United States, 1896-1911 (Toronto: Griffin House, 1972), p. 2.

¹¹Jorgen Dahlie, "Scandinavian Experience on the Prairies, 1890-1920: The Fredericksons of Nokomis," The Settlement of the West, ed. Howard Palmer (Calgary: Comprint Publishing Company, 1977), p. 102.

¹²Arthur Stenby, interview by author, Whitla, AB, 05 July 1988, Glenbow Archives Institute, Calgary.

¹³Jorgen Dahlie, "Book Review: Stump Ranch Chronicles and Other Narratives by Rolf Knight," Canadian Ethnic Studies, Vol. X, No. 2, 1978, p. 192. Dahlie suggests that this flaw in methodology has become increasingly noticeable "at a time when team research flourishes and computer print-outs herald the latest in scholarly productions on ethnicity (or other themes)," making it "difficult to detect individual voices in the bulk of literature."

CHAPTER ONE

Policy and Perceptions

Man's history is a story of movement, . . . of adaptation to new environments, of the blending of blood and the intermixture of cultures, of a constant restless striving for "something better."¹

The history of Norway in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is a story of the unrelenting movement of a vast proportion of the nation's population in the quest for "something better." The nineteenth century in particular proved to be a century of "change and transformation."² During this century the Norwegian way of life underwent major upheavals due to changes in religious and political thought, and social and economic structure. The stable existence of the predominantly rural, subsistence-based Norwegian community, with its established social structures and ties to an orthodox state religion, was transformed in the face of intense reaction to political oppression and the onset of industrial revolution and urbanization. Simultaneously, external forces acted to disrupt the traditional Norwegian way of life.

The start of the nineteenth century witnessed a state of religious unrest in Norway. Dissatisfaction with the orthodoxy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the state religion of Norway as provided for in the Norwegian constitution of 1814, led to an upsurge of "small religious groups which could not accept the

dogmas of the official Norwegian church."³ Agitation began among the adherents of non-Lutheran religious groups against the constitutional proviso that required all Norwegians "to belong to the state Church and to bring up their children in it."⁴ Such an imposition of religious conformity was regarded as an intolerable condition by some Norwegian citizens and emigration seemed to offer a means of escape from such oppression.

Three religious groups in particular--the Quakers, Haugeans, and Mormons--came to regard emigration as their only escape, and thus began the first sizable movements of Norwegians to the United States. Fifty-three Quakers left Norway in 1825 and became the first group of Norwegians to emigrate to America.⁵ The Haugeans, a dissenting religious movement led by Hans Nielsen Hauge in the first decade of the nineteenth century, saw many members choose America over Norway in the 1830s and the following years. They rejected the rigidity of the state church in favour of lay preaching and also protested against the oppressiveness of the ruling elite in their homeland.⁶ Norwegians who had been converted to Mormonism after the establishment of missions in Norway in 1852, also found it necessary to emigrate to escape state persecution.⁷

Although these groups were small in number in comparison to the emigration that took place from Norway in the latter half of the century, these early religious dissenters set the stage for future emigration. Their visits, their letters and the information they provided regarding the promise of the United States, became important sources of encouragement to countless others.⁸ News

of the gold rush in California in 1848 proved to be an additional stimulus for the adventurous and those experiencing the pressures of financial instability.⁹

Emigration from Norway to the United States truly began on a grand scale in 1866, when an estimated twelve to fifteen thousand Norwegians embarked for the United States.¹⁰ This outpouring of people coincided with the worsening of economic and social problems. The 1850s had been a time of prosperity for Norway, but a decade later the prosperity was gone and the nation was hit with a period of agricultural depression.¹¹ Drought and the collapse of commodity prices put the squeeze on the Norwegian peasant farmer at the same time that a dramatic shift occurred in the peasant economy. Industrialization, which had not developed until the 1850s, ushered in a transition from a subsistence to a market-based economy.¹² The result was severe change in the traditional lifestyle of the Norwegian peasant class.

The Norwegian husmann or cotter was the poorest member of the peasant class and had little hope of social advancement, even under pre-market economy conditions.¹³ Yet with the disappearance of subsistence farming, this rank of the peasantry had almost no hope of maintaining its existing standard of living, let alone improving it. The husmenn had no opportunity to compete in a market-based economy because they were not landowners, but rather worked on the holdings of the bønder, or peasant freeholders.¹⁴

Even among the bønder conditions were grave, as they had no means of augmenting their income beyond a subsistence level. Increasing population growth by mid-century put a strain on existing resources and land.¹⁵ Among the

Norwegian peasantry, land was regarded as a "source of dignity, worth, independence, stability, and permanence."¹⁶ According to the allodial (kinship) land laws in Norway, the åsetesrett guaranteed the right of the eldest son to retain possession of the family farm.¹⁷ This left other family members to acquire land of their own outside the paternal farm, or, as was the case among some families, the eldest son subdivided his inheritance among his brothers. In any case, arable land in Norway became increasingly subdivided until the plots were too small to turn a profit.¹⁸ The number of farms in Norway skyrocketed from a total of eighty thousand in 1802 to one hundred and thirty-five thousand by 1860.¹⁹ As a result, the bønder had little hope for the future prosperity of their children in agriculture.

In addition to these problems, the Norwegian peasant faced the inescapable burden of debt. Already in the 1840s two out of every three farms had mortgages attached to them.²⁰ With little means of increasing their cash income and with high land and sundry taxes payable to state officials and the clergy, the bønder became increasingly mired in debt with no hope of relief on the horizon.

The constant oppression felt by the peasant class at the hands of the ruling elite was not minimized by the added burden of taxation implemented by the church and state. The social and financial distance separating the bønder class from the political elite continued to increase and added to the general opposition of the people to the central authority that had existed in Norway since the eighteenth century.²¹

All of these conditions combined to give the Norwegian peasant farmer the sense that there was no longer room for him in the new Norwegian society. He was losing his traditional place and hold on the land. This fact was reinforced by the breakdown of social structures within the peasant communities which for centuries had acted as a unifying force among people dependent on each other for survival.²² As these welfare structures crumbled, so did community cohesiveness. Change had come to the peasant lifestyle, and the only means of escape seemed to be migration to more isolated rural centers in Norway where such change had not yet occurred, or to the ever-expanding urban areas.

Unfortunately, these options were not without their shortcomings. Rural areas in the interior and northern regions of Norway were more sheltered from the effects of the transformations gripping the country, but ultimate change here too was inevitable. Advances in communications and transportation would soon reduce such isolation and facilitate change.²³

Conditions were little better in the urban centers. Wages were low, housing inadequate, and social ills accompanied the onslaught of urbanization and industrialization.²⁴ The transition from a rural to urban setting also demanded a complete change of bønder values. A loss of independence, vulnerability, and no recourse to the land were only a few of the conditions the Norwegian peasantry had to adapt to upon entering the urban milieu.²⁵

In the midst of such a repressive and tumultuous time came visitors, letters, transportation and land agents all advocating great opportunities in America.²⁶ Accompanying many letters from relatives were pre-paid passage tickets to the

United States.²⁷ Many Norwegians were ready to accept the opportunity. It seemed ironic that the Norwegian peasant had a greater chance of maintaining the peasant lifestyle in America than in a rapidly changing Norway.

The great majority of emigrants from Norway in the 1860s and 1870s were rural in background and destined for America.²⁸ Norwegian sources claim that from 1860 to 1880, about 165,000 Norwegians immigrated to North America.²⁹ Norwegian emigration to Australia, South Africa, and South America also existed at this time, yet it was by no means comparable to the numbers leaving for the United States.³⁰ By 1915, an estimated total of 754,561 Norwegians had immigrated to the United States.³¹ Only Ireland lost a greater percentage of its citizens to emigration between 1865 and 1915.³²

Norway was not alone in experiencing a period of change and transition during the nineteenth century. Western Canada was also undergoing a transformation, albeit in a more positive direction. The Northwest Territories was gearing up for a period of incredible development as it approached the close of the nineteenth century. Changes were being wrought by the Canadian government which would facilitate such development, beginning with plans to increase the population figures.

Prior to Confederation, the District of Alberta in the Northwest Territories existed as an open habitat that remained relatively untouched by any significant form of non-native settlement. For nearly two centuries the Northwest Territories was the domain of the Hudson's Bay Company which assumed control of the area in 1670. It was not until 1870, when the newly formed Government

of Canada acquired the Territories from the Hudson's Bay Company, that any action was taken to further populate the area.³³

The population of the Northwest Territories at the time of the first Dominion Census (1871) was estimated at 28,700 out of a total population in British North America of 3,816,134 inhabitants.³⁴ Most of the residents of the Territories were Canadian-born, being largely of Indian descent or originating from Manitoba and Ontario.³⁵ The slow population growth in the Northwest Territories up to this point in time was indicative of a broader trend sweeping the country: during the decade 1861 to 1871 the country's population increased by a mere 7.5 percent from immigration sources.³⁶ Not only was British North America experiencing a low immigration rate, it was also undergoing a steady emigration flow resulting in a negative migration of 192,000 persons for the decade ending in 1871.³⁷

In an attempt to rectify this population drain, the Canadian government entered the 1870s with a progressive campaign to encourage immigration, especially into the Canadian West. At this time the Department of Agriculture exercised total control over immigration issues affecting the West. The British North America Act of 1867 provided for joint control between both federal and provincial bodies over matters of immigration; yet this clause could not be applied to the Northwest Territories as the region had no independent status.³⁸ The Territories possessed sole representation in the form of a federally-appointed provisional government at the start of the 1870s and it did not achieve an elected territorial legislative assembly until 1888.³⁹ Although the Northwest Territories

had the trappings of a representative government, the region remained under federal control and thus had no independent say in matters of immigration.⁴⁰

The initial immigration campaign of the Dominion government reflected a concern for the welfare of the immigrant and a desire for economic progress. The activities of the Department of Agriculture indicated an "open door" policy, geared toward offering immigrants a better way of life, as well as boosting the progress of the fledgling western Districts. The Immigration Act of 1869 legally ensured the welfare of immigrants during the journey to their new homeland. Provisions were made outlining the "responsibilities of transportation companies carrying immigrants" and ensuring "immigrants' welfare from their port of arrival to destination."⁴¹ Little mention was made in the Act regarding the desirability or qualifications of the new citizens. Restrictions on entry applied only to those who might become public charges or those immigrants classified as "insane, idiot, deaf-mute, blind, or infirm."⁴² A Dominion-Provincial Conference held in 1871 to decide on immigration policy concluded that "a liberal policy for land settlement in the West was to be maintained."⁴³

The Department of Agriculture also sought to supplement the work already undertaken by the provinces and by private business in attracting settlers to Canada. Two of the most notable tools the Department used to achieve this end were the implementation of new land policies and a rigorous advertisement campaign. Dominion Lands and Homestead legislation was enacted in Canada to make it easier for settlers to establish themselves on Canadian soil. The first Act implemented was the 1868 Free Grants and Homestead Act, patterned after

the American Homestead Law of 1862.⁴⁴ This legislation offered each adult male one hundred acres of free land with the option for each family head to purchase additional land at fifty cents per acre. Subsequent updates to this ruling in the Dominion Lands Acts of 1872 and 1874 made the offer of land in the Northwest even more appealing to prospective settlers. Free grants were increased to one hundred and sixty acres per settler and pre-emptions of an additional quarter section of land adjoining the original homestead were made available.⁴⁵

Advertising was another highly visible and effective tool used by the Department of Agriculture in the bid to make the Canadian West the promised land for prospective immigrants. The purpose behind this tactic was to present the West as a land of plenty to all who were willing to work: "[i]n Manitoba and the North-west Territories of Canada there are over eighty millions [acres] of the finest wheat raising land upon the face of the globe, and these are to be had by any man for the asking."⁴⁶ Statements of this kind filled the propaganda brochures, pamphlets, and posters which were printed and distributed in vast quantities to countries abroad. In the early 1870s, printed propaganda was aimed almost exclusively at Great Britain. The focus soon widened, however, to include the United States, Germany, France, Scandinavia, and most of northern and western Europe.⁴⁷

At first glance, the literature distributed by the Canadian government seemed to echo the non-restrictive approach of the government's immigration policy. In all likelihood, the officials in the Department of Agriculture responsible for immigration sincerely believed it to be a very open system as did

the majority of Canadian citizens outside of government. Promising land to "any man" and sending this message abroad conveyed a notion of unbiased hospitality; yet an examination of where this propaganda was directed suggests otherwise.

The fact that Anglo-Saxon immigrants from Great Britain and the United States were the first to be recruited by Canadian immigration officials was no secret.⁴⁸ Canadian government officials and many of Canada's intellectual elite shared a circumscribed vision of the civilized world that focused on the United Kingdom and extended outward to include those countries whose citizens most closely mirrored the characteristics of the Anglo-Saxons. Canada perpetuated an ethnocentrism in its immigration policy that was generally unstated, yet understood by most Canadians. To create within the Canadian West a progressive, civilized society, meant to re-establish in a new setting the institutions and customs of the old society: the Anglo-Saxon dominated society of English Canada and of Britain.⁴⁹

This mingling of the ideas of progress and racial superiority reflected in Canada's immigration policy was indicative of trends sweeping Canadian intellectual thought in the mid-nineteenth century. The notion of progress had been introduced to Canadians in the 1850s by English immigrants and gained in popularity in the 1860s and 1870s due, in no small part, to the fervour associated with the opening of the West.⁵⁰ The manner in which progress could best be achieved was closely linked to stereotypes of who, or what type of society, would guarantee the highest degree of progress.

Although the concept of cultural superiority based solely on race had been in existence for centuries, the appearance during the Victorian era of new thoughts on social evolution brought such views to the forefront. The ideas of Hegel and Spencer on the concept of social evolution, supported by Charles Darwin's views in The Origin of Species in 1859 and the Descent of Man in 1871, were often interpreted to give credence to the argument that "biology determined cultural capability," thus strengthening the credibility of racial primacy in the minds of many.⁵¹

In Canada, similar lines of thought were formed concerning the progress of Western development which involved the Anglo-Saxon ideal, imperialism, and a British vision for the West. These perceptions are clearly illustrated by the Canada First movement, a pro-imperialist organization advocating the creation of a British West. The Canada First movement developed in Ontario in 1868 and focused on the theme of western development as a unifying ideal to instill nationalism among Canadians; propagation of close ties with Britain was deemed the only means of achieving this ideal. In the eyes of Canada Firsters, the "Northwest had to be speedily settled in order to make it British in racial character and institutions."⁵² The movement continued to grow in membership until its demise in the mid-1870s and provided a visible witness to the popularity of promoting "superior" Anglo-Saxon values in the West.⁵³

Another prevalent belief regarding race promoted by the Canada Firsters was that of the "northern myth." This myth suggested that inhabitants of northern countries such as Canada and Northern Europe--Scandinavia and

Germany in particular--were naturally a superior race in terms of physique and moral character due to the northern climate. The colder climate instilled qualities of energy, vigour, strength, self-reliance, health and purity in individuals who had to be hardy to survive under harsh northern conditions.⁵⁴

Along with physical strength came moral fortitude. It was assumed that northern people possessed high moral standards, initiative, individualism, and a desire for freedom.⁵⁵ These admirable characteristics were in sharp contrast to those attributed to the inhabitants of southern countries who were regarded as being lazy, effeminate, degenerate, and prone to political corruption, all due to the warmer climate.⁵⁶ Proponents of the northern myth also claimed that it was the people of northern Europe who were responsible for the institutions of liberty that had initially developed in Scandinavia and Germany and were then inherited by Britain, the United States, and Canada.⁵⁷ It was soon accepted that "immigrants who did not come from Northwest Europe were inferior in religion, government, education, and all other characteristics of a progressive civilization."⁵⁸

Members of the Canada First movement unabashedly echoed these sentiments and used them to arouse a nationalistic response in favour of the development of Canada as a strong Anglo-Saxon society. To legitimize their desire for British immigration, the founders made frequent reference to the northern myth. Robert Grant Haliburton, Canada First co-founder and author of The Men of the North and Their Place in History in 1869, stressed that Canada's distinction "must ever be that it is a Northern country inhabited by the descendants of Northern races."⁵⁹ Charles Mair seconded this idea, stating that

"[i]t is the Celt and the Teuton who speak our language and the 'many-tongued' people of northern Europe, who are destined to settle in the West."⁶⁰ William Foster, a Toronto barrister and Canada First co-founder, declared that "[t]he old Norse mythology, with its Thor hammers and Thor hammerings, appeals to us, for we are a Northern people, as the true out-crop of human nature, more manly, more real, than the weak marrow-bones superstition of an effeminate South."⁶¹

Such calls for selected immigration also came from intellectuals outside of the Canada First movement. George Robert Parkin, a Canadian educator and staunch imperialist, made the case for northern European immigration when he said "Canada will belong to the sturdy races of the Northern-Saxon and Celt, Scandinavian, Dane, and Northern German"⁶² There was little doubt in the minds of many English Canadians as to the path the government should follow regarding immigration.

In addition to being assigned desirable characteristics of body and intellect, immigrants from northern and western Europe were thought to be readily assimilable to the British milieu in Canada. Having in common a similar geographic origin meant sharing a similar culture. Geographic determinism of this sort became the excuse for English Canadians to follow a pattern similar to that occurring in the United States, where Americans attempted to populate their country with foreigners "who seemed more intelligent and assimilable--that is, . . . more like the nativists themselves."⁶³

The question of immigration and assimilation also became an important issue among some of the clergy in Canada who, along with other workers in

social welfare fields, had a more direct relationship with the immigrants themselves. They were endowed with a sense of moral obligation toward both the newcomers and society to strive for the social good (which often demanded the assimilation of the immigrant). Such an imperative was often the basis of religious service, especially within the Methodist church.

J. S. Woodsworth was one representative of the Methodist faith who was quite vocal concerning his attitudes towards race, immigration, and assimilation. The views expressed by Woodsworth in his book Strangers Within our Gates (1909) may be considered representative of other English Protestant Canadians at the start of the twentieth century.⁶⁴ Woodsworth expressed the principles of British idealism which claimed that the northern races were superior and that the Anglo-Saxon people embodied the highest principles of Christianity.

Yet, in addition to embracing the concepts of social Darwinism, Woodsworth's views also reflected elements of a highly developed social conscience. It was the moral imperative of the Anglo-Saxon element in Canada to share with the rest of society its superior institutions and level of civilization. In matters of immigration this meant helping the newly arrived immigrants to put off their old ways as quickly as possible and adopt the British characteristics of Canadian life.⁶⁵ Woodsworth used his blend of social concern and Old World stereotypes to lobby the government for more restrictive immigration measures that would ensure the maintenance of a strong Anglo-Saxon presence in Canada.

Social concern of another sort developed out of the arena of liberal-democratic thought in Canada in the 1880s. Liberal-democracy was fuelled by a humanitarian view of society that aimed at alleviating the suffering of all members of society.⁶⁶ Woodsworth may have fit into this category of liberal-democrat except for the fact that the moral progress propounded by liberal-democracy was not compatible with the ideas of social Darwinism, as was the case with Woodsworth's brand of Christian socialism. Liberal-democratic ideals stressed the importance of the individual, emphasizing the equality of each person in society. This led to the desire to create a society in Canada that was based on pluralism and that eradicated all social distinctions between racial groups.⁶⁷ All members of Canadian society, be they British Canadians or immigrants of any race, were to receive the same opportunity for progress within the nation.

This liberal-democratic ideal formed the basis of the Liberal party platform in Canada. The Liberals, under the leadership of Wilfrid Laurier during the height of the immigration boom, reflected this change from racial stereotyping to an equalitarian outlook in their official ideology.⁶⁸ However, despite the unbiased appearance of the Liberal immigration department on an official level, old ideals concerning race still lingered in the minds of immigration officials as they carried out their duties.

Anglo-Saxon superiority, the northern myth, and liberal-democracy were world views that occupied Canadians and had a significant impact on the activities of Canadian immigration officials. Over the course of the most active

period of immigrant recruitment by the Canadian government between 1880 and 1930, each of these ideologies came to the forefront. Only by understanding the views that existed among Canadian politicians, and the public they represented during this period, can motives be found for the targeting of specific racial groups by government officials, as was the case in their recruitment of Norwegian immigrants.

At the start of the 1870s, the Canadian government turned toward the Scandinavian countries as a "second priority" source of immigration.⁶⁹ Britain, of course, had been the government's first choice in its desire for Anglo-Saxon citizens in the early years of the nation's involvement with immigration. However, by 1868, thousands of unemployed workers came to Canada from Britain, the majority of them gravitating toward Canadian urban centres.⁷⁰ Only female domestic labour was required in Canadian cities; otherwise, immigrants were sought who would settle rural areas alone. Canadian immigration officials thus attempted to recruit British farmers, farm labourers, and domestics; yet such individuals were in short supply and did not begin to meet the demand for pioneers in Canada's rural districts.⁷¹

One drawback associated with the immigration of British agriculturists was that "English agricultural labourers with families, the class most desirable to bring to Canada . . . as the least likely to move after settlement, are, as a rule, unable to emigrate without assistance."⁷² English farm labourers in general had little money to set aside to prepare for a new beginning in a new land. When wages for agriculturists in Britain increased in 1876 allowing agriculturists to accumulate

the necessary passage money, few chose to leave Britain due to their improved economic standing. The numbers of successful agricultural immigrants from England in the following years actually fell drastically short of the expectations of the Canadian immigration officials who were then forced to look elsewhere to fill this need.⁷³

Much of the initial discussion among immigration officials concerning the desirability of Scandinavian immigrants was largely based on supposed racial characteristics and stereotypes that supported the northern myth. Scandinavians were viewed as a singular race and little differentiation was made between Norwegians, Danes, Swedes, and Icelanders. Evidence of this can be found in government publications such as the annual Sessional Papers. Statistical information for Norwegians, Danes, and Swedes is frequently amalgamated under the heading "Scandinavians," making accurate research on specific nationalities prior to the turn of the century extremely difficult.⁷⁴

The attitudes of Canadian politicians and immigration officials toward Scandinavians were highly favourable. In keeping with the northern myth, Scandinavians were pictured as physically and morally fit to succeed as pioneers in the Canadian West. In 1881, Prime Minister John A. Macdonald displayed an interest in the "fine bodies of Scandinavians he had seen in Liverpool en route to the United States."⁷⁵ John Dyke, government emigration agent in Liverpool, replied in a letter to the Prime Minister in 1881 that "[c]ertainly these people [Scandinavians] would be most desirable settlers for the Canadian Northwest."⁷⁶

The initial faith in the character of the Scandinavian people held by Canadian immigration officials was to be justified as the number and success of Scandinavian immigrants began to grow in the 1880s. In 1881 there were 4,214 Scandinavians in Canada, with 519 of those in the western regions of British Columbia, the Territories, and Manitoba.⁷⁷ The Scandinavian presence in the country reinforced the favourable image held by immigration officials and most Canadians. One official commenting on the arrivals in 1885 noted that "[t]here was also a fair influx of Scandinavians, who form a very desirable class of settlers."⁷⁸

One desirable characteristic of the Scandinavian people was their seemingly high level of education and intelligence. Recognizing this trait, Deputy Minister of the Interior A. M. Burgess claimed in 1892 that "the Scandinavians as a rule make the most desirable settlers, intelligent, well-educated as a rule, and good men physically."⁷⁹ The Scandinavian countries gave a high priority to education and as a result, they boasted a high literacy rate. Literacy gave the people an awareness of conditions in other parts of the country and abroad.

According to Sir Charles Tupper, High Commissioner for Canada in 1892, such knowledge resulted in a natural aptitude for politics.⁸⁰ Tupper surmised that this tendency, combined with the supposed Scandinavian characteristics of independence and individualism, resulted in the Scandinavian peasant's strong belief in the ideals of freedom and democracy. In the eyes of Canadian officials and other proponents of the northern myth, such Scandinavian qualities produced a very progressive-minded people who would uphold the cherished democratic

ideals of the Canadian West. Tupper summed up his views when he remarked that:

the emigrant whose home land shows a minimum per centage of illiteracy, whose life has been trained in thrift and small economies and whose history, past and present, is a story of struggle of independence such an emigrant is likely to prove a great acquisition. . . . Trained under conditions of soil and climate, and under institutions which have stimulated his physical and mental equipment the Scandinavian is eminently adapted to engage successfully in the settlement and the development of Canada.⁸¹

The success of the Scandinavian settlers in Canada also seemed assured due to their apparent tendency to assimilate quickly. In terms of desirability based on racial requisites, assimilation to the Anglo-Saxon norm was a dominant factor. From the viewpoint of immigration officials, the Scandinavians appeared to espouse the ideals of independence, democracy, and progress advocated by Anglo-Saxon conformists and liberal-democrats alike.

Language played a big part in the assimilation process. Many Canadians held the view that the sooner the immigrants adopted the English language, the sooner they would become "British subjects" in all respects. The high level of education among the Scandinavians aided in this regard. John Dyke reported in 1895 that the "peasants in the Scandinavian kingdoms are the best educated of any in Europe, and there is a great desire on their part to learn the English language and in nearly all the small towns free classes are held for adults."⁸² An immigration official observed that the Scandinavians indeed "assimilate themselves with us and become Canadians, they become British subjects almost at once, they learn our language quickly."⁸³

Once the English language had been acquired, it was seen as only a matter of time before Scandinavian immigrants would be completely assimilated and thus become culturally "invisible" within the Anglo-Saxon milieu of the Canadian West:

[t]he Scandinavians very rapidly acquire the English language and adopt our habits, and after they have been here for one or two years at the most they are practically as thoroughly Canadian as those who've been born and brought up in this country, and as they are quiet, law-abiding people, we are all anxious to secure as large a percentage of the emigrants leaving the shores of Sweden, Norway and Denmark as we can.¹¹⁸⁴

With the passage of time, the Canadian government developed a deepening interest in the Scandinavians and more information became available to the public concerning the cultural, social, and economic characteristics unique to each of the Scandinavian countries. Yet it was not until the turn of the century that Norwegians were more frequently distinguished from other Scandinavians in immigration records.⁸⁵

Specific mention is made in the early 1900s of the desirability of the Norwegian people. Many perceptions concerning the Norwegians were based on qualities associated with the geographical location of the country. According to Arthur F. Ford, the cold, northern climate of Norway produced a physically robust race. The men of Norway were depicted as "big, brawny, broad-shouldered, fair-haired giants; the women, pretty, healthy, clean-featured and rosy-cheeked, with great masses of golden hair."¹¹⁸⁶ When a party of Norwegians arrived in New Brunswick, it was noted that:

[t]his party of Norwegians was of excellent type, being physically very robust and all had the appearance of having been used to hard outdoor work . . . and I am of the opinion that they are a suitable class of immigrants.⁸⁷

All of the glowing qualities generally attributed to Scandinavians were also ascribed to the Norwegian group when they were referred to specifically.

However, the future of the Canadian West depended on more than just the racial composition of its citizens; more immediate to the progress of the region was its economic development. From the onset of settlement in the West, economic development was synonymous with agriculture. John Carling, Minister of the Department of Agriculture in 1891, stated his Department's view "that the only class of immigrants we want are men who can come here and become farmers and help to develop the resources we have in the land. That is the only class we have work for."⁸⁸

This sentiment was shared by government officials outside of the Department of Agriculture as well. It was generally acknowledged that the transformation of the West from a dormant frontier to a productive, civilized extension of the Dominion depended on immigration. However, only a certain class of newcomers were deemed suitable for the task. Canadian immigration pamphlets consistently beckoned the agriculturist to take advantage of the great opportunities awaiting him in the West. The government made it clear it was in the market only for successful homesteaders who would stay on the land and bring it under cultivation.

The Norwegians exhibited a propensity for settling successfully as quickly as possible, and thus earned high regard within the Canadian Immigration Branch. An "agrarian myth" was attached to the Norwegian people which equated the Norwegian race with rural living.⁸⁹ This agrarian myth found support from Norway's historical background which reveals a rich agricultural heritage. Although Norway is not geographically best-suited for an agricultural society (only five percent of the land surface is arable), almost one hundred percent of the country's population was at one time involved in agriculture on a subsistence level, either as a full-time occupation or in conjunction with supplemental employment in the fishing, logging, or mining industries.⁹⁰

The Norwegian peasant farmer or bonde is closely associated with many of the traditional ideals and customs jealously guarded by the Norwegian people. The peasant class was intrinsically linked with the land and "embodied the sum of Norwegian freedom."⁹¹ The Norwegian bonde was an identifiable figure in Norway's past, and the myth of the idyllic, rural quality of life associated with the peasant farmer was deeply embedded in the Norwegian culture and figured prominently in the folklore, literature, art, music, and drama of the country.⁹² The agrarian myth applied to Norwegians by Canadians echoed the strong cultural sentiment of the Norwegian people themselves toward their agrarian heritage, and thus was more of a reality than myth.

The agricultural contribution of intended settlers was the prime concern of the Dominion government when the most intensive period of immigration into Canada took place under the watchful eye of Clifford Sifton, Minister of the

Interior. Sifton was appointed Minister of the department in 1896 under the newly established Liberal government of Sir Wilfrid Laurier. In his work as Minister, Sifton adhered to the liberal-democratic platform of Laurier's Liberal party which advocated, in principle at least, an equalitarian society and which played down the significance of race within such a society. Yet, Sifton himself was of Anglo-Saxon heritage and shared with many of his Canadian contemporaries the vision of a Canada that "was a progressive, British society" in which "the state must have the power to inculcate such values in an ethnically diverse population."⁹³ Sifton strongly believed in the advantages of assimilation and dictated that racial equality could be compromised if the collective good of the British-Canadian society demanded such action.⁹⁴

Sifton, according to one of his biographers, was one of "the least prejudiced in a time when racial feeling was rampant."⁹⁵ He maintained an open door policy regarding immigration and did not openly discriminate against immigrants based on race through legislative means.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, this did not negate the existence of Sifton's Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-Canadian bias; the immigration laws in 1896 were flexible enough to permit "the Minister of the Interior latitude in undermining the arrival of less welcome settlers."⁹⁷ Sifton's prejudice was disguised as an occupational one, which placed agriculturists above all others.⁹⁸ He "believed in the proposition that different 'races' had different characteristics which, among other things, inclined some to be farmers . . . while others either would not succeed on the farm or their children would be likely to leave the farm."⁹⁹ Thus, in recruiting immigrants based on their potential success as

farmers, Sifton covertly inhibited the immigration of certain racial groups without having to implement restrictive legislation.¹⁰⁰

As far as Sifton's attitude toward Norwegian peasant immigration was concerned, such a bias worked to Norwegians' advantage. Any racial stereotypes appeared to be overridden by a business perspective which emphasized the development of the West in the most efficient manner and with the least expenditure to the Dominion government. According to Sifton's business philosophy, the only good immigrant was the agricultural immigrant.¹⁰¹ This type of individual would be more likely to adapt to the conditions of the Canadian prairie, establish himself and become self-sufficient, and remain on the land for many years to come. This was the formula for success as far as Sifton was concerned.

Sifton speculated that the West "needed a peasant stock . . . whose roots would grow deep in the prairie soil and who would remain as farmers providing generation after generation a return on the investment involved in bringing them to the prairies."¹⁰² James A. Smart, Deputy Minister of the department from 1897 to 1904 and Sifton's right-hand man, agreed with this assessment. He concurred that prospective settlers should have the means and ability to successfully undertake agricultural and related pursuits in the Canadian West. Smart suggested in 1901 that such an immigrant could only be found in Scandinavia and Europe, as it was not likely by this time that Great Britain could be counted on to provide the numbers of settlers needed:

while every effort should continue to be made to secure as large an Anglo-Saxon immigration as possible, it would not appear that we are likely to meet with as much success as might be desired Under the circumstances, . . . there'd appear to be no doubt that Canada will have to look to Europe and Scandinavia for a share of the emigration from those countries which is now being directed towards the United States and the South American Republics.¹⁰³

It is evident from this statement that although economic suitability took precedence, matters of race and the Anglo-Saxon ideal still dominated the minds of immigration officials.

The individuals working under Sifton in the Department of the Interior had similar backgrounds and adhered to similar ideals. The officials were predominantly Anglo-Saxon in origin. Men such as James Smart, Deputy Minister (1896-1905), Frank Pedley, Superintendent of Immigration (1896-1905), and W. F. McCreary and J. Obed Smith, Immigration Commissioners (1896-1900 and 1900-1909 respectively), were all lawyers and Liberals in ideology. They shared the liberal-democratic ideals of their party and supported Sifton's method of basing immigration on economic rather than on racial motives. However, these officials also shared Sifton's opinion that the immigrants who came to Canada should be indoctrinated with the ideals of independence, democracy, and progress, and contribute to the development of an Anglo-Canadian society.

In terms of their economic contribution, Sifton agreed with Smart in regard to the Norwegians. His positive perception held true in following years and was reinforced by the general success of the increasing numbers of Norwegian homesteaders who entered the Canadian West in the early part of the twentieth century. Sifton, as late as 1920 remarked that:

the place to look for immigrants is Belgium, Denmark, and in a greater degree, Norway and Sweden. From these countries the best agricultural settlers can be procured, who are perfectly competent when they arrive in Canada to take care of themselves and never want any assistance whatever from anybody I believe one hundred thousand first class farmers could be got in the next two to three years and they would be worth one million immigrants of the usual drifter class.¹⁰⁴

The Canadian government was not the only element within Canadian society that was interested in immigration from an economic standpoint. The influx of immigrants provided an immediate market for goods and services, brought capital into the economy, and expanded the labour force. Therefore, business interests supported the government in its bid for immigration and worked closely with the Immigration Branch to further this goal.

The most obvious business to profit from increased immigration was that of transportation. Transportation companies often worked in close unison with the Canadian government in the recruitment of immigration. One company which figures prominently in the immigration history of the country after 1880 is the CPR. Betty Robinson Macleod, a student of Canadian economic history, suggests that "from 1882 until the outbreak of World War One, the story of immigration and settlement in Canada can very nearly be equated to a description of the colonization activities of the Canadian Pacific Railway."¹⁰⁵ The CPR not only dealt with transportation, but had been involved in land sales and colonization since 1881.¹⁰⁶ The CPR had a vested interest in immigration in that the immigrants supplied a market for rail transportation, land, and the necessary amenities for the traveller en route.

In addition to providing a ready market for the CPR's services, immigration filled the transportation company's need for workers. Many young Scandinavians arriving in Canada in the early 1880s took immediate employment with the CPR as labourers laying the track. The company's payment for labour came in the form of land alongside the railroad, or as money set aside for the purchase of land. A deposit of two hundred and fifty dollars was kept by Canadian Pacific officials for each worker until the time came to buy land, in order to ensure rural settlement in the West.¹⁰⁷ This procedure benefited both the Dominion government and the CPR: the government wanted immigrants to occupy the rural expanse of the Northwest Territories, and the CPR needed a market to occupy the extensive land holdings it possessed along the path of the railway.

The racial background of the immigrant mattered little to the Company; quantity of immigration was a more urgent concern at this stage than any cultural attributes of the clients could have been. The only advantage the Scandinavians might have possessed in the eyes of the CPR Company administrators was their propensity to remain on the land once settled.

As well as filling a necessary role within the transportation industry, Scandinavian immigrants were able to meet a need for labour in other sectors of Canadian economic life which were more race specific. As early as the 1870s, there was a growing demand for farm and general labourers:

the large area of land annually brought under cultivation [in Canada] has increased the demand for skilled labour, so that farmers and farm hands were much enquired for. The demand for these classes . . . continues, and they can always feel certain of finding employment at good wages.¹⁰⁸

This demand would be continued well into the next century.

Scandinavian immigrants were desirable not only as farm labourers, but they also had experience in mining and logging which enabled them to be "always in demand by contractors," as they were "preferred by them above all others."¹⁰⁹ In terms of women workers, Scandinavians were avidly sought after as domestic servants. In 1892 they were considered to be:

admirably suited to meet the wants of Canada in this particular class of labour The Scandinavian servant girls are clean, honest, industrious and intelligent. They are generally well domesticated and capable women, and accustomed to low wages and a simple quiet life.¹¹⁰

While government and business opinion regarding immigration was important, so were the perceptions of the public. In general terms, those of the Canadian public who were not indifferent to the influx of immigrants into the West echoed the government's positive perception of the Scandinavian settlers. Some opinions were based on the geographical origins of the immigrants: "so long as Britons and northern Europeans constitute the vast majority there is not so much danger of losing our national character."¹¹¹ The major emphasis in public opinion was on the similarity of the Scandinavian newcomers to themselves. The general consensus was that they were an asset to the country. An article in Dominion Illustrated: A Canadian Pictorial Weekly suggested that

"renewed efforts should . . . be made by our Government to induce more of the hardy German and Norwegian races to remain here."¹¹²

It would not be accurate to assume that no negative attitudes existed among Canadians toward the Scandinavian immigrants. One angry British citizen in Alberta wrote the government to request that immigration be restricted to "British elements" only, as Americans, Swedes, Danes, Norwegians, Ruthenians, Galicians, Finns, and others were not desirable, largely due to their political persuasions.¹¹³ Yet comments such as this were more the exception than the rule in Canada; most public opinion referring to Scandinavians or Norwegians in particular were in favour of increased immigration.

Negative attitudes toward Norwegian immigrants specifically also existed within the Canadian government, but these sentiments were directed toward a small sector of the immigrant population. Charity-assisted immigrants sent to Canada with the help of the Norwegian government proved to be incapable of earning a living for themselves. The situation was so problematic that F. C. Blair, Secretary for the Department of Immigration and Colonization in Canada complained in 1928 that "the culls have come to the surface in such numbers and the men have so completely failed to stay on the land that even the Norwegian movement is regarded as of no value, but is on the other hand productive of a great deal of trouble to us now."¹¹⁴ The matter of undesirability was based on the class of immigrant rather than on inherent qualities of race or character:

. . . it is evidently the opinion of the Consul General of Norway that the type of Norwegian selected was not likely to seriously take up farming in Canada nor was the type likely to add to the splendid record of Norwegian immigrants who have come to this country.¹¹⁵

The unsatisfactory result of this movement seems to have been an isolated case within the history of Norwegian immigration to Canada, as the majority of immigrants had been successful.

Canadian immigration policy became more restrictive with Sifton's successor, Frank Oliver. Oliver assumed the position of Minister of the Interior in 1905, when the presence of the growing immigrant population in Canada was being more noticeably felt by the public. Public opinion, along with his own convictions, convinced Oliver to impose policies restricting immigration propaganda to three areas: Scandinavia, along with Britain and Germany, made it onto the "most-wanted" list.¹¹⁶ Selectivity based on agriculture continued to be a determining factor in immigration policy formation during Oliver's tenure in office. In fact, the need for agricultural workers in Canada persisted until after World War Two. In 1927 the question was raised in Parliament as to:

what, if anything, could be done in co-operation with the Rural Districts and the Norwegian Government and our own to assist emigration from Norway to Canada, confined exclusively to practical agriculturists.¹¹⁷

The Canadian government's approach to Scandinavian immigration was affected by ideology, racial stereotypes, economic concerns, and public opinion. Each of these influences, along with the personalities and dispositions of the officials directly involved, shaped immigration policy and the perceptions associated with it. From the inception of Dominion control over immigration matters, to the end of the Sifton administration, Canada's immigration policy

basically followed an "open door" approach. In respect to Scandinavian and therefore Norwegian immigration, the door was wide open and the welcome mat out.

Norwegians were welcome in Canada because they "fit" the image of the ideal settler put forth by the government, the CPR, and the public at large. The racial characteristics attributed to Norwegians were in keeping with the Anglo-Saxon character of western Canadian society. They were agriculturists and easily assimilable, two essential characteristics which gained the Norwegians a place on Canada's preferred-immigrant list. Such qualities enabled the Norwegians to maintain their "desirable" status throughout the period of increasingly restrictive Canadian immigration policies in the twentieth century. The task facing immigration officials remained the successful recruitment of the Norwegian immigrants.

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

¹Franklin D. Scott, The Peopling of America: Perspectives on Immigration, AHA Pamphlets, American Historical Association No. 241, 1963, p. 3.

²Brit Berggreen, "Norwegian Culture and Society, Outline 1978," Norwegian Culture and Society C-53, International Summer School, Oslo, July 1987. Subsequent reference under Norwegian Culture.

³Yaw Amoako-Addo, Selected Topics of Social Policy of the Norwegian Welfare State (Oslo: University of Oslo, 1986), p. 15.

⁴Ronald G. Popperwell, Norway, Nations of the Modern World Series (London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1972), p. 280.

⁵Howard B. Furer, ed., The Scandinavians in America, 1866-1970: A Chronology and Fact Book (New York: Oceana Publications, 1972), p. 11.

⁶Blegen, Norwegian Migration to America, 1825-1860, pp. 162-63.

⁷Bjork, pp. 86, 96.

⁸Scott, p. 24.

⁹Bjork, pp. 86, 96.

¹⁰Qualey, p. 251. American reports state that 12,633 Norwegians and Swedes immigrated to the United States in 1866, whereas Norwegian reports indicate the migration was greater with 15,455 individuals leaving Norway for the United States.

¹¹Semmingsen, Norway to America, p. 103.

¹²Popperwell, p. 34.

¹³Berggreen, Norwegian Culture, 06 July 1987.

¹⁴Qualey, pp. 10-11.

¹⁵Semmingsen, Norway to America, pp. 100, 162. The population of Norway doubled between 1814 and 1864.

¹⁶Jon Wefald, A Voice of Protest: Norwegians in American Politics, 1890-

1917, Topical Studies Vol. I (Minneapolis: The Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1971), p. 15.

¹⁷Cyvind Østerud, Agrarian Structure and Peasant Politics in Scandinavia: A Comparative Study of Rural Response to Economic Change (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1978), pp. 101, 260.

¹⁸T. K. Derry, A History of Modern Norway, 1814-1972 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p. 131.

¹⁹Scott, p. 22.

²⁰Blegen, Norwegian Migration to America, 1825-1860, p. 170.

²¹Berggreen, Norwegian Culture, 08 July 1987, and Amoako-Addo, p. 12. Berggreen classifies the population of nineteenth century Norway into three groups and estimates the percentage of the entire population they comprise: (1) Embetsstanden - government officials, wealthy merchants, shipowners (1-3%); (2) borgerstanden (citizens) - craftsmen, tradespeople, shipmasters and tjenestemenn - civil servants (7-10%); (3) bøndene - peasants - odal peasants, crofter, husmann, the "common people" (90%). Amoako-Addo states that the opposition to the central authority "was brought about by an electoral system which gave electoral power to the peasants while a political elite, representing the King and the bureaucracy was able to dominate the political representation of the system."

²²Amoako-Addo, p. 341. He suggests that the spread of factory work in Norway took from the farm family the traditional roles of "feeding, educating and helping their members against hunger, accidents, illness and unemployment, and assisting them in old age." The belag was a neighbourhood group found in Norwegian peasant communities whose members were mutually obliged to help and support each other. Members did this through social institutions such as the dugnad or "bee," which called on community co-operation to fulfill tasks too large for one homestead to accomplish. Such institutions guaranteed support for all members of the community in time of need; their disappearance in Norway was greatly noticed during the nineteenth century. See Berggreen, Norwegian Culture, 09 July 1987 and Semmingsen, Norway to America, p. 78.

²³Lovoll, p. 12; and Blegen, Norwegian Migration to America, 1825-1860, p. 11. Initial emigration from Norway was the heaviest from southern Norway and from the fjord and mountain regions in the western and eastern parts of the country.

²⁴Canada. Parliament. Immigration Branch Records. Sir Charles Tupper, High Commissioner for Canada, London, to T. M. Daly, 28 September 1892 (RG 76 vol. 13 f. 77 Pt. 1), p. 15. Subsequent reference under IB.

²⁵Amoako-Addo, p. 341.

²⁶Blegen, Norwegian Migration to America, 1825-1860, p. 257.

²⁷Canada. Parliament. IB. Sir Charles Tupper to T. M. Daly, 28 September 1892 (RG 76 vol. 13 f. 77 Pt. 1), p.3.

²⁸Furer, p. 50.

²⁹Loken, From Fjord to Frontier, Table 2, p. 30.

³⁰Lovoll, p. 8.

³¹Qualey, p. 4.

³²Lovoll, p. 18.

³³Canada Year Book, 1957-1958 (Ottawa: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1958), p. 156. For a general survey of western Canadian history, see Gerald Friesen, The Canadian Prairies: A History (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984).

³⁴Canada Year Book, 1872 (Ottawa: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1872), p. 234.

³⁵Canada Statistical Abstract and Record, 1886 (Ottawa: Department of Agriculture, 1886), p. 59. This trend remained true for the Territories into the early 1880s.

³⁶J. L. Elliott, "Canadian Immigration: A Historical Assessment," Two Nations, Many Cultures: Ethnic Groups in Canada, 2nd ed., ed. Jean Leonard Elliott, (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall, 1979), p. 292.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸British North America Act, 1867, sec. 95.

³⁹Lewis Herbert Thomas, The Struggle for Responsible Government in the North-West Territories, 1870-97, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), pp. 11-16, 161. This provisional government was established under the Temporary Government Act of 1869. Prime Minister John A. Macdonald referred to the Act as "a short bill for the establishment of a provisional Government" (Thomas, p. 15). The Act also "provided for the appointment of a Lieutenant-Governor who was to administer the local government under periodic instructions from Ottawa" (Thomas, p. 12).

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 64.

⁴¹The Immigration Program, Canada Immigration and Population Study (Manpower and Immigration, 1974), p. 4.

⁴²Canada Year Book, 1957-1958, pp. 167-68.

⁴³Immigration to the Canadian Prairies, 1870-1914 (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1971), p. 5.

⁴⁴Lars Ljungmark, "Canada's Campaign for Scandinavian Immigration, 1873-1876," Swedish-American Historical Quarterly 33, No. 1 (January 1982), p. 22.

⁴⁵Chester Martin, "Dominion Lands" Policy, ed. Lewis H. Thomas (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1973), pp. 141, 161.

⁴⁶Free Homes in Manitoba and the Canadian North-west (Winnipeg, 1886), p. 1.

⁴⁷Ljungmark, pp. 23-24.

⁴⁸Howard Palmer, "Responses to Foreign Immigration: Nativism and Ethnic Tolerance in Alberta, 1880-1920," M.A. Diss. University of Alberta, 1971, p. 51.

⁴⁹Doug Owram, Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West, 1856-1900 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), pp. 125-27.

⁵⁰Laurence S. Fallis, Jr., "The Idea of Progress in the Province of Canada: A Study in the History of Ideas," The Shield of Achilles, W. L. Morton, ed. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968), p. 171.

⁵¹Brian McKillop, A Disciplined Intelligence: Critical Inquiry and Canadian Thought in the Victorian Era (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1977), pp. 73, 124, 204; and Howard Palmer, Patterns of Prejudice: A History of Nativism in Alberta (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1982), pp. 23-24.

⁵²Carl Berger, The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), p. 66.

⁵³The Canada First movement came to an end due to a division among leaders as to whether or not the movement should become involved in political action. The split weakened the institutional basis of the movement to the point of collapse. See W. S. Wallace, "The Growth of National Feeling," Canadian Historical Review, Vol. I, No. 2, June 1920, pp. 156-57.

⁵⁴Berger, pp. 128-29.

⁵⁵Marilyn Barber, introd., Strangers Within Our Gates, James S. Woodsworth. Rpt. 1909, Michael Bliss, ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), p. xiv.

⁵⁶Klaus Peter Stich, "Immigration and the Canadian West: From Propaganda to Fiction," PhD Diss. York University, 1974, p. 15; and Barber, p. xiv.

⁵⁷Berger, p. 130.

⁵⁸Barber, p. xii.

⁵⁹Berger, p. 53.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 59.

⁶¹Ibid., pp. 62-63.

⁶²Ibid., p. 131.

⁶³Scott, p. 51.

⁶⁴Barber, p. xi.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. xix.

⁶⁶Fallis, pp. 177-78.

⁶⁷W. L. Morton, "Victorian Canada," The Shield of Achilles (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1968), p. 418.

⁶⁸Robert Kelley, The Transatlantic Persuasion: The Liberal-Democratic Mind in the Age of Gladstone (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1969), p. 382.

⁶⁹Betty Robinson Macleod, "A History of Canadian Economic Development with Specific Reference to Immigration," PhD Diss. Duke University, 1967, p. 280; and Donald H. Avery, "Canadian Immigration Policy and the Alien Question, 1896-1919: The Anglo-Canadian Perspective," PhD Diss. University of Western Ontario, 1973, p. 124.

⁷⁰Ljungmark, p. 22.

⁷¹Avery, p. 10.

⁷²Canada. Parliament. Sessional Papers 1876, No. 8, p. xiv. Subsequent reference to Sessional Papers under SP.

⁷³Ibid., p. 6.

⁷⁴Ibid., Toronto Agency Return, p. 19. In some cases the number of Norwegians coming to Canada were of a significant proportion to merit individual reference as "Norwegians" in certain agents' reports. They are also

frequently categorized with one other ethnic group, such as "Swedo-Norwegians" or "Germany and Norway" (SP 1895, No. 13, Appendix K, pp. 97, 112).

⁷⁵Canada. Parliament. IB. John Dyke, Report on Continental Emigration, Liverpool, 27 March 1895 (RG 76 vol. 13 f. 77 Pt. 2), p. 9.

⁷⁶Canada. Parliament. IB. Letter to Sir John A. Macdonald from John Dyke, Liverpool, 13 September 1881 (RG 76 vol. 13 f. 77 Pt. 2).

⁷⁷Russel Craig McIvor, "A History of Canadian Population and Immigration," M.A. Diss. University of Chicago, 1939, p. 89.

⁷⁸Canada. Parliament. SP 1886, No. 10, pp. xxix, 21.

⁷⁹Canada. Parliament. IB. Letter to George E. Drummond, Director of the Canadian Iron Furnace Co. Ltd., Montreal, from A. M. Burgess, Ottawa, 10 October 1892 (RG 76 vol. 13 f. 77 Pt. 1).

⁸⁰Canada. Parliament. IB. Sir Charles Tupper, High Commissioner for Canada, London, to T. M. Daly, 28 September 1892 (RG 76 vol. 13 f. 77 Pt. 1), p. 4.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, pp. 2, 4.

⁸²Canada. Parliament. IB. John Dyke Report, 27 March 1895 (RG 76 vol. 13 f. 77 Pt. 2), p. 133.

⁸³Canada. House of Commons Debates, 1890, comment by T. M. Daly, p. 2417.

⁸⁴Canada. Parliament. IB. Letter to Sir Charles Tupper from Hugh J. Macdonald, 28 October 1891 (RG 76 vol. 13 f. 77 Pt. 1).

⁸⁵See Immigration Branch records, Sessional Papers, and House of Commons Debates and Journals of the early 1900s to witness the change in focus on specific Scandinavian groups.

⁸⁶Arthur F. Ford, chapter on "Scandinavians," in Strangers Within Our Gates by J. S. Woodsworth. Rpt. 1909, Michael Bliss, ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), p. 74.

⁸⁷Canada. Parliament. IB. Letter to J. S. Fraser, Division Commissioner, Department of Immigration and Colonization, from J. V. Lantalum, St. John, NB 29 March 1927 (RG 76 vol. 297 f. 273271).

⁸⁸Canada. House of Commons Debates, 1891, Mr. Armstrong, 09 September 1891, p. 5242.

⁸⁹Barber, p. xiv.

⁹⁰Berggreen, *Norwegian Culture*, 06 July 1987. In 1815 more than ninety percent of the Norwegian population were rural inhabitants; by 1890, this figure dropped to seventy-six percent. In fact, by the early 1870s "agriculture . . . was still the way of life of most Norwegians." See T. K. Derry, *A History of Modern Norway, 1814-1972* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), pp. 98, 130.

⁹¹Oscar J. Falnes, *National Romanticism in Norway*, *Studies in History, Economics and Public Law* No. 386 (New York: AMS Press, 1968), p. 57. See also Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted* (Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1973) and John Berger, *Pig Earth* (London: Writers and Readers Publishing Co-operative, 1979) for further study on the characteristics of the peasant class.

⁹²Popperwell, p. 32. For a further study of the impact of the Norwegian peasant class on the development of art, see Roar Hauglid, ed., *Native Art of Norway* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1967). Folklorists Jørgen Moe and Peter Christen Asbjørnsen, artists Adolph Tidemand and Hans Gude, musicians Ole Bull and Ludvig Lindeman, and dramatists Bjørn Bjørnsen and Henrik Ibsen were among the most famous of Norway's writers and artists to be inspired by the Norwegian peasant. See Falnes, pp. 53-65.

⁹³David John Hall, "The Political Career of Clifford Sifton, 1896-1905," PhD Diss. University of Toronto, 1973, p. iii. Subsequent reference under "The Political Career."

⁹⁴Sifton's attitude was similar to that of Sir Wilfrid Laurier who believed in the rights of the individual as long as the collective good of society was not being compromised. See Timlin.

⁹⁵Hall, "The Political Career," p. 187.

⁹⁶Troper points out that the restrictive policies used by Sifton against non-agrarians were not formalized until the Canada Immigration Act was redefined in 1910, under the ministership of Frank Oliver, Sifton's successor in the Department of the Interior. See Troper, p. 23.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 6. This feature of Canadian immigration policy persisted into the twentieth century; the Immigration Act of 1910, for example, granted a large degree of discretionary power to members of the Cabinet and the Immigration Branch in restricting the entry of immigrants. See Judith Leah Dwarkin, "Characteristics of International Immigrants to Alberta and Implications for Provincial Development," M.A. Diss. University of Calgary, 1978, p. 6.

⁹⁸Elliott, pp. 164-65.

⁹⁹David John Hall, "Clifford Sifton: Immigration and Settlement Policy, 1896-1905," *The Prairie West: Historical Readings*, ed. R. Douglas Francis and

Howard Palmer (Edmonton: Pica Pica Press, 1985), p. 77. Subsequent reference under "Clifford Sifton."

¹⁰⁰Sifton opposed the recruitment of Black, Italian, Jewish, Oriental, and urban English immigrants based on this occupational criteria.

¹⁰¹Timlin, p. 518.

¹⁰²Hall, "The Political Career," p. 189.

¹⁰³Canada. Parliament. SP 1901, No. 25, Report of Deputy Minister James A. Smart to Minister Clifford Sifton, p. xv.

¹⁰⁴Sifton to Dafoe, 18 November 1920, The Dafoe-Sifton Correspondence, 1919-1927, Ramsey Cook, ed., vol. II (Altona, MN: Manitoba Record Society, 1966), p. 42.

¹⁰⁵Macleod, p. 225.

¹⁰⁶J. Lorne McDougall, Canadian Pacific: A Brief History (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1968), p. 129.

¹⁰⁷Canada. Parliament. IB. Letter to the Commissioner of Immigration, Department of Mines and Resources, Ottawa, from Daniel Stein, Consul-General of Norway, Montreal, 10 December 1938 (RG 76 vol. 459 f. 701506).

¹⁰⁸Canada. Parliament. SP 1876, No. 8. Report from L. Stafford, Immigration Agent, p. 7.

¹⁰⁹Canada. Parliament. IB. John Dyke Report, 27 March 1895 (RG 76 vol. 13 f. 77 Pt. 2), p. 153.

¹¹⁰Canada. Parliament. IB. Sir Charles Tupper to T. M. Daly, 28 September 1892 (RG 76 vol. 13 f. 77 Pt. 1), p. 26.

¹¹¹"Canadianizing the Newcomer," Canadian Courier, 1914; in Canadian History in Documents, 1763-1966, J. M. Bliss, ed. (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1966), p. 205.

¹¹²Dominion Illustrated: A Canadian Pictorial Weekly, VI, 11 April 1891, p. 338.

¹¹³Canada. Parliament. IB. Letter to J. Crerar from Robert Graham Lamb, Hoselaw, Alberta, 08 July 1920 (RG 76 vol. 13 f. 77 Pt. 5), pp. 1-2.

¹¹⁴Canada. Parliament. IB. Letter to J. M. K. Macalister, Assistant Commissioner, Department of Colonization and Development, CPR Co., Montreal, from F. C. Blair, 11 January 1928; and letter to J. Bruce Walker,

Director of European Emigration, London, from F. C. Blair, 11 January 1928 (RG 76 vol. 297 f. 273271).

¹¹⁵Canada. Parliament. IB. Letter to J. M. K. Macalister from W. J. Egan, 29 March 1928 (RG 76 vol. 13 f. 77 Pt. 6).

¹¹⁶Stich, p. 15.

¹¹⁷Canada. Parliament. IB. Letter to W. J. Egan, Deputy Minister, Department of Immigration and Colonization, Ottawa, from J. Bruce Walker, Director of European Emigration, London, 25 February 1927 (RG 76 vol. 13 f. 77 Pt. 5), p. 2.

CHAPTER TWO

Recruitment

It will thus be apparent that if the Canadian North West is to be populated by a hardy class of agriculturists, efforts must be made to secure them from the European continent.¹

The Canadian Immigration Branch, having agreed that the Norwegians were desirable immigrants who could, in all probability, secure for the West its "measure of perfection," set out to convince potential emigrants that the prairies were suitable for them. Officials busied themselves with the development of strategies to popularize the Canadian West in Norway, and a vigorous recruitment campaign in northern Europe got underway by the 1870s. However, all did not run smoothly in Canada's bid to secure immigrants direct from the homeland. As a result, Canadian officials turned their gaze toward an alternative source: the United States.

The Canadian government faced a severe challenge from the very outset of its Norwegian campaign in northern Europe. By the 1870s it was already late in the running. The United States would prove to be Canada's greatest competitor as it had experienced a mass influx from Norway, Sweden and Denmark as early as the 1860s.² The United States developed its early lead in Norwegian immigration recruitment due in part to advantageous timing. The United States

became a significant option for Norwegians at the very moment emigration was being considered as an alternative to increasingly difficult conditions in the homeland.

Thanks to the earlier immigrants, by the 1850s a firmly-rooted connection existed between Norway and the United States which permitted the exchange of information. Propaganda generated from individual states reached Norway early on: the Illinois Central Railway, established in 1854, sent agent Oscar Malmberg to Norway and Sweden in 1860; in 1867, the Minnesota government's Board of Immigration issued five thousand pamphlets in Norway; and in 1873 North Dakota's Northern Pacific Railway sent Hans Mattson to Scandinavia as their colonization agent.³ Reflecting on the early activity of the United States in securing Scandinavian immigration, Canadian High Commissioner Charles Tupper remarked in 1892 that after decades of American propaganda, the flow of Scandinavians to the United States had become "largely automatic."⁴

The United States had secured for itself an "information monopoly" in Norway that resulted in the United States being the only known choice for immigration among most Norwegians.⁵ Canada and the United States were often viewed as one and the same, or Canada was viewed unfavourably by Norwegians due to misrepresentation of the country by American agents seeking to better their own immigration figures.⁶ It was clear that if the Canadian government wished to establish a significant movement from Norway, it would have to correct misperceptions and make Canada better known to the Norwegian populace.

One of the primary methods chosen by Canadian immigration officials to carry out this challenging task was through the printed word. Pamphlets printed in Norwegian depicted the free land available in Manitoba and the Northwest Territories and described the quality of the soil, the healthy climate, free schools, and the availability of assistance from government and private sources to aid in settlement. In 1883, sixty-five thousand pamphlets were sent to Norway by the Canadian government.⁷ This was second only to that sent to Germany, which received over one hundred thousand brochures in 1883.⁸ The quantity of propaganda sent to Norway dropped to ten thousand brochures in 1884, rose to forty thousand in 1885, hovered around fifty-five thousand for the next three years, and remained close to thirty thousand per year from 1889 to 1894.⁹

In addition to distributing pamphlets, the Canadian government placed advertisements in Norwegian newspapers. The goal was to advertise in newspapers with the largest circulation so that all classes of people could be reached.¹⁰ Articles on Canada appeared on a regular basis in the Christiania Posten, a widely circulated newspaper originating out of Norway's capital city.¹¹

One method that became quite effective in stimulating interest in Canada was to print letters written by Scandinavians who had settled in the Canadian West. Prospective immigrants were more likely to take the word of fellow countrymen than that of the Canadian government. These accounts claimed to depict the real situation in Canada, but they always ended with favourable comments about the West. E. Nelson of Fish Creek, District of Alberta, wrote: "Those seeking a new home need not be afraid of coming to Alberta. I believe it

to be the best country on the continent."¹² Such words of encouragement seemed to add credibility to the propaganda issued by the Canadian government.

Letters and editorials depicting the riches of the Canadian West also appeared in Scandinavian language newspapers published in the newly developing Scandinavian communities in Canada during the late 1880s and early 1890s. Copies of Den Skandinaviske Canadiensaren (The Scandinavian Canadian) of Winnipeg and Danebrog (Danish Flag) of Ottawa were collected by immigration officials and sent to the Scandinavian countries.¹³

Committed to recruiting agricultural immigrants, the Department of the Interior made a special attempt to focus on a predominantly agrarian audience in Norway. Farm families in leading agricultural districts became the targeted recipients of Canadian immigration leaflets and advertisements. In 1899, the government mailed twenty-five thousand pamphlets to Norwegian farmers.¹⁴ Such an undertaking was largely for experimental purposes in an attempt to find the most effective method of arousing interest in Canada among Norwegian agriculturists.¹⁵

Whatever the method, the response from interested agriculturists was encouraging. Over half of the applications received for additional immigration literature were from young farm hands, and another forty percent were from farmers and tradespeople.¹⁶ The campaign to get the word out about the settlement and agricultural opportunities in the Canadian West seemed to generate a growing interest among the Norwegian people.

The Canadian government combined its use of propaganda literature with another highly effective recruitment tool: the Canadian immigration agent. Agents serving as representatives of the government were the conduit through which potential immigrants learned more about Canada. The Canadian government dispatched a special immigration agent to serve all three Scandinavian countries in 1873 with instructions to recruit immigrants.¹⁷ This special agent was William McDougall, who held the position from 15 January 1873 to 13 April 1874.¹⁸

The duties of the agent included the dispersal of propaganda literature, the employment of local emigration agents to work under him on commission, and the implementation of any other arrangements which would result in increased immigration to Canada. McDougall was replaced by Hans Mattson, who fulfilled the duties of the Scandinavian agent until September 1875.¹⁹

In addition to special immigration agents, the Canadian government employed "return men" to perform a similar function. The idea behind the return man was "the temporary return of successful settlers in Canada to their former homes in Europe with a view to extending the knowledge of the resources of Canada and the advantages she has to offer intending emigrants."²⁰ The return men were granted free passage to their home countries, a nominal advance and return passage, with all other payments dependent on the numbers of settlers secured for Canada. One return man was allotted for Denmark and Norway.²¹

The Dominion government had one official immigration office in Scandinavia from which the special agents and return men worked. They

travelled throughout Norway, Sweden, and Denmark to promote emigration. McDougall had been stationed in Copenhagen, Denmark and Mattson had his headquarters in Gothenburg, Sweden. There was no Canadian immigration office and no permanent immigration agent in Norway in the nineteenth century and this omission became a matter of some contention among Canadian immigration officials.²²

The argument in Ottawa was that the government's recruitment campaign "would have far greater effect" if a main office was located in Christiania, Norway's capital city.²³ The Canadian government was hampered in its effort to make this a reality due to the position on emigration taken by the Norwegian government. Common to all Scandinavian governments was an ambivalence in regard to emigration matters. Sweden offered the toughest stance against emigration, as it had been the Scandinavian country most affected by it. Norway and Denmark did not directly oppose emigration, though they made it quite clear they did not support any emigration schemes.²⁴

The Norwegian government made its position on emigration known from the very outset of Canada's involvement in the country in the 1870s. The government enforced guidelines governing the behaviour of foreign agents and kept a watchful eye on all emigration activity. William McDougall, Canadian immigration agent in Scandinavia, reported in 1874 that the Norwegian government, in an effort to control the numbers and activities of foreign immigration agents in the country, had passed laws restricting emigration recruitment efforts to those agents granted a licence by the Norwegian

government itself.²⁵ These licences required the posting of a bond of approximately four to six thousand dollars (twenty thousand Norwegian kroner) to ensure the welfare of the emigrant.²⁶ Licences were renewable each year and could be revoked at the discretion of the police or chief government officials in Norway.²⁷ These licences were essential to the operation of agencies in Norway, and thus the government restrictions were adhered to by most agents in the fear of having their licences rescinded.

Norwegian law governing emigration was not the sole obstacle to the Canadian government establishing an immigration agency in Norway. The reluctance of officials within the Department of the Interior to do so in the 1890s and following years stemmed primarily from economic considerations. A. M. Burgess, Deputy Minister of the Department in 1896, did not doubt the willingness of the Norwegian government to permit an agency in Norway; rather, concern over adequate funding and the efficient expenditure of those funds led Burgess to question the wisdom of establishing an agency in Norway when it was "questionable . . . how much an agent could do if he were appointed."²⁸ The Norwegian government allowed agents with licences to distribute immigration advertisements and literature providing they refrained from any "open attempts at propaganda."²⁹

The stand taken by the Norwegian government regarding emigration was influenced to a great degree by internal and external forces. In 1897 the government placed restrictions on emigration for the first time and strictly enforced guidelines among immigration agents.³⁰ This action coincided with an

upswing in the Norwegian economy which witnessed an improvement in conditions, employment, and higher wages as the new century approached.³¹ Conversely, when the twentieth century and the Great War had brought serious economic difficulties to Norway, opposition to any emigration movement "waned and the main idea of the [government] officials [was] to have the prospective emigrants placed in their lands of adoption as advantageously as possible."³² However, even when conditions in Norway warranted a repeal of emigration restrictions, the Norwegian government proceeded cautiously and withheld full support for emigration for political purposes.³³

Leading newspapers in Norway also expressed an unsympathetic attitude toward emigration. In 1901, a Scandinavian newspaper in Minnesota noted that the radical press in Norway exhorted the government to implement a tax on all emigrants, as young Norwegian men "get a free education, then leave when their labour begins to be of value to the country."³⁴ The sentiment expounded most often through the years by local newspapers in Norway was one of strong opposition to the exodus of valuable labourers. Yet during the post-World War One period, the Norwegian press "made a rapid change of face" to become mildly supportive of Norwegian emigration to Canada.³⁵

The views of the Norwegian people and of those emigrating seemed to follow two paths: they either saw emigration as a loss of Norway's human resources when economic conditions were favourable, or as a blessing to the Motherland at times when the country's resources could not support its population. Public opinion generally coincided with the stance of the Norwegian

government on emigration. It was believed that the government took a hard line on this issue for the well-being of the Norwegian citizen: by such actions, the Norwegian government sought to diminish the likelihood of the emigrant becoming the victim of fraudulent business deals by unscrupulous agents. In addition, the Norwegian government also sought to protect state and private interests which would be adversely affected by emigration.³⁶ By closely monitoring the manner in which the emigration process was carried out, the Norwegian government hoped to keep the movement at a slower, more manageable pace.

In an attempt to establish a working relationship with the Norwegian government, the Canadian government conducted its activities in Norway with caution and attempted to maintain a low-profile approach in its dealings. A non-aggressive recruitment campaign was supported in 1894 so as not to antagonize the Norwegian government.³⁷ One Canadian agent remarked in 1897 that the Norwegian government "[does] not allow us to work openly, but we can work quietly."³⁸ By 1899, the recommendation had been made that the Canadian government advertise in Norway "without the hand of the Government being shown."³⁹ Hampered in its efforts to recruit Norwegian immigrants directly, the Canadian government nevertheless had found the means to overcome such obstacles.

In order to operate effectively and cheaply, the Canadian government worked in conjunction with transportation companies from the very beginning years of recruitment. The majority of private steamship companies operating in

Norway chose Christiania as their agency headquarters. One of these companies was the Allan Steamship Line, a Canadian company with over four hundred local licensed agents in Scandinavia.⁴⁰ The Canadian government enlisted A. Sharpe, the Allan Line's agent in Norway, to be its Norwegian emigration agent in 1873.⁴¹ The government benefited from the broad exposure its propaganda could be given by a company agent and was also able to avoid the hindrances of dealing with the Norwegian government in applying for an agent licence.

The steamship company agent profited by collecting a two dollar commission from the Dominion government on every emigrant recruited.⁴² The Canadian government was in favour of granting commissions to agents as an incentive, but the Norwegian government prohibited the payment of bonuses to independent agents for the number of emigrants procured. Commissions could only be collected by steamship lines with approval from the Norwegian government; hence, the Canadian government was able to get around this restriction and continue its practice of bonuses through the employment of the steamship company agent.⁴³

The Canadian government also worked closely with the CPR in its bid for Norwegian settlers. Incorporated in 1881, the company performed the functions of both a transportation and colonization company.⁴⁴ It acted as spokesperson for the Dominion government in colonization matters to almost the same degree as it pursued its own interests.⁴⁵ The reason behind the CPR's interest in the immigration and settlement activities of the government becomes evident upon an examination of the land grant policy in existence between the company and

the government. The CPR realized that it would not be able to sell its land holdings until the cheaper homestead lands of the government were taken up. With this in mind, the CPR felt compelled "in its own self-interest to act as land agent for the government It had to push government lands first and then hope to sell its own lands later."⁴⁶

The CPR aided the Canadian government immensely in its propaganda campaign by printing and distributing its own immigration pamphlets to supplement government literature.⁴⁷ The dissemination of this literature was facilitated in Norway by the appointment of Ole Jacob Amundsen as the CPR Norwegian land agent in 1910.⁴⁸ The government compensated CPR employees through the payment of commissions and subsidies. The collaboration between the government and the CPR brought both sides closer to achieving their goals.

At the close of the nineteenth century, the Canadian government joined forces with an association of private steamship agencies known as the North Atlantic Trading Company (NATC). The government made arrangements with the NATC, an alliance of German shipping agents, in 1899 to direct agricultural immigrants from Europe, including Scandinavia, to Canada.⁴⁹ The government worked quietly through the guise of the NATC in Europe and made sure that the company's actions were conducted in a legal manner.⁵⁰

The trading company appeared to produce successful results for the government: during the seven year lifespan of the company, seventy-one thousand immigrants were directed to Canada with an expenditure of \$367,245.85.⁵¹ Clifford Sifton, Minister of the Interior, gave his full support to the

company, as it secured for Canada a good quality agricultural settler who had the means to become independently established on the land.⁵²

Not all of the officials in the Immigration Branch shared Sifton's opinion.⁵³ Frank Oliver, Sifton's successor as Minister of the Interior, had different perceptions of what constituted the ideal immigrant and did not view the agricultural immigrant with equal fervour. When the returns of the NATC began to rapidly decline in the latter years of the company's existence, Oliver saw no merit in the continued funding of this operation.⁵⁴ As a result, he cancelled the agreement in 1906.⁵⁵

The importance of a good working relationship between the Canadian government and transportation companies went without saying, as the ease of access to the new land was a chief concern of the emigrants. Canada was in stiff competition with the United States in terms of transportation. Migrants destined for the United States had the advantage of direct steamship lines from Christiania to New York; whereas passengers destined for Canada had to journey to England, cross England by train, and then take another ship from England to Canada. This posed serious problems for the Canadian government in convincing immigrants to choose Canada over the United States.⁵⁶

Inland transportation to the Canadian West was sorely lacking until the early 1880s when CPR lines reached the Canadian prairies. Prior to this time, travel to the region was difficult and the journey dissuaded many from coming into the area. Sir Charles Tupper recognized this fact in 1892, when he stated:

[i]f Canada has not been able to do very much so far it arises principally from the fact that our North-west Territories have only been accessible comparatively speaking but yesterday, since the construction of the CPR[;] Canada has thus laboured under serious disadvantages⁵⁷

It was not until 1883 that the CPR reached Calgary in the District of Alberta, opening up the settlement possibilities of the region to many immigrants.⁵⁸

The Canadian immigration campaign also faced competition with the United States in terms of transportation rates. American railways were able to offer cheaper rates than the newly established CPR. In 1888, however, the Canadian government revoked a monopoly clause agreement made with the CPR Company that had guaranteed the absence of other railways in Canada from the company's competitive range for a twenty year span.⁵⁹ The move into a competitive market helped to bring about lowered rates on the CPR.

Transportation companies also proved to be indispensable to the government in terms of opening up a larger reserve of contacts for Canadian immigration agents. The large number of agents in the employ of the transportation companies and their wide geographical distribution in Scandinavia ensured a large market for Canadian propaganda. Canadian immigration officials were able to make contact with steamship agents in Norway by hosting visiting delegations to Canada. In 1910 the Canadian government brought a delegation of five agents representing the Cunard and Anchor-Donaldson steamship lines to the Canadian West to witness the conditions on the prairies and to garner information on how to obtain homesteads in the West.⁶⁰

The five delegates, representing five regions of Norway including Stavanger, Aalesund, Christiania, Bergen, and Trondhjem, were to "present an intelligent and detailed report upon their return to Norway" concerning the farming conditions in western Canada which would then be submitted to the newspapers for publication.⁶¹ The delegates assured Canadian immigration officials that as a result of their reports, Canada could expect to receive Norwegian immigrants of "a most excellent type, industrious, peaceable and expert tillers of the soil" the following spring.⁶² The Government of Canada aimed to bring over two or three such delegations each year from different parts of Scandinavia, if they proved to be successful ventures.

The mandates of the Canadian government and the Canadian companies in Norway were basically the same: to encourage Norwegians to set sail for Canada. Their methods of recruitment were also similar, as the distribution of propaganda literature and the use of agents were the chief means of operation for both interests. With a common objective and method of operation, the joint effort of government and business in immigration recruitment proved to be a practical and successful venture.

It is difficult to get an accurate impression of the degree of success the Canadian Immigration Branch achieved through its recruitment campaign in Norway. Statistics dealing with the numbers of Norwegian immigrants coming directly to Canada prior to the twentieth century are seldom recorded independently from the combined immigration figures for all the Scandinavian countries. The general indication from available statistics suggests that the

number of Scandinavians arriving in Canada in the last half of the nineteenth century showed some promise: from 1854 to 1865 alone, forty-four thousand Norwegians disembarked at Quebec.⁶³ However, a considerable proportion of these arrivals proved to be transients who journeyed on to the United States.⁶⁴ By 1893, only 405 Scandinavians were on record as having homesteaded in the West.⁶⁵

Immigration to Canada direct from Norway dwindled in the 1890s as a result of an economic depression in the United States which lasted from 1893 to 1896.⁶⁶ Economic recovery in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries brought about a return to higher immigration levels. Immigration Branch statistics show that from 1904 to 1924, Norwegian immigration to Canada via ocean ports fluctuated between 91 and 2,424 persons per fiscal year for a total of 22,755 individuals.⁶⁷

The Dominion government was not satisfied with the recruitment results from Norway, particularly as the United States continued to claim most of the flow. Despite a herculean effort on the part of the Canadian Immigration Branch, the futility of rerouting an immigration pattern established decades earlier became apparent. Nevertheless, the Canadian government took some small comfort in the fact that its Norwegian campaign had spread the word about the land opportunities in the Canadian West.

Despite this, the Canadian government needed numbers to justify success. Still convinced of the suitability of the Norwegian people for the developing western Canadian society, the Canadian government pressed ahead with its

Norwegian immigration campaign, albeit with an added American focus.

Government agents increasingly turned their gaze to the growing Norwegian population in the United States.

The fledgling Norwegian communities of the American Midwest had attracted some attention from the Canadian Immigration Branch in the 1870s in conjunction with the government's immigration campaign in Scandinavia. Nevertheless, it was not until the late 1880s that the Canadian government intensified its recruitment campaign among the Norwegians in America in response to the ongoing westward movement of migrants from the burgeoning Norwegian centres.

Immigration officials in Canada looked with interest to the Norwegians in the rural Midwest for several reasons: like the Norwegian people who immigrated to Canada directly from Norway, the immigrants to America possessed the admirable qualities associated with the Nordic race, plus they had acquired the skills of the American farmer.⁶⁸ In the eyes of the Canadian government, the Norwegian immigrant from the United States was a welcome blend of Old World agrarian roots and New World acculturation. During the relatively short time spent in America, the Norwegians had been initiated into the rigours of pioneer life and for the most part, had adapted to it. They had become skilled in dryland farming and livestock management and had been able to accumulate small sums of capital. The American Norwegians had begun the assimilation process, in terms of becoming accustomed to a new language and new ways.⁶⁹

The Canadian government did not face as many obstacles to the recruitment of Norwegians from the United States as it experienced in Norway. In America, Canadian immigration officials did not run as much of a risk of antagonizing those in society whose ties to the home country ran deep and who thus did not welcome emigration ideas. The initial uprooting of Norwegians from their homeland had already taken place, and perhaps it would not be as difficult for the Canadian government to convince them to migrate a second time, as their ties to the American soil were not as strong as to their homeland. The problems which existed between the Canadian and Norwegian governments were not present between the Canadian and American governments, as Canada was not perceived as a threat to the maintenance of population growth in the United States.⁷⁰

Canadian immigration officials also found it more convenient to work in the American Midwest for the simple reason that it was closer to home in terms of geography and culture. The proximity of the Norwegian communities south of the border facilitated the placement of Canadian immigration agents in the United States. Transportation ceased to be a major problem due to the completion of connecting lines between Canada and major Norwegian settlements in the United States. The Soo Line was completed in 1894 and connected Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan with St. Paul, Minnesota via North Dakota.⁷¹ The Minneapolis and Sault Ste. Marie Railway had two lines running through North Dakota to Canada by 1890.⁷² In Canada, the CPR branch line

between Calgary and Edmonton in the District of Alberta, completed in 1891, opened new lands for immigrant settlement.⁷³

The early work of the Canadian Immigration Branch in the United States resembled that which had been implemented in Norway, in that it relied heavily on the distribution of literature and on the work of the immigration agent. In 1875, Anders Halvorson was brought to Winnipeg by the Canadian government as a Scandinavian delegate from Chicago. The following year, Halvorson was employed by the Canadian Immigration Branch to distribute government propaganda literature and promote settlement to the Northwest Territories as the Canadian immigration agent in Chicago.⁷⁴

The role of propaganda literature and agents in the Canadian government's immigration campaign in the United States was greatly enhanced in the late 1880s and the 1890s. This time it was Canada's turn to benefit on the immigration front from advantageous timing: the government stepped up its American campaign just as Norwegians in the Midwest were once again looking for options. The vision of America as a country of endless land and opportunity had grown dim by 1890 for many Norwegian farmers who had settled in the agricultural areas of the midwestern states. A shortage of good agricultural land, drought, and depression in this region combined to push the Norwegians continually westward across the United States and into Canada.⁷⁵

These unfavourable conditions were a far cry from what initially greeted the Norwegian immigrants upon their first arrival in the American countryside. Norwegian agriculturists had been quick to move to rural areas after their arrival

in America. As early as 1834, Norwegian immigrants had moved into Illinois, and had gone on to Wisconsin in 1837.⁷⁶ Conditions here were good, but the steady increase of immigrants into these areas put pressure on land availability and necessitated movement further west. Most of the choice land had been occupied in Wisconsin by 1850 and by the late 1860s government land in Minnesota was scarce. The 1870s and 1880s saw the migration of Norwegians into Iowa and the Dakotas.⁷⁷ The population push into the Midwest became so intense that by 1892, an estimated 750,000 Scandinavians had located in Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and the Dakotas.⁷⁸ Added to these ranks were immigrants of other nationalities (notably of German heritage) who were also seeking homesteads in the region.⁷⁹ Land reserves in the Midwest could not meet the demands of such a massive population influx, and by the 1890s the availability of free lands in these states had been exhausted.⁸⁰

The 1890s brought on more hardships for the Norwegian immigrants in the United States. Droughts affected most areas of the Midwest in 1890 and 1894, resulting in very poor crop yields.⁸¹ This occurred on the heels of an economic depression in the midwestern states from 1893-1896.⁸² Norwegian farmers began to feel the burden of debt encroaching on them once again, and many were forced to mortgage their farms.

The number of mortgages on farm land increased drastically in the first decade of the twentieth century, as did interest rates and the price of land. By 1910 over half of the farms in North Dakota were mortgaged and figures for other states in the Midwest were not far behind.⁸³ Land prices had risen as little

as thirty-two percent in North Dakota to well over three hundred percent in South Dakota.⁸⁴ Prices rose in response to the demand for land from a growing population and to the amount of capital available to the landseekers. High land prices ushered in a return of the tenant farmer, who was once again deprived of the privilege of owning his own land.⁸⁵

Increasing indebtedness, foreclosures, the rise of tenancy, and the scarcity of land available for one's children left the Norwegian immigrant in the midwestern United States in a position very much like the one he had left behind in Norway. The loss of freedom and independence, which only ownership of land could prevent, were conditions that the immigrant had hoped to escape for good in the New Land. It appeared that if he wanted to regain the freedom on the land and the rural way of life, another change was inevitable. Migration once again seemed necessary, and the Canadian West seemed to have the most to offer.⁸⁶ Western Canada at long last became the preferred immigration destination over the United States.

The Canadian government quickly took advantage of the circumstances. Scandinavian language newspapers originating in the Canadian Scandinavian settlements and other forms of propaganda were circulated among the Norwegian immigrants in the United States. C. A. L. Akerlindh, appointed Scandinavian officer for the Canadian government in 1892, took the opportunity to spread the word about Canada among Scandinavians before they had even entered the United States. Akerlindh "distributed thousands of leaflets, pamphlets and newspapers giving descriptions of our magnificent and beautiful Canadian north-

west" to the Scandinavian immigrants passing through Canada on their way to the United States.⁸⁷

Canadian immigration officials received a good response from their targeted audience in the United States. Amos Rowe, government immigration agent at Calgary, reported that over half of the homesteads issued at the Calgary office were to American immigrants with capital, having on average over two thousand dollars each. Rowe remarked that the majority of these immigrants were neither of Canadian or American origin, but Scandinavian.⁸⁸

The immigrant delegate to Canada played a bigger part in Canada's recruitment campaign in the United States than it did in Norway. A delegation of Norwegians from Minnesota travelled to the District of Alberta in 1893 and filed for homesteads at Bardo. The delegates laid the ground work for the successive immigration of other Norwegian families or groups. Referring to the Norwegian delegates, Rowe speculated that "these settlers will form the nucleus of a considerable future emigration for the districts they represent."⁸⁹ Akerlindh was equally optimistic about the potential of the Scandinavian immigration from the United States. He ventured in 1893 that "from present indications and from what I learned from those coming from the United States during the season I would say that the coming year will witness an immense influx from there."⁹⁰

The number of letters of inquiry received by Canadian government agencies from prospective Norwegian settlers continued to escalate in the following years. H. H. Smith, Immigration Commissioner for the Canadian government, reported in 1895 that "correspondence with Norwegians in the United States is increasing

steadily, and a great interest is being evinced by them which will doubtless bear fruit next spring" in the form of increased immigration.⁹¹ Agents at the government Immigration Hall in Winnipeg responded to nearly four hundred letters received from Scandinavians in 1894.⁹² These replies were in the form of letters or propaganda packages. Packages consisted of pamphlets, maps, letters from settlers and general reports regarding conditions in the West.⁹³ In 1894, 270 packages were issued by the Winnipeg agency alone to interested parties in both Scandinavia and the United States, "the greater number of these being to Norwegians in the United States."⁹⁴

The Canadian government recognized the need for immigration agents and agencies to be located in the United States as the demand for information regarding the Canadian West grew. In 1895 a Canadian immigration bureau was established in Chicago.⁹⁵ Chicago was an important location for an agency, as it was the "Gateway to the West" through which a large number of Norwegian immigrants passed.⁹⁶ In 1897 Canadian immigration agents were located in several strategic cities in the midwestern states including Detroit, Kansas City, Chicago, and St. Paul.⁹⁷ St. Paul proved to be an important Norwegian centre and in an effort to capitalize on the Norwegian immigration market in the United States, the Canadian Immigration Branch placed its American headquarters for Scandinavian immigration in St. Paul in 1900.⁹⁸

Canadian immigration agents in the United States were responsible for more than just the dissemination of government propaganda literature. Their duties included follow-up visits to farmers within their jurisdiction and the

organization of tours by prospective immigrants into western Canada.⁹⁹ In addition, agents frequently travelled to outlying areas to advertise and distribute propaganda material. County and state fairs and other local gatherings provided excellent opportunities for the agent to set up displays and give lectures on the Canadian prairies to large audiences.¹⁰⁰

The Canadian government was finally able to achieve, in the United States, the type of results it had desired from its Norwegian recruitment campaign. The number of Norwegian immigrants from the United States during the first six months of 1900 was more than double that of those immigrating to Canada directly from Europe: 135 to 55.¹⁰¹ Again, precise figures for the number of Norwegians who immigrated from the United States to Canada are difficult to determine, as those who crossed the border were frequently classified as Americans.¹⁰² Yet, the "Scandinavian emigration from the United States (with few exceptions) all proceeded west to Alberta," and by 1931 there were over twenty-seven thousand Norwegians in the province.¹⁰³

Canadian immigration officials were pleased not only with the quantity of the Norwegian influx from south of the border, but also with the quality. John W. Wendelbo, Scandinavian officer for the Canadian government, commented in 1895 that:

we may congratulate ourselves on the inauguration and continual increase of this movement, as well as on the quality of the people we are getting from the States, the Norwegians especially being all first class farmers, moving into Canada in numbers and drawing their friends after them.¹⁰⁴

The recruitment campaign in the United States was a success in that the movement was predominantly one of rural, skilled agriculturists with capital. These immigrants sought land for themselves and for their children and were thus committed to remaining on the land after settlement. The Canadian government's role in the recruitment of Norwegian immigrants was different in America than it was in Norway, because the initial drive to migrate and the continued momentum of the movement grew out of the incentive of individual Norwegian immigrants themselves to find a more promising place for them and their families. It could be argued that Norwegian immigrants travelling to the Canadian West as delegates played as big a role in the settling of immigration affairs and in the continued migration of those who followed in later years as did the Canadian immigration agents delegated to the midwestern United States.

The Canadian government faced a sizable challenge in its campaign to recruit Norwegian immigrants for the Canadian West. The United States, which first proved to be Canada's biggest competitor in Norway, ended up as the supplier of the greatest portion of Alberta's Norwegian population. Canada had not been prepared to take full advantage of the initial emigration stirrings of the people in Norway in the nineteenth century: the Canadian West did not then offer anything that Norwegians could not find in the United States. By 1896, however, conditions had changed, and the West came into its own. The Northwest Territories, and the District of Alberta in particular, finally had the drawing power necessary to attract Norwegian immigrants from the United States and directly from Norway.¹⁰⁵

Canada had finally succeeded in its Norwegian immigration recruitment campaign. As well, the Canadian West was finally looked upon as an entity separate from that of the United States, with a richness and future outlook that set it apart. The Canadian prairies found their worth in being "the last agricultural frontier in the northwestward push of settlement," and became a haven for those immigrants who knew the value of the land in terms of freedom, independence, and heritage.¹⁰⁶

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

¹Canada. Parliament. IB. John Dyke, Report on Continental Emigration, Liverpool, 27 March 1895 (RG vol. 13 f. 77 Pt. 2), p. 10.

²Furer, pp. 11, 28.

³Qualey, pp. 36, 102.

⁴Canada. Parliament. IB. Sir Charles Tupper to T. M. Daly, 28 September 1892 (RG 76 vol. 13 f. 77 Pt. 1), p. 24.

⁵Ljungmark, p. 38.

⁶Canada. Parliament. IB. Letter to C. A. L. Akerlindh, Ottawa, from J. B. Lundberg, Allan Lines, Gøteborg, 19 October 1894 (RG 76 vol. 13 f. 77 Pt. 2).

⁷Canada. Parliament. IB. John Dyke, Report on Continental Emigration, Liverpool, 27 March 1895 (RG 76 vol. 13 f. 77 Pt. 2), p. 136.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid., pp. 136-37.

¹⁰Canada. Parliament. IB. Memorandum to T. M. Daly, Minister of Interior, from C. A. L. Akerlindh, [?] January 1893 (RG 76 vol. 13, f. 77 Pt. 1).

¹¹Canada. Parliament. IB. Letter to Sir Charles Tupper from J. G. Colmer, [?] March 1893 (RG 76 vol. 13 f. 77 Pt. 1). The name of Norway's capital city was changed from Christiania to Oslo in 1925.

¹²E. Nelson, as quoted in The North-West Farmer in Manitoba, Assiniboia, Alberta (Montreal, 1890), p. 50.

¹³Canada. Parliament. IB. Letter to T. M. Daly from C. W. Day, 25 April 1894 (RG 76 vol. 100 f. 13440). Kenneth Bjork points out that Den Skandinaviske Canadiensaren was subsidized by the Dominion government and printed information regarding available land and included testimonies from satisfied pioneers in the Canadian West. See Kenneth Bjork, "Scandinavian Migration to the Canadian Prairie Provinces, 1893-1914," Norwegian-American Studies, No. 26, 1974, p. 7.

¹⁴Canada. Parliament. IB. Letter to [?] from G. H. Mitchell, Liverpool, 31 July 1899 (RG 76 vol. 13 f. 77 Pt. 2), p. 3.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Canada. Parliament. IB. Letter from G. H. Mitchell, 31 July 1899 (RG 76, vol. 13 f. 77, Pt. 2), pp. 2-3.

¹⁷Avery, p. 124.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ljungmark, p. 24.

²⁰Canada. Parliament. SP 1894, No. 13, p. 5.

²¹Ibid.

²²Canada. Parliament. House of Commons Debates, 1897, Mr. Sproule to Clifford Sifton, Minister of the Interior, p. 4066; and Canada. Parliament. Journals of the House of Commons, vol. XXXIII, 25 May 1898, Mr. Rogers to James A. Smart, Deputy Minister of the Interior, p. 233.

²³Canada. Parliament. IB. Memoranda for Mr. Reid, Acting Commissioner of Immigration, Fort Frances, 23 June 1917 (RG 76 vol. 13 f. 77 Pt. 5), pp. 3-4.

²⁴Canada. Parliament. IB. Sir Charles Tupper to T. M. Daly, 28 September 1892 (RG 76 vol. 13 f. 77 Pt. 1), p. 5.

²⁵Canada. Parliament. IB. Report by William McDougall, Government Agent, to H. Jenkins, Agent General, London, 26 March 1874 (RG 76 vol. 106 f. 18023).

²⁶Ljungmark, p. 26.

²⁷Canada. Parliament. IB. Report of Visit to Scandinavia (Denmark, Sweden, and Norway) on Emigration Matters, 04 July 1910 (RG 76 vol. 13 f. 77 Pt. 5), p. 2.

²⁸Ibid., p. 223.

²⁹Canada. Parliament. IB. Letter to Sir Charles Tupper from J. S. Colmer, March 1893 (RG 76 vol. 13, Pt. 1); and Sir Charles Tupper to T. M. Daly, 28 September 1892 (RG 76 vol. 13 f. 77 Pt. 1), p. 5. Comparison between countries in immigration brochures was prohibited, and any "open attempts at propaganda" were liable to be penalized. The decision as to whether or not an agent was guilty of openly canvassing for emigrants was a very arbitrary one and depended largely on the disposition of the prosecuting official toward emigration.

³⁰Canada. Parliament. IB. Memo to Mr. Fortier from C. A. L. Akerlindh, 13 March 1897 (RG 76 vol. 13 f. 77. Pt. 2).

³¹Canada. Journals of the House of Commons, vol. XXXIII, 25 May 1898, James A. Smart, Deputy Minister of the Interior, p. 224; and Canada. Parliament. IB. Report to the Right Honorable Lord Strathcona, High Commissioner for Canada, from W. Preston, Inspector of Agencies in Britain and Europe, London, 29 May 1899 (RG 76 vol. 13 f. 77 Pt. 2).

³²Canada. Parliament. IB. Daily Quebec Telegraph, 05 February 1924 (RG 76 vol. 13 f. 77 Pt. 5).

³³Canada. Parliament. IB. Letter to W. J. Egan, Deputy Minister, Department of Immigration and Colonization, Ottawa, from J. Bruce Walker, Director of European Emigration, London, 25 February 1927 (RG 76 vol. 13 f. 77 Pt. 5), p. 1. Immigration matters in Canada were transferred from the portfolio of the Department of the Interior to the Department of Immigration and Colonization in 1917.

³⁴Canada. Parliament. IB. Svenska Folkets Tidning, Minn., 20 November 1901, trans. C. A. L. Akerlindh (RG 76 vol. 13 f. 77 Pt. 5).

³⁵Canada. Parliament. IB. Letter to W. J. Egan, Deputy Minister, Department of Immigration and Colonization, Ottawa, from J. Bruce Walker, Director of European Immigration, London, 25 February 1927 (RG 76 vol. 13 f. 77 Pt. 5), p. 1.

³⁶Blegen, Norwegian Migration to America, 1825-1860, p. 216.

³⁷Canada. Parliament. IB. Letter to A. M. Burgess from J. G. Colmer, Secretary of the Office of the High Commissioner for Canada, 31 December 1894 (RG 76 vol. 13 f. 77 Pt. 1).

³⁸Canada. Journals of the House of Commons, vol. XXXIII, 25 May 1898, p. 224.

³⁹Canada. Parliament. IB. Report to the Right Honorable Lord Strathcona, High Commissioner for Canada, from W. T. R. Preston, Inspector of Agencies in Britain and Europe, London, 29 May 1899 (RG vol. 13 f. 77 Pt. 2).

⁴⁰Canada. Parliament. IB. William McDougall Report of Arrangements in Scandinavia to H. Jenkins, Agent General, 26 March 1874 (RG 76 vol. 106 f. 18023).

⁴¹Ljungmark, p. 26.

⁴²Canada. Parliament. IB. William McDougall Report of Arrangements in Scandinavia to H. Jenkins, Agent General, 26 March 1874 (RG 76 vol. 106 f. 18023).

⁴³Canada. Parliament. IB. Charles Bennett, Christiania, Booking Agent (lists), 12 October 1908 (RG 76 vol. 431 f. 642556).

⁴⁴W. Kaye Lamb, History of the Canadian Pacific Railway (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1977), p. 33.

⁴⁵Chester Martin comments that the CPR, "[t]o a degree approached perhaps by no other land agency, . . . came to integrate itself with the free-homestead and immigration policies of the day and to subserve the interests of the nation in land settlement." See Martin, p. 267.

⁴⁶McDougall, p. 128.

⁴⁷Canada. Parliament. IB. Letter to Sir Charles Tupper from J. G. Colmer, March 1893 (RG 76 vol. 13 f. 77 Pt. 1).

⁴⁸Loken, From Fjord to Frontier, p. 97.

⁴⁹Timlin, p. 521. The arrangement was made secretly by Lord Strathcona, High Commissioner for Canada, and W. T. R. Preston, Inspector of Agencies for Canada in Europe, due to the restrictions placed on immigration agents in many of the European countries. See Hall, "Clifford Sifton," p. 291.

⁵⁰Timlin, p. 521.

⁵¹Hall, "Clifford Sifton," p. 291. The Canadian government was prepared to divert fifteen thousand dollars a year to the company in the form of bonuses and allowance for promotional literature. See McIvor, p. 97.

⁵²The NATC was to recruit only those agricultural immigrants possessing a minimum of one hundred dollars capital and who were "otherwise acceptable." Hall, "Clifford Sifton," p. 291.

⁵³Avery, p. 129.

⁵⁴Ibid. In the last years of the company's existence, immigration numbers brought by the company dropped to 4,118 in 1904-05 which comprised only three percent of total immigration figures to Canada for the year, and in 1906-07 this percentage dropped to two percent or only 2,296 immigrants.

⁵⁵Hall, "The Political Career," p. 621.

⁵⁶Canada. Parliament. IB. Letter to the Secretary, Department of Immigration and Colonization from J. Obed Smith, 07 April 1920 (RG 76 vol. 13 f. 77 Pt. 1), p. 2.

⁵⁷Canada. Parliament. IB. Sir Charles Tupper to T. M. Daly, 28 September 1892 (RG 76 vol. 13 f. 77 Pt. 1), p. 2.

⁵⁸Friesen, p. 179.

⁵⁹Macleod, p. 225.

⁶⁰Canada. Parliament. IB. Daily Quebec Telegraph, 05 February 1924 (RG 76 vol. 13 f. 77 Pt. 5).

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Alberta Culture, "Et Folk: Ethno-Cultural Groups in Alberta," n.d., Alberta Culture.

⁶⁴Loken, From Fjord to Frontier, p. 45. For example, of the 643 Norwegian immigrants to arrive at the Toronto agency in 1874, only ten remained in Canada while the remainder continued on across the border. Similarly, out of the 3,551 Norwegians who passed through the Hamilton agency in the same year, 3,491 went on to the United States. See Canada. Parliament. SP 1876, No. 8, pp. 19, 29.

⁶⁵McIvor, p. 96.

⁶⁶Canada. Parliament. SP 1894, No. 13, Report of Mr. C. A. L. Akerlindh, p. 118.

⁶⁷Canada. Parliament. IB. Statement of Norwegian Immigration to Canada, during the Period from 01 July 1904 to 31 December 1924 (RG 76 vol. 459 f. 701506).

⁶⁸Avery, p. 128.

⁶⁹Blegen, Norwegian Migration to America, 1825-1860, pp. 140. J. R. Reiersen, a Norwegian immigrant to the United States, noted in 1844 that in comparison to the older Norwegian immigrants, "those who emigrate in their younger years live in constant touch with the Americans, fully understand their language, acquire some of their characteristics, and fully enter into their conditions of life." See J. R. Reiersen, Veiviser for Norske Emigranter til De forenede nordamerikanske Stater og Texas (Pathfinder for Norwegian Emigrants to the United States and Texas), Christiania, 1844, as quoted in Blegen, Norwegian Migration to America, 1825-1860, p. 246.

⁷⁰Troper notes that some state governments were indeed concerned about the impact the Canadian campaign would have on state population figures; however, no direct action was taken by individual states to restrict the activities of the Canadian immigration officials. This was largely due to the fierce competition for settlers which existed between states, preventing the formation of a united front against the Canadian immigration campaign. See Troper, pp. 115-17.

⁷¹Bicha, The American Farmer, p. 89.

⁷²Qualey, p. 156.

⁷³Loken, From Fjord to Frontier, p. 64.

⁷⁴Canada. Parliament. SP 1876, No. 8, Report of Scandinavian Delegates R. F. Rowan and A. Halvorson, p. 165.

⁷⁵Loken, From Fjord to Frontier, pp. 41-42.

⁷⁶Qualey, p. 39.

⁷⁷Ibid., pp. 98, 131.

⁷⁸Canada. Parliament. IB. Letter to T. M. Daly from Sir Charles Tupper, 28 September 1892 (RG 76 vol. 13 f. 77 Pt. 1), p. 2.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 3.

⁸⁰Ljungmark, p. 41.

⁸¹Karel Denis Bicha, "Canadian Immigration Policy and the American Farmer, 1896-1914," PhD Diss. University of Minnesota, 1963, p. 3. Subsequent reference under "Canadian Immigration Policy."

⁸²Canada. Parliament. SP 1895, No. 13, Report of H. H. Smith, Commissioner, p. 7.

⁸³Bicha, "Canadian Immigration Policy," p. 115.

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 6.

⁸⁵Loken, From Fjord to Frontier, p. 42.

⁸⁶Bicha, "Canadian Immigration Policy," p. 33.

⁸⁷Canada. Parliament. SP 1894, No. 13, Report of Scandinavian Officer C. A. L. Akerlindh, Ottawa, 31 December 1893, p. 118.

⁸⁸Canada. Parliament. SP 1894, No. 13, Report of the Calgary Agent A. Rowe, Calgary, 01 November 1893, p. 137.

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰Canada. Parliament. SP 1894, No. 13, Report of C. A. L. Akerlindh, Ottawa, 31 December 1893, p. 118.

⁹¹Canada. Parliament. SP 1895, No. 13, Report of H. H. Smith, Commissioner, p. 8.

⁹²Canada. Parliament. SP 1895, No. 13, Table D, Immigration Hall, Winnipeg--Transactions for the fourteen months ending the 31 December 1894, p. 12.

⁹³Canada. Parliament. SP 1897, No. 13, Report of Special Scandinavian Agent in the United States C. O. Swanson, Waterville, P.Q., 07 January 1897, p. 50.

⁹⁴Canada. Parliament. SP 1895, No. 13, Report of John W. Wendelbo, Scandinavian Immigration Officer, Winnipeg, 31 October 1894, p. 149.

⁹⁵Bicha, "Canadian Immigration Policy," p. 53.

⁹⁶Qualey, p. 39.

⁹⁷Bicha, "Canadian Immigration Policy," p. 73.

⁹⁸Ibid., p. 86.

⁹⁹Troper, p. 45.

¹⁰⁰Bicha, "Canadian Immigration Policy," p. 77.

¹⁰¹Canada. Parliament. SP 1901, No. 25, Pt. 2, Report from Scandinavian Officer J. W. Wendelbo, Winnipeg, 24 August 1900, p. 129.

¹⁰²Ibid.

¹⁰³Canada. Parliament. SP 1897, No. 13, Report of Scandinavian Officer John W. Wendelbo, Winnipeg, 07 November 1896, p. 126; and Census of Canada, 1931, Table 31, pp. 296-97.

¹⁰⁴Canada. Parliament. SP 1895, No. 13, Report of Scandinavian Immigration Officer John W. Wendelbo, Winnipeg, 31 October 1895, p. 148.

¹⁰⁵Canada. Parliament. IB. Memo for F. C. Blair, Department of Immigration and Colonization, from the Office of the Assistant Deputy Minister, 15 July 1924 (RG 76 vol. 13 f. 77 Pt. 5). The increasing numbers of Norwegians coming to western Canada directly from Norway becomes especially noticeable in 1921 and following years with the implementation of quotas on immigration by the American government. The yearly quota for Norwegian immigrants from 1921 to 1924 was 12,202; from 1924 to 1929 this was reduced to 6,453; and from

1930 to 1946, the quota was set at 2,377. See William S. Bernard, ed., American Immigration Policy: A Reappraisal (New York: Harper Brothers, 1950), p. 27.

¹⁰⁶Qualey, p. 170.

CHAPTER THREE

Settlement

They could not do better than emigrate to the Canadian North-West, if they are willing to submit for a time to the privations incident to life in a new country, where, ultimate success will be the certain accompaniment of energy, industry, and perseverance.¹

The Canadian government's successful recruitment of Norwegian and Norwegian-American immigrants as settlers for the West did not signal an end to the tasks of the immigration officials. The immigrants had yet to be settled successfully.² The success of the Canadian government's Norwegian immigration campaign ultimately depended on how well the Norwegian newcomers would take to the western landscape and become permanent and productive residents. Along with private colonization companies, the government continued to play a significant role in the settlement of the immigrants. The extent of this role varied according to the needs and demands of the Norwegians themselves.

The settlement process may be considered the final and most crucial aspect of the immigration process for both immigrant and host society. The move from Norway or the United States to Alberta was not a speedy process in the late 1800s, allowing the Norwegian immigrant ample time to develop his own vision of life in the new land. In the same way, government and private company

officials had, over the years, firmly established their own ideas about the settlement of the immigrants in the West. Notions of where to settle, the type of settlement to be encouraged, and the best means of facilitating adaptation to the new surroundings were among the many considerations facing newcomer and host alike. In the case of Norwegian immigration to Alberta, three parties--the immigrant, the delegate, and the Canadian immigration or colonization agent--became inextricably involved in these settlement issues.

The immigrant was naturally the focal point in the settlement process and ultimately dictated the direction such settlement would take. Yet, the individual landseeker was subject to a wide array of external influences in making settlement choices. One of the first choices to be made by the immigrant upon movement into the new, largely unsettled environment, was the homestead location. This was a crucial decision, as it could mean the difference between success and failure for the agriculturist. The geographic and cultural setting of the homestead had to be considered, as both the physical and psychological aspects of homesteading influenced the ultimate ability of the settler to stay on the land.

The Norwegian immigrant to Alberta during the late 1800s and early twentieth century displayed a high degree of self-reliance in taking on these challenges. Numerous accounts exist of Norwegian immigrants coming on their own to the region, choosing their homestead, and establishing themselves on the land with little dependence on outside aid.³ One typical example is that of Ole Solberg and Bernard Ronson, Norwegian immigrants from Minneapolis,

Minnesota, who journeyed to Alberta in 1910. After inspecting the area, they travelled to Lethbridge where, after standing in line for hours, they filed for homesteads in the Fertile Plains district of southeastern Alberta.⁴

Many Norwegians came prepared to make educated decisions concerning the nature of their settlement in the Canadian West. Those immigrants who had spent time in the midwestern United States prior to the move were, for the most part, equipped with some knowledge of Alberta's topography and land policies obtained through word-of-mouth, propaganda literature, or personal eyewitness. In addition, they had gained valuable insight into homestead requirements during their years of farming experience in the United States. Such individuals, generally, had a solid idea of what they were looking for in regard to settlement prior to their arrival in Alberta and were well-equipped to make informed choices of their own accord. The independent nature attributed to the Norwegian people evidenced itself in the tendency of these homesteaders to carry out the settlement process with little outside guidance.

The movement of Norwegian immigrants into Alberta was not entirely an individual phenomenon, however. During the early years of the immigration (predominantly the 1880s and 1890s), the movement took on a community-oriented aspect based on large family groupings. The responsibility for the initial stages of placement and settlement of this kind of immigration often rested with an appointed community leader or delegate.⁵

These delegates would investigate conditions, select a suitable location for the community, and return to the group to lead them to the chosen land. Such

was the case for the Norwegian settlers who came to the Eagle Hill district of central Alberta in 1902. In January of that year, Thomas Ronneberg and two neighbours from Newfolden, Minnesota came to the Canadian West, and deciding that the area around Eagle Hill seemed like "paradise," they returned the following June with five Norwegian families and the promise of more to follow at a later date.⁶

In some cases, religious leaders acted as delegates and aided in the settlement process. Among some settlers there existed the desire to form Lutheran communities in Alberta.⁷ Lutheran ministers, inspired by the vast field open for mission work in the Canadian West, shouldered the task of establishing communities where congregations could be developed. Reverend H. N. Ronning, a Norwegian Lutheran minister, was a pioneer in northern Alberta, establishing the Norwegian community of Valhalla in 1912.⁸

The role of the Canadian government immigration agent and other colonization agents employed by independent companies was also an important one in nearly every aspect of the settlement process. These agents worked in conjunction with the immigrant and the delegate. The Canadian government obviously had a vested interest in ensuring the creation of permanent, self-sufficient settlements and was prepared to provide support through various means. Government agents and land guides were made available to direct, inform, aid, and monitor the immigrants and their progress.⁹

Alongside the government agents were workers for private companies who had a stake in land and colonization ventures in the Canadian West. Once again,

the CPR figured prominently in this facet of the immigration movement. Sharing similar visions for the western region with the Canadian government and acting from fundamentally the same motives, the CPR collaborated closely with government agents and became totally immersed in the settlement process.

The success of the railway depended on the existence of a market to use and pay for its services, and it was obvious to CPR officials that "any settlement was bound to contribute traffic to its main line" in western Canada.¹⁰ Moreover, the railway company realized the advantages of encouraging the immediate settlement of agriculturists who would spare little time in breaking the soil and establishing a flow of grain from West to East by rail.¹¹ Thus, the settlement of agriculturists was a priority for the company.

The importance of this third phase of the Canadian immigration campaign is underlined by the CPR's decision to place settlement concerns above those of land sales. As early as 1881, the president of the CPR, George Stephen, acknowledged that "[i]t is settling, not selling that we must aim at."¹² The CPR adapted its business policies to the needs of the incoming immigrant, providing every service and aid deemed necessary. In fact,

every conceivable effort was made to keep on the land the settler who showed promise of making good. No concession was too great if it meant the difference between success and failure. Nuclei of settlement must be established on the prairie at all cost.¹³

So vital was settlement to the mandate of the CPR, that the company was willing to adjust land sale contracts and reduce payments when necessary to keep the homesteader on the land. Stephen went so far as to say that "if our lands

won't sell we will give them away to settlers."¹⁴ With an eye on long-term economic success, the CPR, as did the Canadian government, considered it in its best interests to take note of the needs of the immigrant landseeker and actively promote successful settlement in the West.

The onus on the individuals involved in settlement, be they the immigrant, delegate, or agent, was to select a homestead site best suited to the needs and capabilities of the intended settler. Norwegian immigrants did not seem to share a common vision of what the most suitable area for settlement entailed. Unlike other Scandinavian groups (such as the Icelanders and Danes) who tended to congregate in certain locations, the Norwegians and their Swedish neighbors scattered more widely across Alberta, crossing several geographic boundaries. This propensity for dispersed settlement was well-noted by government agents. John W. Wendelbo, Scandinavian officer for the Dominion government in Winnipeg, remarked in 1896 that "[a] large number of that class of people, far from being inclined to colonize, prefer to mingle with other nationalities, and we can, therefore, find Scandinavians settled in almost any likely district."¹⁵ Although the Norwegians did spread out over a wide geographic area, areas of concentration were visible within the southern, central and northern portions of what became the province of Alberta in 1905.

Southern Alberta witnessed a wide scattering of Norwegian settlement extending from the Calgary region to the Alberta-Montana border. Here, the immigrants came into contact with a predominantly short grass prairie landscape.¹⁶ Suitability and adaptation to this type of geography varied among

the Norwegian immigrants, depending on their previous homesteading experience and their willingness to embrace a pioneering lifestyle in a new environment.

The open expanse of the southern Alberta prairie offered its own type of challenge to the newcomers, both in a physical and psychological sense. The short grass prairie could be viewed as either a blessing or a hardship. For the Edward Anderson family who had previously homesteaded at Minot, North Dakota, the grasslands of the Seven Persons area southwest of Medicine Hat seemed to be a "promising land."¹⁷ When the Andersons immigrated to the region in 1908, the natural prairie grasses stood "belly-deep to a horse" in places, ensuring a good supply of hay for livestock. The sandy loam composition of the soil and the presence of sloughs for water seemed to indicate favourable conditions for a grain and livestock operation.¹⁸

The open terrain of the southern Alberta prairie was not always viewed with such enthusiasm. The scene which greeted many immigrants was one of barrenness: no trees, fences, or roads were yet in place to break up or tame the expanse of the prairie.¹⁹ According to James B. Hedges, "the comparative absence of trees was both a blessing and a curse. If it simplified the task of preparing the soil for planting, it complicated the pioneer's fuel problem."²⁰ Some settlers were able to negate this disadvantage by adapting to fuel substitutes. Ole Solberg, a Norwegian settler in the Bow Island district in 1910, supplemented his wood fuel supply with cow chips in the summer and he was fortunate enough to have access to a coal outcrop which provided him with fuel that could be dug and burned during the winter months.²¹

Other challenges that faced the Norwegian settler on the short grass prairie were crop hazards such as adverse climatic conditions, fire, and insect plagues. Peter C. Thue, a Norwegian immigrant from the Turtle Mountains of North Dakota, came to southern Alberta in 1910 with optimistic visions of what would await him. He had heard reports of "Sunny Alberta" being "the land of milk and honey," with "long summers, early springs starting in February," and "no mention of winter."²² It soon became apparent to Thue that this idealized image of Alberta did not match reality. His first attempt at planting potatoes on his homestead near Bow Island ended in failure, as frost killed the crop three times in one season before he had success. Drought and hot winds also took their toll in later years, leading Thue to question "if the promised land was over another horizon instead of the one we had picked."²³

Drought, hail, sand storms, and grasshopper plagues were common occurrences on the southern prairies from 1910 to 1920, a time when many Norwegian immigrants took up land in the region.²⁴ Grass fires, which were common hazards during dry years, added to the fears of the settlers and often threatened their survival. For O. H. Fjeldberg, a pioneer in the Bindloss district from Sjøvegan, Norway, the thick, plentiful grass of the area became a source of worry during drought years, as was the case in 1914, when the dry grass was an abundant fuel for fire.²⁵

The Norwegian immigrant who chose to settle in southern Alberta experienced psychological as well as physical challenges in adapting to the prairie region.²⁶ Upon first encounter, the vastness and isolation of the southern Alberta

prairie could be overwhelming for a newcomer not accustomed to the open countryside. This was much more so the case for those Norwegian immigrants who came to the Canadian West directly from Norway. Harald Thaulow, former Norwegian Vice Consul in Edmonton, Alberta, wrote an article in a Norwegian newspaper in 1926 on the suitability of the Alberta landscape for Norwegian immigrants in which he concluded that:

anything more foreign and unlike Norway than these endless stretches of prairie it is impossible to imagine. I have seen too many Norwegian prairie farmers to have any illusion on the subject. I have seen too many splendid, strong Norwegians sitting there without courage and ill with homesickness to have any belief in the splendours out there.²⁷

The transition was often more challenging for the immigrant women, who frequently joined their husbands or families in Alberta after the settlement site had already been selected. The women were thus deprived of the opportunity to view the homestead prior to the move, and they sometimes had little knowledge of the type of terrain they would encounter. Clifford Solberg recalled that his mother, Ingeborg Marie Solberg, did not realize what the southern Alberta landscape was like until she arrived at Bow Island in 1910 from Minneapolis, Minnesota.²⁸ Mrs. Carl Elias found herself in this situation when she left her home in Bokn, Norway in 1913 to marry her future husband in Bow Island, Alberta. Learning to feel at home on the open grassland in southern Alberta posed quite the challenge for "a young girl right from . . . a high mountain farm in Western Norway."²⁹ Olive Brakken, a fisherman's daughter from Hammerfest, Norway underwent a similar transition in adapting from a coastal to a prairie

lifestyle when she came to Seven Persons in 1911.³⁰ Not only did she have to adapt to the lay of the land, she also had to acquire new skills essential for the maintenance of a prairie homestead.

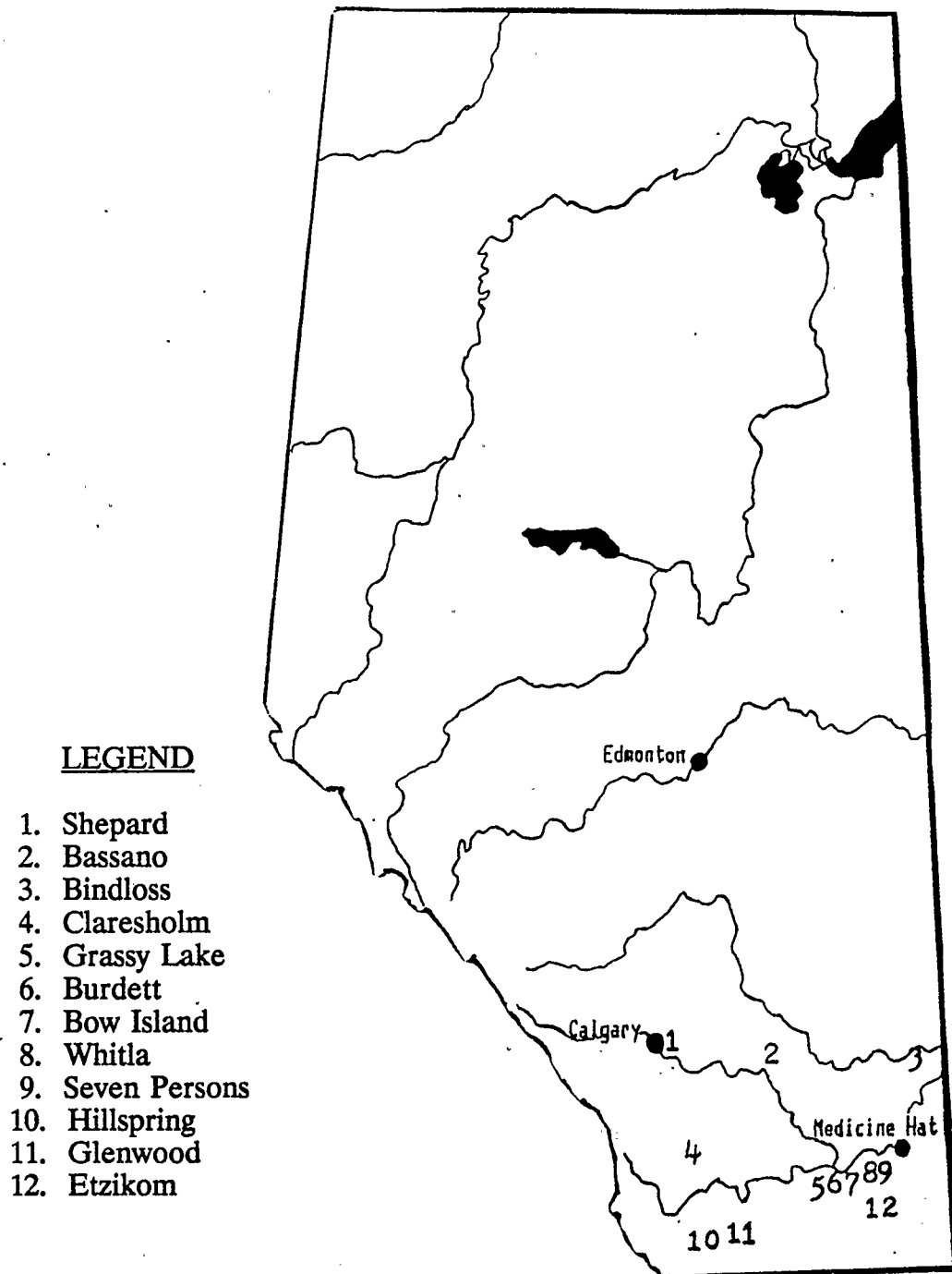
Those Norwegian immigrants willing to embrace the challenges offered them as homesteaders in southern Alberta settled widely throughout the area, although a few pockets of settlement emerged which possessed a visible Norwegian element. Norwegians homesteaded around Bindloss, Bow Island, Seven Persons, Whitla, Burdett, Grassy Lake, and Etzikom in the southeast corner of the province between 1902 and 1912 (see map 1).³¹ These were largely farm settlements, with the population diffused over a significant area.

More cohesive Norwegian groupings in the south existed in Claresholm and Bassano. Claresholm was not strictly a Norwegian settlement: the community was made up of American, eastern Canadian, British, Norwegian, and Danish settlers.³² The Norwegian constituency at Claresholm originated with Ole Jacob Amundsen, a Norwegian immigrant originally from Oslo, Norway who came to Alberta from North Dakota in 1901. The Claresholm district impressed Amundsen, who recognized it as good farm and ranch land. Amundsen returned to North Dakota in 1902 to spread the word about the area.³³ Ole Hustad was one of those who had heard Amundsen's reports of the Claresholm district and, convinced of the great opportunities awaiting the homesteader there, he joined the party of Norwegians who accompanied Amundsen on his return to Claresholm later that same year.³⁴ A number of the Norwegians who eventually

NORWEGIAN SETTLEMENTS

in

SOUTHERN ALBERTA



map 1

settled at Claresholm had originally emigrated from Hamar, Norway, and the community totalled forty residents by 1902.³⁵

Amundsen was also responsible for initiating the Norwegian settlement at Bassano. In 1910 he was hired by the CPR as Land Agent for Norway. Amundsen subsequently persuaded potential settlers in Norway to purchase land in the Bassano district.³⁶ In later years, Norwegians also came to communities south of Claresholm. Hillspring and Glenwood (northwest of Cardston) received immigrants directly from Norway when government and CPR agents chose the site for the placement of Norwegian immigrants in 1927.³⁷

The major urban site of Norwegian settlement in southern Alberta was Calgary, where the first Norwegians arrived in 1880.³⁸ Significant Norwegian immigration came in 1886 from Eau Claire, Wisconsin to work for the newly established Eau Claire and Bow River Lumber Company.³⁹ These were skilled workmen who had been involved in the lumber industry in Wisconsin and were persuaded by Peter Prince, one of the company's directors, to bring their skills to Calgary.⁴⁰ The workers took up residence near their employment in the Eau Claire district of Calgary, which became "one of the first permanent Norwegian communities in the West."⁴¹

Several of the workers were transients waiting to procure farms in the Calgary vicinity.⁴² Conrad Anderson was one such employee who filed on a homestead near Shepard, just east of Calgary, in 1886.⁴³ He had immigrated from Norway to Wisconsin in 1883 and had come to Calgary with the Eau Claire

workers in 1886. Anderson combined seasonal work with the company with horse and cattle ranching in Shepard and thus experienced both the life of the urban immigrant and the "loneliness, discouragement, and hardship" of the rural Alberta farmer and rancher during the drought years of the 1880s and 1890s.⁴⁴

Norwegian immigrants to southern Alberta exhibited two responses to the prairie landscape and life: they either stuck it out through difficult years, learned to adapt and accept the area as their new home, and perhaps even embraced their surroundings with optimism and enthusiasm; or they continued to search for their promised land in other directions. Many Norwegian settlers in this area moved to the United States from 1915 on, after experiencing successive years of poor agricultural conditions. Others proceeded northward in Alberta to a more central location, where the terrain possibly appeared more suitable to the Norwegian people.

The central region of Alberta extending from Calgary to Edmonton proved to be a favoured settlement area for Norwegian immigrants. Proceeding north from Calgary, the terrain gradually transforms from one of short grass prairie to parkland. Norwegian immigrants to Alberta at the turn of the century seemed to prefer the combined landscape of fields and forest to the monotony of the bald prairie to the south. William Wonders suggests that along with availability of land and proximity to transportation routes, access to a mixture of woodland and grazing land was an influential factor in the Norwegian's selection of homestead site in Alberta.⁴⁵

The familiarity of the landscape may have played a determining role in the selection as well. The geography of the central region was perhaps less foreign to the Norwegians than other areas in Alberta, as it closely corresponded to the lay of the land in the midwestern United States and in their homeland. Qualey points out that the portions of Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Iowa which possessed high Norwegian populations were areas of mixed woodland and rolling meadowland with a plentiful water supply.⁴⁶ Those immigrants who originally emigrated from the interior region of Norway would have been accustomed to a similar rolling topography of trees, lakes and meadows. Therefore, the fact that such settlers were already familiar with the life and skills required for homesteading in this type of setting may have been part of the allure that the central Alberta parkland held for Norwegians.

The central Alberta region surrounding Wetaskiwin and Camrose claimed the greatest concentration of Norwegian settlers in the province. Conditions in this district seemed ideal for the Norwegian agriculturist, as it comprised the transitional zone between forest and grassland.⁴⁷ Thus, both open and forested land was available within one select area. Camrose provided a woodland environment ensuring a source of building material and fuel, and Wetaskiwin embodied the open prairie and fertile soils preferred by Norwegians from the United States who possessed skills in grassland farming.⁴⁸

Interest in the area as a settlement site intensified in the 1880s. Montague Aldous, a surveyor for the Dominion government, reported on the Beaver Hills district north of Camrose in 1879. He noted that "this is a section of country

particularly well adapted for settlement; the soil is good." Hay meadows, an abundance of timber, water of good quality, and several kinds of fish could all be found in the Beaverhill Lake area.⁴⁹

The completion of the Calgary and Edmonton (C and E) railway line in 1891 did much to open up the region for settlement. By 1892, Norwegians had located in the New Norway district southeast of Wetaskiwin.⁵⁰ Evan and Ludvik Olstad of Minnesota were the first settlers in New Norway. They filed for homesteads for themselves and for family members still in the United States. Their pioneering activity ensured the movement of other Norwegians from Minnesota to New Norway in subsequent years.⁵¹

The following year (1893) witnessed the arrival of increasing numbers of Norwegians in the central Alberta area to assess its suitability for settlement. Ole Bakken was one such scout from South Dakota, who became the first Norwegian to take up land at Camrose.⁵² A party of twenty men from Minnesota also made the trip in 1893, surveying land from Red Deer to Beaverhill Lake in search of a favourable settlement site.⁵³

Dominion government agents kept abreast of the heightened immigration interest in the region. Early in 1894 R. L. Alexander, Travelling Immigration Agent, commented on activity north of the Battle River:

With an A 1 soil, a bountiful supply of excellent water, abundance of coal, wood and hay to be had always within easy reach of any settler, these parts of our territory have become famous, and our "Cousins from over the border" have not been slow in catching on to these facts and are settling there in considerable numbers.⁵⁴

Government agents, along with the Norwegian immigrants, also recognized the suitability of the area east of Wetaskiwin for the settlers from the United States.

Later that year, a contingent of Norwegians from Minnesota moved into the Beaverhill Lake district, naming its settlement Bardo in memory of their home in Bardu, Norway.⁵⁵ Reverend Peter B. Anderson, a Norwegian Lutheran minister, was a founding settler and maintained a strong religious influence in the community.⁵⁶ The original Bardo settlers remarked that "the land was open" and "much to their liking."⁵⁷ However, not all immigrants who followed in later years possessed the same degree of appreciation. Members of the Forseth family, who came to Bardo in 1908, were disappointed with the pioneer conditions they encountered. The Forseth daughters recalled their initial reaction: "We thought we were really up against it--mother and dad and all the family were here, and we couldn't go back to Norway. We surely thought this was a terrible country."⁵⁸ One daughter, Mrs. Helga Forseth Sandboe, was discouraged by the primitive conditions encountered around the Camrose area, such as roads that were scarcely more than "cattle trails." She also recalled the difficulty of coping with a new language which, to her ears, "sounded worse than the Laplanders who sometimes used to frequent the area where we lived in Norway."⁵⁹

Immigration to the Wetaskiwin area continued to grow in the mid-1890s. Wetaskiwin became the "jumping-off place for homesteading in the area around Camrose," and by 1894 the community was receiving the largest influx of immigration of all the towns along the C and E line south of Edmonton.⁶⁰ Not all immigrants had originally set their sights on the Wetaskiwin area, however.

Haakon J. Stolee left Dakota Territory in 1902 with the intention of settling in the "promised land of the Rocky Mountains" in British Columbia.⁶¹ Upon reaching Golden, British Columbia, Stolee and his companions decided to head eastward to Alberta after being "told by everyone that central Alberta was the right spot" for them.⁶² They chose homesteads in the Wetaskiwin vicinity near Ferry Point as they found the farmland suitable to their needs and preferred the abundance of small groves to the "naked, treeless farms" they viewed elsewhere.⁶³ Stolee was satisfied with this decision: in his own words, "British Columbia was soon forgotten. Alberta looked inviting."⁶⁴

The early 1900s continued to see a strong movement of Norwegian immigrants to Wetaskiwin. By 1902, many Norwegians from Minnesota had arrived and were hard at work clearing brush.⁶⁵ Settling southeast of Wetaskiwin in 1903 with five other Norwegian families from South Dakota, Jacob Vikse invested much time and effort into clearing the brush before homestead improvements could be made.⁶⁶ He found that the parkland setting also offered its challenges to the livestock: although the immigrant himself may have found the parkland relatively easy to adjust to, his livestock often encountered problems in adapting to the new grass type. Different feed, new weeds that proved fatal, and disease such as swamp fever robbed many a new immigrant of his stock.⁶⁷

Fortunately, this setback corrected itself in time; once the livestock became accustomed to the vegetation, the central Alberta grasses appeared to be much to their liking. This was noted by Kaja Froyen, who accompanied her husband Rev. Lars Froyen of the Norwegian Free Church to Wetaskiwin in 1904. The

vegetation on their homestead near Edberg "was just wonderful in the summer. The cattle were wading knee-deep in the grass and peavine."⁶⁸ Froyen commented that the cattle on the Alberta prairie were just as fat and sleek as the grain fed cattle she remembered in North Dakota.⁶⁹ The rich grasses of the coulees and sloughs may have ensured well-fed livestock, but it posed the same threat of prairie fire in central Alberta as it did in the south.⁷⁰

Norwegians also formed a concentrated settlement at Donalda. Prior to 1911, the community was known as Eidsvoll, after a city in central Norway where the nation's constitution was signed. The preponderance of Norwegians in the Donalda district was noted by Sam Steele, an Irishman who taught school at Norbo (ten miles from Donalda) in 1914-1915. He "found that almost the whole district was inhabited by Norwegians, an intelligent, kindly, and industrious people."⁷¹ Jacob Olson came to the region from Norway in 1912 to visit friends and relatives. He observed that the country was "mostly slough land, but it produced enormous hay crops."⁷² Olson and his fellow visitors from Norway appeared impressed with the settlement site, except for the winter climate, which Olson claimed "seemed too severe to interest us permanently."⁷³

Other enclaves of Norwegian settlement existed in central Alberta outside of the Battle River district. One of these was located to the south near the C and E stop at Olds. Norwegian immigrants who disembarked at Olds proceeded west to the communities of Eagle Hill, Bergen, and Sundre. Eagle Hill received its first group of Norwegian settlers in 1901. These individuals came from Thief River Falls, Minnesota and formed the nucleus of the community which acted as

a magnet for future Norwegian immigrants, until most of the homesteads had been taken up in the area by 1905.⁷⁴

According to Muriel Eskrick, a long-time resident of the area, the Norwegians had come to Eagle Hill believing the myth of "sunny Alberta."⁷⁵ The reality of conditions did not meet the expectations of immigrants arriving in June of 1902, when they were greeted by a snow storm followed by a month of rain.⁷⁶ Other hardships such as the severe winter of 1906-1907, bouts of swamp fever and other livestock diseases, prairie fires, wind storms, and meager food supplies were balanced by the advantages of an abundant hay and timber supply, and times of plenty.⁷⁷ For the most part, the Norwegians took pleasure in the "open land, the freedom, the immensity of the land" available to them at Eagle Hill.⁷⁸ Most citizens found Eagle Hill suitable for their needs, and the community continued to flourish. H. O. Yewell, residing at Eagle Hill in 1915, observed that the area was still "largely composed of people of Norwegian heritage who settled in Eagle Hill ten or fifteen years previously, coming there from Minnesota and North Dakota."⁷⁹ The Norwegian character of the community fostered by the first generation immigrants from the United States was reinforced in later years by the addition of settlers direct from Norway.⁸⁰

The settlement at Bergen (southwest of Eagle Hill) was founded in 1905 when J. T. Johanneson, a Norwegian pastor of the Evangelical Free Church in Minnesota, entered the region in search of homesteads. Johanneson found the "green and beautiful" timbered land around Bergen reminiscent of Norway and thus named the community after the Norwegian coastal city of Bergen.⁸¹ The

settlement attracted such a large Norwegian population that "anyone who wasn't a Norwegian in those early years was a foreigner."⁸² Bergen also exhibited a strong religious nature due to the influential leadership of its founder, pastor Johanneson.

A year after Johanneson settled at Bergen, N. T. Hagen selected a homestead at Sundre.⁸³ Hagen had immigrated to Alberta via the United States. His original home was at Søndre, Norway, after which he named his newfound home. Hagen became the first postmaster of the community when an office was opened in 1907.⁸⁴

The third area of Norwegian settlement in central Alberta was in the vicinity of Red Deer. As early as 1893, a party of Norwegians arrived at Red Deer in search of land.⁸⁵ The geography of the Red Deer district seemed ideally suited for the mixed farmer. In 1886, the editor of the Medicine Hat Times claimed that:

Having seen considerable of the most desirable portions of the Northwest, I hesitate not to say that another district to equal Red Deer for farming, stock-raising and dairying, is yet undiscovered and settlers who are seeking homes in the West, should on no account fail to visit this particular district.⁸⁶

His words did not go unheeded: the Red Deer district experienced a heavy influx of settlers in 1901, the majority from the United States.⁸⁷

The area west of Red Deer--forming a triangle between Sylvan Lake, Rocky Mountain House and Rimbey--received a noticeable, yet scattered, influx of Norwegians in the first decade of the twentieth century. Evarts took the lead in

1902, followed by settlement at Eckville, Gilby, Diamond Valley, Bingley, Bentley, Rocky Mountain House, Leedale, and Rimbey (see map 2).⁸⁸ The Norwegian presence in these communities was not pronounced and soon became diluted by newcomers of other ethnic backgrounds. Gilby stands out as having a significant Norwegian presence: the community took its name from the Gilbertsons, a Norwegian family who pioneered in the Eckville area in 1903.⁸⁹

In addition to these three geographic areas, Norwegian settlement was noticeable in central Alberta communities such as Viking, Bawlf, Tofield, Ryley, Lea Park, Asker, Provost, Ponoka, and Lacombe. Although the region offered its share of hardships, the parkland of central Alberta seemed to be suitable in that it appeared less foreign to those immigrants from parkland areas in the United States and Norway.

Yet, movement of Norwegian individuals within Alberta persisted. Mobility between Norwegian communities in the central region was common; as for the more adventurous types, northern Alberta seemed the place to go. The Peace River district attracted attention among Norwegian immigrants in the early 1900s. Advertised in 1911 as "The Last Best West," this northern region presented itself as "the last chance in western Canada to obtain the best land ever offered for homesteading anywhere in North America."⁹⁰ Norwegians were lured to the Peace River district as early as 1907 and continued to settle there in significant numbers until the 1930s. A strong Norwegian presence was marked in the communities of La Glace, Valhalla, Wanham, Fairview, and Scenic Heights, as well as in the major centres of Grande Prairie and Peace River (see map 3).

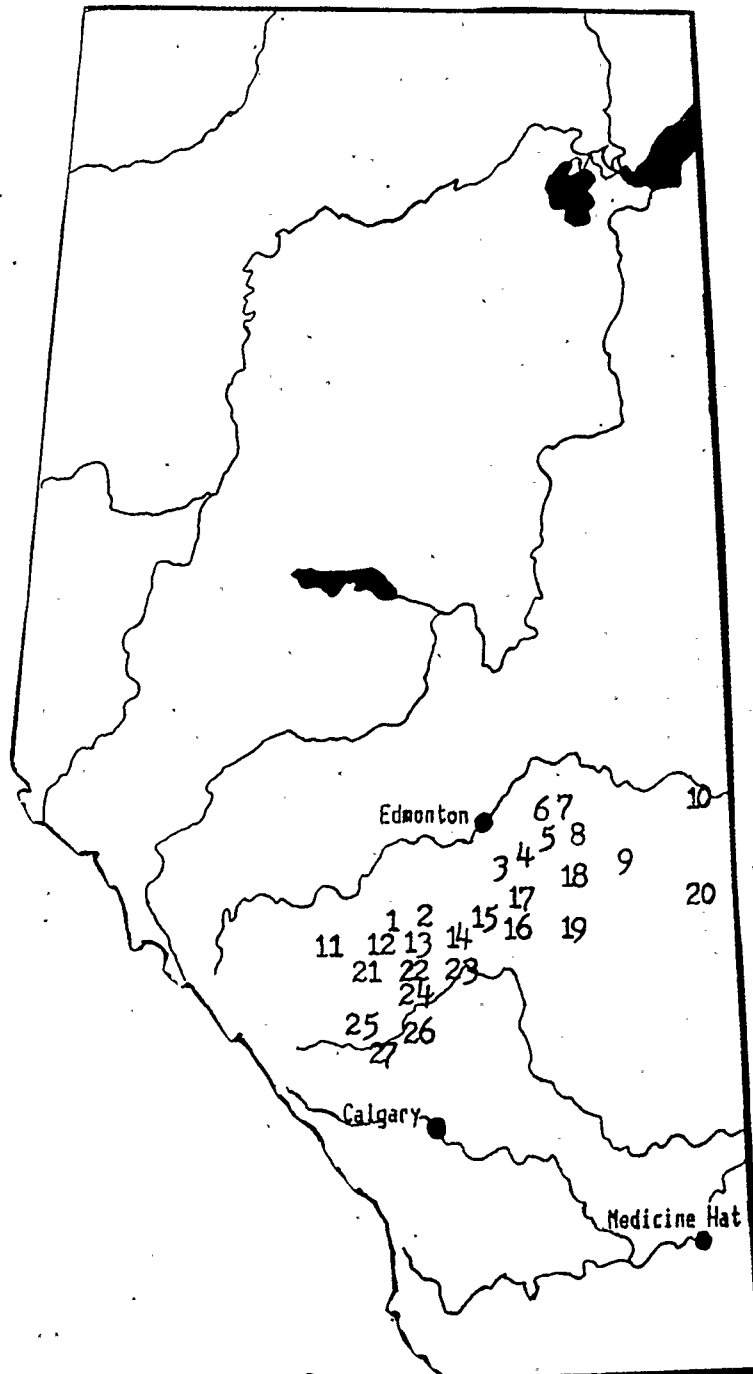
NORWEGIAN SETTLEMENTS

in

CENTRAL ALBERTA

LEGEND

1. Leedale
2. Rimbey
3. Wetaskiwin
4. Camrose
5. Bardo
6. Tofield
7. Beaverhill Lake
8. Ryley
9. Viking
10. Lea Park
11. Bingley
12. Gilby
13. Bentley
14. Lacombe
15. Ponoka
16. Asker
17. New Norway
18. Bawlf
19. Donalda
20. Provost
21. Eckville
22. Evarts
23. Red Deer
24. Diamond Valley
25. Sundre
26. Eagle Hill
27. Bergen

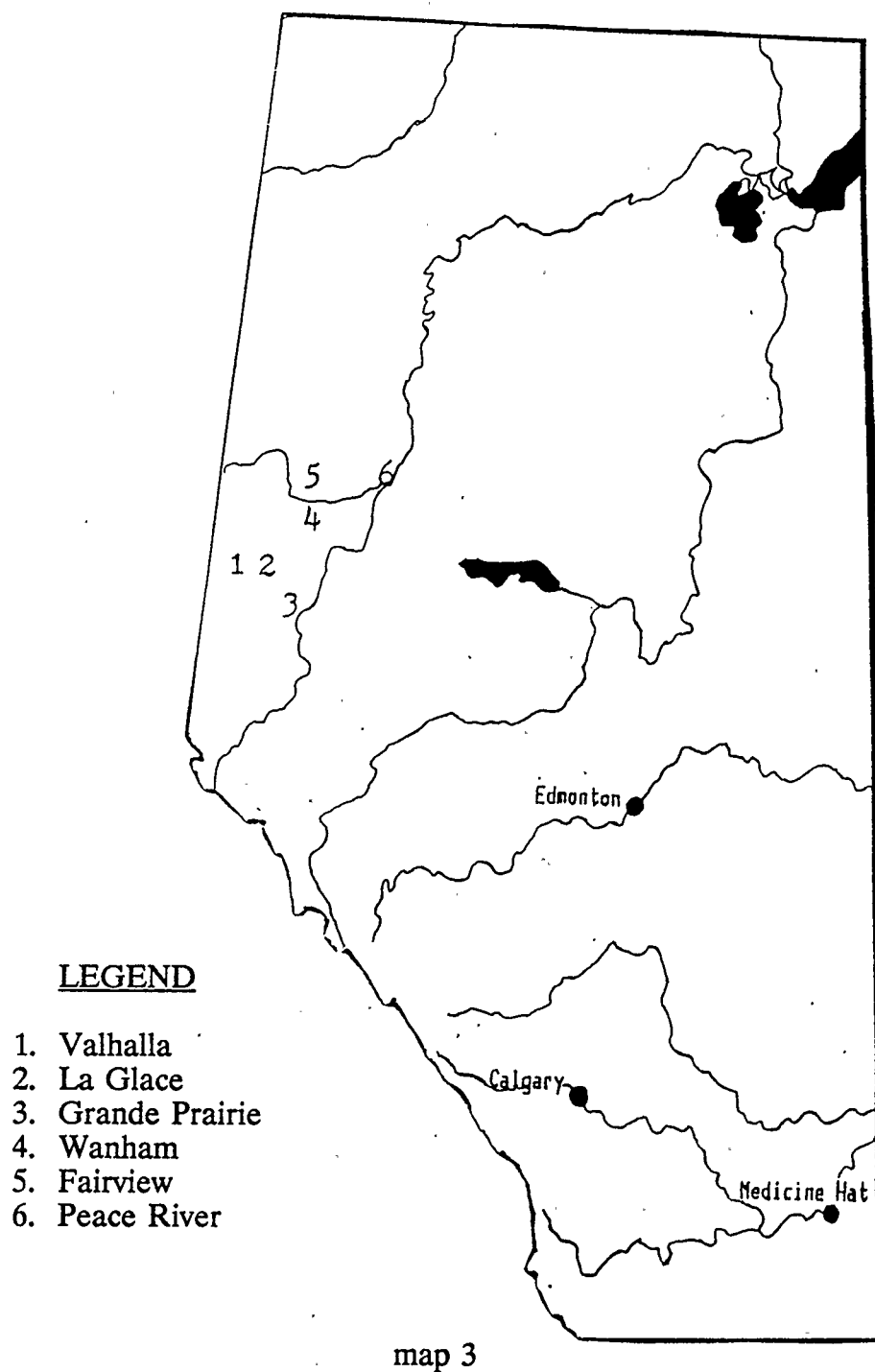


map 2

NORWEGIAN SETTLEMENTS

in

NORTHERN ALBERTA



The Peace country into which the Norwegians came in the early years of the immigration had definite frontier qualities. In 1906, the population of the Peace River area (census division sixteen) including Dunvegan, Peace River Crossing, and Spirit River settlements, was a mere 743 inhabitants.⁹¹ The geography was suitable for farming and ranching and varied from a level and rolling, lightly wooded parkland dotted with creeks, coulees, and small lakes, to a geography of heavy timber stands and rough waste land. The undulating land, along with uneven soil fertility, resulted in settlement being widely dispersed.⁹²

The isolation of the frontier and the distances between settlements in the north offered similar challenges to the Norwegian newcomers as did the vast open spaces of southern Alberta. Many Norwegians who relocated to the Peace country had previously settled around Camrose or in the American midwest.⁹³ For the most part, they headed north with idealized images of what would await them. Barney Throness left North Dakota in 1911 with grandiose visions of northern Alberta instilled in him by Norwegian friends already in Edmonton. Throness recalled the impression their words about the Grande Prairie country had left in his mind:

It sounded something like God's promise to Abraham when he was ordered to leave his homeland and kindred, take his belongings and proceed to the Promised Land--a land flowing with milk and honey.⁹⁴

Yet he faced disappointment upon encountering the lack of population and amenities in the "city" of Grande Prairie.

Rev. H. N. Ronning had a similar utopian view of the northern district of Valhalla. He had read that the area possessed "excellent soil with luxuriant

grass" and was "suited for mixed farming."⁹⁵ For Ronning, the scattered population of the north offered a great opportunity for mission work, and he looked to the Grande Prairie region as the place ideally suited for a Norwegian Lutheran colony. Ronning saw it as his responsibility as a man of God to "guide and gather our people in the founding of new settlements," as in his opinion, neither the church nor the government were providing the necessary aid.⁹⁶ Unlike the experiences of other Norwegians entering northern Alberta, Ronning's optimistic expectations of the Valhalla district were not shattered upon his arrival in 1912. He was pleased with the reality that stretched out before him:

The land here consisted of wide, sweeping slopes; the whole landscape looking like an immense park. The grass was abundant. There was running water and a fine piece of timberland near by. Small wonder that we called it Valhalla, the home of the gods.⁹⁷

Valhalla and La Glace maintained very homogeneous Norwegian populations compared to other communities in the vicinity such as Scenic Heights, which incorporated a larger mix of ethnic groups.⁹⁸ The Norwegian contingent in Valhalla and La Glace, comprising ninety to ninety-five percent of the settlements, consisted primarily of families from the Bardo colony in central Alberta.⁹⁹ Immigration to these communities and to other centres in northern Alberta increased after the arrival of rail lines to Peace River in 1915 and to Grande Prairie one year later.¹⁰⁰ Canadian government agents made note in 1917 of the heightening interest Norwegians in both the United States and in Norway expressed in the Peace River district.¹⁰¹ Norwegian immigration grew noticeably in the 1920s, with many of these individuals being relatives of those already

established in the north.¹⁰² The Norwegian communities in northern Alberta were initiated mainly by speculators, but they endured and prospered as the Norwegians found the land suitable and chose to stay.

The Norwegian immigrants who settled throughout Alberta were to a large extent self-reliant in achieving their settlement goals. Nevertheless, the immigrants did have access to external aid from government and CPR sources. Both the government and the CPR offered their services to the Norwegian immigrants, particularly at the outset of settlement, in the form of transportation. Lillian Ost recalls that her parents travelled from North Dakota to southern Alberta in 1909 by train at the subsidized rate of one cent per mile.¹⁰³ This was made possible by an agreement between the government and railway company that provided settlers in the United States with "Canadian Land Seekers' Certificates" which enabled holders to travel to Canada via the CPR at the reduced rate.¹⁰⁴ The Canadian government also expended considerable sums in transporting delegates and settlers to potential settlement sites.¹⁰⁵

The government provided for the next step of the immigrant's journey to the settlement site by erecting immigration halls, sheds, or tents along the rail line to accommodate the travellers until they were ready for the next leg of their journey. Shelters were established or rented at select points along the Calgary and Edmonton line including Calgary, Didsbury, Innisfail, Red Deer, Lacombe, Ponoka, Edmonton and other stops.¹⁰⁶ Land guides and agents often met incoming settlers at the immigration buildings to escort them to available homesteads.

The role of the land guide cannot be underestimated in the settlement process. He was instrumental in the placement of the settler on the land. Government agents of Scandinavian descent such as C. O. Swanson and Edmund Thompson personally conducted many Norwegians to quality homestead sites.¹⁰⁷ It was imperative that the settlers adapt well to the designated site and remain on the land. The land agents were thus responsible for selecting locations well-suited to the immigrants they were placing.

It has been noted that Norwegian settlement in Alberta tended to be scattered and widespread throughout the province. The Canadian government contributed to this phenomenon through the structure of its land policy. Gulbrand Loken claims that the Dominion government "effectively blocked ethnic consolidation" by freeing only even-numbered sections of land for settlement.¹⁰⁸ The government further discouraged group settlement by flatly denying a request by Norwegians to claim unsurveyed land for a colony near Claresholm in 1902.¹⁰⁹ Dominion land policy made it difficult for large groups to locate in Alberta without special consent; as a result, no Scandinavian bloc settlements existed in the province.¹¹⁰

Attitudes concerning the nature of group settlement began to change within government and CPR circles as the necessity of permanent landowners became obvious. Traugott O. F. Herzer, a German Lutheran minister working with the CPR's Department of Natural Resources in 1914, did much to bring about a new approach to group settlement. During his missionary travels in Alberta, Herzer realized that substantial Lutheran congregations could only be successful if

settlements were large enough to support them. He advocated a settlement plan that would place immigrants in areas where individuals of a similar nationality or religion were already established. This settlement scheme was socially suited to the Norwegians who, according to sociologist Alan B. Anderson, tended toward gravitation group settlements. These settlements attract "migrants who have come abroad independently [and] are drawn together into groups by forces of mutual attraction," including language, culture, and religion.¹¹¹ Agents for the CPR recognized the importance of group settlement to the fledgling western communities and took the social environment, as well as the geography, into consideration when determining settlement location.

The interest of the government and the CPR in the well-being of the immigrant did not end once the settler had been placed on the land. Ties were maintained between immigrant and agent through follow-up visits made by the agent to the settlement site. Government immigration agent R. L. Alexander describes a follow-up visit he made in 1893 to the Battle River country east of Wetaskiwin:

I called upon many settlers, conversed with them, inquired as to how they were getting along, what their prospects were, how they had succeeded and if satisfied with the country, and was pleased to learn and to report that without an exception I found all satisfied, and as some said, "more than pleased with the country."¹¹²

Reports were prepared by agents on the observations made during these visits so that the progress of the settlements could be monitored.

Along with ensuring the success of the physical aspects of settlement, agents attempted to support the immigrants in the psychological adaptation that had to take place. By easing the burden of the immigrant through assistance in procuring land, obtaining supplies and gathering information about the new land, the agent helped to foster optimism in the newcomer toward life in Alberta. Hedges suggests that such aid rendered by CPR agents was greatly appreciated by the immigrants and "guaranteed the new settler would begin farming in Alberta in an enthusiastic frame of mind."¹¹³

Agencies also attempted to help immigrants in the search for suitable employment. The Canadian government worked through the Land Settlement Branch of the Department of Immigration to place a number of immigrants in farm work. Government officials worked in conjunction with the CPR and other transportation companies in Canada and various employment agencies to help the newcomers secure a livelihood.¹¹⁴ Immigration officers for both the government and the CPR received numerous requests from farmers for farm labourers and were able, in good economic times, to "provide the new arrivals with suitable and profitable employment."¹¹⁵ This function intensified in the 1920s and post-war period as the composition of immigration to Canada shifted more toward the labouring class over agriculturists. As many immigrants arrived during this later period with little capital or experience, it became the responsibility of the transportation companies to ensure that employment was secured for the immigrants they brought to Canada.¹¹⁶

Despite the fact that the Dominion government and the CPR had the mandate to aid the immigrant population in securing suitable settlement and employment, they did not always carry it through to the satisfaction of the immigrants. Rev. H. N. Ronning for example, did not feel the government was meeting the needs of the Norwegian immigrants in terms of placement, and as a result, he took on the task of establishing a suitable Norwegian community in northern Alberta.¹¹⁷ Other Norwegians expressed their disgruntlement with government and CPR dealings with the immigrants in letters directed to the Department of Immigration. Among these complaints were charges that transportation companies cared little about the welfare of immigrants upon arrival in the new land, and that the government was hindering, rather than aiding, the quest of the new immigrant for employment.¹¹⁸

Refutations of charges similar to these had been made on behalf of the Canadian government and the CPR in Scandinavian newspapers at an earlier date. Knud Faber of Calgary argued that "it is a great misunderstanding when people believe that the railway companies think their task ended when the immigrants have arrived at their destination."¹¹⁹ As for the charges against the Dominion government regarding employment, Robert Forke, Minister of the Department of Immigration and Colonization in 1927, explained in an interview for the Norwegian newspaper Aftenposten that such delays in job placements resulted from a late spring which restricted farm work. Forke further commented that one would "always be able to meet immigrants which [sic] are not

contented.¹¹²⁰ The onus for the problems experienced in placements was consistently put on the immigrant.

The experiences of nine Norwegian families who came to southern Alberta in 1927 illustrate how the agencies of the CPR did not always take suitability of site and education into consideration in the attempt to settle productive citizens. The Norwegian families came to western Canada from Rjukan, Norway, having contracted with the CPR to settle on farms in Manitoba. Upon arrival in Winnipeg, the families were sent to Calgary and then to Brooks and Lethbridge to secure employment, as the CPR had not procured farms for them in Manitoba.¹²¹ The Norwegians were eventually placed as sugar beet workers at Hillspring and Glenwoodville (present-day Glenwood) south of Lethbridge where there was a high demand for this type of labour.¹²²

Through an examination of a series of letters and inquiries between CPR officials and individuals writing on behalf of the Norwegian families, it becomes apparent that the Norwegians faced numerous hardships in their location and were very ill-suited to the work and the setting they were provided with by the CPR. Mr. Kildal, a CPR agent involved in the case, pointed out that the Norwegians were not experienced in farm or sugar beet work, and since beets were not grown in Norway, the Norwegians would not be efficient workers until they had acquired the proper skills on the job.¹²³ Kildal also attributed the families' difficulties to an unwillingness to work and to adapt to their new surroundings.¹²⁴

Several individuals and agencies became concerned with the welfare of these immigrant families and, seeing the Norwegians did not yet possess adequate English language skills, they voiced the concerns of the immigrants to the CPR. Carl Johnson, a Scandinavian farmer at Hillspring, wrote to the Norwegian consulate charging neglect and mistreatment of the Norwegian families by the CPR. He vehemently queried the consulate how "can [the] CPR in the time of 1927 treat people worse than cattle?"¹²⁵ Johnson claimed that the CPR had abandoned the Norwegians in southern Alberta without money or supplies and had failed to send a representative to the area to check on their well-being.¹²⁶

Other individuals questioned the suitability of placing the nine Norwegian families in Hillspring and Glenwoodville. Rev. B. M. Hofrening, a Norwegian minister at North Battleford, was eager to have the Norwegians settled suitably, as they were not suited for sugar beet work.¹²⁷ The Camrose president of the League of Norsemen in Canada, F. A. Nordbye, wrote to Ole Kirkvold, CPR official in Calgary, asking: "Now where is the trouble? Is it wholly with these immigrants or has the CPR Colonization Board fallen down on their job?"¹²⁸ Nordbye suggested that the families might fare better if moved farther north where employment would perhaps be more fitting. CPR agent Kildal also acknowledged that the relocation of the Norwegian families to a predominantly Scandinavian settlement would be the best plan of action.¹²⁹

Clearly, in the case of these nine Norwegian families, the CPR showed little concern for the welfare of the immigrants and the suitability of the placement to the individual. It may be argued that the CPR put economic considerations

before the welfare of the immigrant in this instance. The company needed to bring settlers onto its lands in the southern irrigation district of Alberta and knew it faced a challenge.¹³⁰ The CPR's Department of Natural Resources, formed in 1912, encouraged the production of sugar beets in the eastern irrigation section of southern Alberta, as this crop was well-suited to the use of irrigation.¹³¹ The Department urged the CPR to "take every legitimate means" to promote the hasty construction of a sugar beet factory on the company's irrigation lands in hopes of stimulating an interest in the harvesting of the crop in the area.¹³² Thus, the CPR's endeavours to transform Norwegian immigrants into sugar beet farmers, regardless of their aptitude or desire, appear to stem from purely economic motives.

The Dominion government and the CPR strove to facilitate the speedy settlement of the immigrant on the land; yet the Norwegian community itself filled a need that no outside source could. The community helped further the goals of both government and immigrant interests, providing a vital structure to the Norwegian settlement as well as to the Alberta society as a whole.

The sharing of a common heritage, language or religion within a community setting eased the transition to a foreign land and society by adding a degree of familiarity to the new lifestyle. Social reflections of the homeland such as language, traditions, and religion were reinforced in individual homes by material culture reminiscent of Norway. These items took the form of trunks, spinning wheels, utensils, tools, and books, to mention but a few of the things which were brought over by the immigrant from Norway. In addition to performing practical

functions, such possessions provided valuable psychological benefits to the owners by removing some of the foreignness from the world surrounding them.

The success of the Norwegian settlements in Alberta was largely a result of the co-operation and interdependence which existed not only between community members, but between the communities themselves. Hospitality in a Norwegian home was extended to all newcomers to a settlement, and this often lessened the unhappy feeling the newcomer inevitably had upon first arrival. In reference to the predominantly Norwegian community at Eagle Hill, H. O. Yewell remarked that the "settlers lacked many things, even the barest necessities but one thing abounded--friendliness, open-heartedness, sociability, and the desire to assist anyone who needed a helping hand."¹³³ Much of the community aid and support came from the religious congregations which rallied to help new settlers get started; this even applied to settlers in other communities who might have required financial aid due to setbacks of one kind or another.¹³⁴

The Norwegian community contributed greatly to the development of Alberta society as well. Education and religion were two highly regarded aspects of community life among the Norwegian settlers which enriched the Alberta society as a whole. In Norway, education had traditionally fallen under the domain of the church.¹³⁵ This characteristic was transplanted to Alberta, where institutions of national prominence such as Camrose Lutheran College, incorporated in 1911, and the Canadian Lutheran Bible Institute established in Camrose in 1932, continued the close association between education and religion.¹³⁶

Norwegians were classified as desirable immigrants for the West because they were, among other things, perceived to be "fit, and willing to endure the rigours of frontier life on the prairies."¹³⁷ Upon establishing a new life in Alberta, the Norwegian immigrants faced no shortage of hardships. The difficulties varied according to region: settlers on the southern prairie had to cope with the vastness of the land and a different lifestyle from that of the coasts and valleys of Norway. Those moving into central Alberta encountered a geography more reminiscent of the midwestern United States and Norway, and as a result, the region possessed the largest concentration of Norwegian settlers in the province. The northern portion of Alberta served as the final frontier available in Alberta and offered similar challenges to those experienced on the prairie due to the remoteness of the settlements and the ensuing isolation.

Collectively, the Norwegian immigrants underwent similar hardships regardless of their choice of settlement area: they had to adjust to a new culture, deal with the rigours of pioneer life, and find a workable means of reconciling their old lifestyle with the new. Many found that the most amenable way to come to terms with being Norwegian in Canada was through a blending of the two cultures; or rather, the acceptance of the Canadian way of life into which was incorporated Norwegian skills, values, or possessions which provided a sense of identity and familiarity.

The Norwegian community was instrumental in easing the hardships of the immigration transition in both the physical sense of providing help in getting a homestead functioning and in the psychological sense of providing a support

group. The Canadian government and the CPR did what they could to ensure successful settlement; they eventually recognized the importance of the ethnic community to the well-being of the immigrant, and after some time supported ethnically-cohesive settlements. The goals of the government, the CPR, and the Norwegian immigrant were all realized through the success of these communities and the numerous contributions they made to Alberta and the Canadian West.

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

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³Refer to the chapter "New Furrows in the Canadian West" in Loken's From Fjord to Frontier for individual accounts of Norwegian settlement efforts.

⁴Clifford Solberg, "Ole Solberg Promoted Education and Religion," Conquerville: A Growing Community (Conquerville Women's Institute, 1963), p. 40. Subsequent reference under "Ole Solberg."

⁵William C. Wonders, "Scandinavian Homesteaders in Central Alberta," The New Provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan, 1905-1980, ed. Howard Palmer and Donald Smith (Vancouver: Tantalus Research Ltd., 1980), p. 157. Subsequent reference under "Homesteaders in Central Alberta."

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⁷Magda Hendrickson, interview by Elly Silverman, Camrose, AB, 11 June 1976, p. 1.

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⁹Frimann B. Anderson, Immigration and Settlement of our Vacant Lands in Manitoba and the North-West (Winnipeg, 1887), pp.14-15.

¹⁰McDougall, p. 128.

¹¹Ibid., p. 129.

¹²George Stephen to John A. Macdonald, 08 May 1881, as quoted in Lamb, p. 216.

¹³Hedges, p. 398.

¹⁴Lamb, p. 216.

¹⁵Canada. Parliament. SP 1897, No. 13, Report of Mr. John W. Wendelbo, Scandinavian Officer, Winnipeg, 07 November 1896, pp. 126-27.

¹⁶Howard Palmer, Map of "Alberta Today," Alberta: A New History (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, Ltd., 1990), p. vi.

¹⁷Lillian Ost, Seven Persons: One Hundred Sixty Acres and a Dream (Medicine Hat: Seven Persons Historical Society, 1981), p. 73.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Arthur Stenby, interview by author, Whitla, AB, 05 July 1988.

²⁰Hedges, p. 6

²¹Solberg, "Ole Solberg," p. 41.

²²Silver Sage: Bow Island, 1900-1920 (Bow Island Lions' Club Book Committee, 1972), p. 494. Subsequent reference under Silver Sage.

²³Ibid., pp. 494, 497.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 664-68.

²⁵Bindloss: Golden Memoirs, 1912-1963 (Bindloss Pioneer Committee, 1963), p. 16.

²⁶For example, Aksel Sandemose vividly portrays the mental strain the Alberta prairie was capable of exerting on the Scandinavian immigrant. In his novel Ross Dane, Sandemose recounts the settlement of a Danish immigrant on the Alberta prairie in the 1890s. Through the eyes of the protagonist, Sandemose describes the Alberta geography as vast, empty, lonely, and hopeless. Christopher Hale, translator of Sandemose's work, suggests that the author's depiction of the land is representative of the perceptions held by northern European immigrants of the time. See Aksel Sandemose, Ross Dane, trans. Christopher S. Hale (Winnipeg: Gunnars and Campbell, 1989); and Christopher S. Hale, "Aksel Sandemose and 'Ross Dane': A Scandinavian's Perception of Western Canada," Scandinavian-Canadian Studies, Edward Laine, ed. (Association for the Advancement of Scandinavian Studies in Canada, AASSC, 1983), pp. 29-30.

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²⁸Clifford Solberg, interview by author, Bow Island, AB, 08 July 1988.

²⁹"Carl Eide," Silver Sage, p. 501.

³⁰Lillian Ost, interview by author, Medicine Hat, AB, 07 July 1988.

³¹See local histories for Bindloss, Bow Island, Seven Persons, and Conquerville; Arthur Stenby, interview by author; Bard B. Herigstad, "Diaries and Account Books of Homesteader, Pendant d'Oreille District," Glenbow Archives Institute (GAI), Calgary.

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⁴⁰Gulbrand Loken, A History of Trinity Lutheran Church (Calgary: University Printing, 1975), p. 1.

⁴¹Brian Melnyk, "Calgary Buildings, 1905-1914," M.A. Diss. University of Calgary, 1980, p. 59; Marianne Fedori, "History of Eau Claire: Changes in a Residential Community," 07 April 1978, Manuscript Collection, GAI, Calgary, p. 8.

⁴²Max Foran, Calgary: An Illustrated History (Toronto: National Museums of Canada, 1978), p. 40.

⁴³Chestermere Historical Society, research material for local history publication Saddles, Sleighs and Sadirons, 1883-1970, Box 1 f. 1, GAI, Calgary.

⁴⁴Ibid. Calgary was also a magnet for Norwegian women who found employment as domestic servants in urban centres. There was a great demand for such help in many Canadian cities, and Scandinavian domestics were never

short of placements. See Foran, p. 40; and CPR Papers, Memo for Mr. C. A. Van Scoy, Superintendent of Colonization, from James Colley, Assistant Superintendent of Colonization, Calgary, 23 June 1927.

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⁴⁶Qualey, p. 114.

⁴⁷William Wonders, "Scandinavian Homesteaders," Alberta History, 24, No. 3, Hugh Dempsey, ed. (Summer 1976), p. 4.

⁴⁸Wonders, "Homesteaders in Central Alberta," p. 140.

⁴⁹Canada. Parliament. SP 1880, No. 4, Appendix 6, Letter to Lindsay Russell, Surveyor General, Dominion Lands Office, Ottawa, from Montague Aldous, D.T.S., Edmonton, 27 November 1879. Aldous' mention of Beaver Lake and Beaver Creek refers to present day Beaverhill Lake and Beaverhill Creek. See Atlas of Alberta Lakes, ed. Patricia Mitchell and Ellie Prepas (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1990), p. 339.

⁵⁰Brunvand, p. 60.

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⁵⁵Eric J. Holmgren and Patricia M. Holmgren, Over Two Thousand Place Names of Alberta, 3rd ed. (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1976), p. 16.

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⁵⁷Silverman, p. 2.

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⁷⁴The Eagle Calls, pp. 25, 28.

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⁹⁴Throness, n. pag.

⁹⁵Rev. H. N. Ronning, p. 90.

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⁹⁸Lavern Sorgaard, interview by Howard Palmer, La Glace, AB, Summer 1979.

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¹²⁵CPR Papers, Letter to the Norwegian consulate from Carl Johnson, Hillspring, 02 June 1927 (f. 1859).

¹²⁶Ibid.

¹²⁷CPR Papers, Memo for James Colley, Assistant Superintendent of Colonization, from C. A. Van Scoy, Superintendent of Colonization, Winnipeg, 02 August 1927 (f. 1859).

¹²⁸CPR Papers, Letter to Ole Kirkvold, Calgary, from F. A. Nordbye, Camrose, 02 July 1927 (f. 1859).

¹²⁹CPR Papers, Kildal Report on trip to Hillspring, 08-15 July 1927 (f. 1859).

¹³⁰Hedges, p. 295.

¹³¹Ibid., pp. 296, 303.

¹³²Ibid., p. 303.

¹³³H. O. Yewell, The Eagle Calls, p. 297.

¹³⁴Jacob B. Stolee, "Reminiscent Reflections," n.d. Camrose Lutheran College library.

¹³⁵Olav Hove, The System of Education in Norway (Oslo: The Royal Norwegian Ministry of Church and Education and Johan Grunt Tanum Forlag, 1968), pp. 5, 9.

¹³⁶Chester Ronning, "A Study of an Alberta Protestant Private School: The Camrose Lutheran College, A Residential High School," M.A. Diss. University of Alberta, 1971, p. 14; and Loken, From Fjord to Frontier, p. 162.

¹³⁷Clifford Sifton, as quoted in Timlin, p. 518.

CONCLUSION

The targeting of Norwegian immigrants for settlement in the West by Canadian government immigration officials was part of the fulfillment of the government's vision of western society. The government regarded the West as an empty slate on which any type of society could be imprinted. It envisioned a society that was progressive, permanent, and able to develop the economic resources of the region. Yet beyond that mandate existed the desire for a society reflective of the social and cultural values and institutions of the older Anglo-Saxon society of eastern Canada.

In the search for such citizens for the West, the Canadian government looked beyond its shores and found the Scandinavians--and specifically, the Norwegians--to be suitable candidates. Government officials made this decision based on several criteria: the Norwegians were agriculturists, backed by a longstanding agrarian tradition; they were a progressive and educated race; and they were of a nation that was politically, religiously, morally, and geographically compatible with the Anglo-Saxon environment in Canada.

This last criterion was crucial to the ultimate acceptance of the immigrant on Canadian soil during a time when nordic societies were high on the pecking order of races. The climate of intellectual thought in Canada, as well as ethnic

stereotypes and the ethnic biases of those individuals influencing government policy in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, all played a role in shaping the visions and perceptions of Canadian officials toward the settlement of the West. Similar beliefs were shared by influential groups or individuals outside of the governmental realm who nonetheless had an impact on the views of the policymakers. The overall verdict in Canada seemed to be that the Norwegians were suitable immigrants for the West, in keeping with the ideas of Anglo-Saxon superiority, the nordic myth, and liberal-democracy. They were regarded as desirable in terms of ethnicity and economic viability, and were generally accepted by the government, business and the public in Canada.

Conditions in many parts of Norway had already encouraged Norwegians to be in a susceptible state of mind when Canadian immigration agents began advertising the West in Scandinavia in the 1870s. Agents were able to offer opportunities in Canada which many Norwegians found sadly lacking in their own country. They held a bleak vision of their future lives in a Norway burdened and restricted by the oppressiveness of the Norwegian church and state, the disappearance of the traditional farming community, and the growing industrialization of Norway that foreshadowed the end of a centuries-old way of life for many rural Norwegian families.

Canadian immigration officials skillfully steered their recruitment campaigns in Norway to take advantage of such conditions. To many discouraged Norwegians, the agents seemed like godsend as they inundated the Scandinavian countries with brochures and reports of millions of acres of fertile land, bountiful

crops, and freedom. The Norwegians did not take these enticements lightly, as productive land and independence historically were elements of great value to them. The basic elements of their vision of a new life entailed a place where they could get enough land to ensure their children's future as agriculturists, in a country where diligent work would be rewarded. Such a vision persisted among Norwegians even after they had emigrated to the midwestern United States, and thus a similar campaign by the Canadian Immigration Branch in America proved even more effective.

The ultimate question remains, did Canadian immigration officials and Norwegian immigrants succeed in bringing their visions into being? An answer to such a question depends on whose definition of success is used and what criteria are employed to measure success. The Canadian government succeeded in its Norwegian recruitment and settlement campaign in that it brought a significant number of Norwegians to the West between 1870 and 1930 who remained on the land and became productive agriculturists. The motives of the government and the CPR in bringing Norwegians to Alberta and placing them in areas in great need of agricultural development stemmed from purely economic considerations. The government had a desire to see economic development in the West in response to its commitment to nation-building and progress for the whole of Canada. The CPR needed successful agriculturists in the West to provide a market for the newly-completed rail lines in Alberta. Only with the occupation of government and company lands would the CPR make a significant return on its investment. Although the CPR experienced some failure in the

poorly executed placements of certain Norwegian immigrants in southern Alberta, both the government and the railway could claim ultimate success in the undertaking, as Norwegians settled widely and permanently in virtually all viable agricultural areas in Alberta.

In addition to the economic success realized by the Norwegian recruitment campaign, the Canadian government was not disappointed in its assessment of the Norwegian character. The Norwegians justified government officials' perception of them as being easily assimilable to Canadian society. The general sentiment among those Norwegian families who chose to permanently settle in Alberta was to learn about the Canadian system and adapt to Canadian ways as quickly as possible, in an effort to make the transition a little easier. Many warmly embraced Canada as the new home that offered them an opportunity to secure a brighter future for their children.

Norwegians also did more than merely blend in with the Anglo-Saxon norm: they contributed to the Albertan society by playing a significant part in the establishment of educational, religious, and cultural institutions in their various communities. By such actions, the Norwegians helped to bring the government's vision of a progressive West into fruition.

It is more of a challenge to determine the extent to which the Norwegian immigrants felt they had succeeded upon arriving in Alberta, as success can be measured in different ways by different individuals. Those immigrants who were greatly disillusioned by the reality of the land they encountered in Alberta were not successful in their quest if they were not able to overcome their

disappointment. There were those who were not able to adopt a new homeland, and who eventually returned to their previous homes in Norway or the United States.

Still, the majority of Norwegian immigrants might claim success in their journey to the Canadian prairie in so far as they established permanent settlements, they embraced the Canadian way of life and adapted their own heritage and skills to their new situation. As well, they contributed actively to the social and cultural life of their community, be it in the southern, central or northern reaches of the province. The Norwegians could also be considered successful if they found themselves able to secure land for their children and maintain a sense of independence in their activities as farmers and citizens in the West, as many had hoped for prior to the migration. Such a situation was often to be realized by those Norwegian immigrants who persisted in their efforts to settle in Alberta.

Among the Norwegian immigrants and government and railway immigration officials were those who claimed that the Canadian government's Norwegian recruitment and settlement campaign of 1870 to 1930 was indeed a success. Their visions of a new land in the Canadian West beckoned for the same end result: the establishment of a widespread rural Norwegian population that would persist and contribute to the development of the society. In achieving this end, the common vision of immigration official and immigrant, along with advantageous timing of events, worked together to bring visions into reality and add another valuable dimension to Alberta's history.

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