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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

# THE CANADIAN WEST AND THE RANCHING FRONTIER, 1875-1922

by

© DAVID H. BREEN

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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## ABSTRACT

The main intent of this study of the ranching frontier in Canada is to provide a broadly based account of the role played by a little known but important group in the occupation and development of the prairie west. Within this general history special attention is directed towards three major themes; namely, the evolution of dominion land and settlement policy in the semi-arid region, the economic conflict between the grain farmer and the cattleman for the same territory, and the ranchers as a political force much in excess of their number.

The study is divided into three chronological parts. The first part covers the open range era from 1875 to 1896. In this section the focus initially is upon the small cattlemen who proved the suitability of the southwestern Canadian prairie for stock raising, and then upon the large cattle companies whose presence made the region part of Montreal's economic hinterland. Particular notice is paid also to the cultural composition of the nascent ranching community that coloured the already developing economic contest between rancher and farmer.

During the second period from 1896 to 1911 the cattlemen were confronted with a government programme of

mass settlement that seriously threatened their industry's economic viability and at the same time intensified the social tension that was peculiar to this part of the Canadian west. The ranchers' political response to this threat is assessed, as are the economic changes being forced upon the industry and the changing demographic picture within the ranching country.

In the concluding period the agrarian advance was turned by the ranchers' improved political and economic fortunes as well as a prolonged drought that drove farmers from the region. In light of this development federal land policy in the dry region is evaluated and the cattlemen's continued effectiveness as a political pressure group is measured through their carefully orchestrated campaign to ensure the retention of their large leaseholds, their stenuous effort to retain access to the Chicago market in face of the protection-minded American Congress, as well as their part in a movement that eventually forced the British government to abandon its long-standing embargo on the importation of live cattle.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# INTRODUCTION

The ranching frontier in the Canadian West, unlike its American counterpart, has not been accorded the honour of a separate niche in the nation's historiography. The opening and colonization of the Canadian West has traditionally been described almost entirely in terms of the westward movement of cereal agriculture.[1] Within this context the ranchers and their vocation have received only cursory attention and are usually dismissed with a few sweeping assumptions that have with repetition come to be accepted as obvious and beyond question. As the ranching industry clearly originated in the United States, it has been assumed that the ranch community itself was essentially American. One otherwise excellent study of prairie settlement concludes: "[ranching] in southern Alberta is simply the expansion of the stock-raising industry which began in Texas and in the late seventies and eighties spread rapidly northward. . . ."[2]

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[1] See for example, Robert England, The Colonization of Western Canada (London: P. S. King and Son Ltd., 1936). E. H. Oliver, "Saskatchewan and Alberta: General History," The Prairie Provinces, Part I, Vol. XIX, Canada and its Provinces, ed. A. Short and A. G. Doughty (Toronto: Glasgow, Brook and Co., 1914).

[2] A. S. Morton and Chester Martin, History of Prairie Settlement and Dominion Lands Policy, Vol. II of Canadian Frontiers of Settlement, ed. W. A. Mackintosh and W. L. G. Joerg (Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd., 1938), p. 91. My italics.

In this incomplete way the nature and origins of the Canadian ranching industry are left without elucidation and bound to the evolution of the ranching industry south of the border. R. W. Murchie explains that "ranchers from the United States played an important part in the northward expansion of the range area. . . ."[3] G. L. Berry also notes the arrival of "prominent" American ranchers in southern Alberta,[4] but neither author has chosen to elaborate upon the contributions allegedly made by these ranchers, nor have they examined how they fitted into the region's social framework. Consequently the impression remains that American ranchers were the dominant element within the Canadian ranch community. The infusion of American culture is assumed to be self-evident and paramount. One work dealing with the social aspect of prairie settlement has characterized the social development of the Canadian cattle country as simply a "cultural diffusion northward."[5] By way of elaboration Dawson and Young explain that "the practice of ranching brought to Western Canada a picturesque type of

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[3]R. W. Murchie, Agricultural Progress on the Prairie Frontier, Vol. V of Canadian Frontiers of Settlement, ed. W. A. Mackintosh and W. L. G. Joerg (Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd., 1930), p. 53.

[4]Gerald L. Berry, The Whoop-Up Trail (Edmonton: Applied Arts Products Ltd., 1953), p. 99.

[5]C. A. Dawson and E. R. Young, Pioneering in the Prairie Provinces: The Social Side of the Settlement Process, Vol. VIII of Canadian Frontiers of Settlement, ed. W. A. Mackintosh and W. L. G. Joerg (Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd., 1930, p. 12.

frontier settlement which was noted for [the] relatively free and unconventional mode of existence" reminiscent of Texas.[6] Within this context, the Canadian cattleman is imputed to possess the same social characteristics as his American counterpart.[7] This insistence upon an American stereotype has persisted to the present. Discussing the development of Western Canada during the eighteen-eighties, W. S. MacNutt presents the traditional picture. He asserts that "Calgary itself was an outpost of the cattle industry from over the border" and that the "ragged band" of ranchers about Fort Macleod made that town "Canada's best version of a wild west."[8] In short, Canadian historians have tended to describe the ethos of their own ranch community according to an American criterion simply because a ranching industry, of common origin, existed on both sides of the border. The one exception to this interpretation is to be found in the work of Lewis G. Thomas in which he has attempted to draw attention to the unique character of the Canadian cattle kingdom.[9]

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[6] Ibid., p. 20. My italics.

[7] Ibid., pp. 21-23. The authors accept and quote the detailed character analysis presented by W. P. Webb in The Great Plains.

[8] W. S. MacNutt, "The 1880's," The Canadians 1867-1967, ed. J. M. S. Careless and R. Craig Brown (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1967), pp. 83-84.

[9] Lewis G. Thomas, "The Ranching Period in Alberta" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Alberta, 1935), and "The Rancher and the City: Calgary and the Cattlemen, 1883-1914," Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada, VI, Ser. IV (June, 1968).

Once identified as the economic and cultural offspring of an American parent the Canadian ranching community is generally dismissed as the marginally important precursor to general agricultural settlement which followed within a decade. It is inferred that the cattlemen were quickly and without protest absorbed into the larger agricultural community. If this is so the northern stockmen, despite their alleged American character, seem to have acted in a way quite out of keeping with such a profound economic encroachment. Finding no indication of armed violence in the contest between rancher and farmer for control of the region, historians have assumed that the classical struggle between grazier and farmer so familiar in the American setting did not occur in the Canadian West. Such a conclusion of course fits compatibly with one of the verities of Canadian historiography, namely that the settlement of the Canadian plains must be noted for its orderly and peaceful progress in contrast to the more volatile American frontier.[10]

Local or regional historiography dealing with the ranching phase of western development has taken two directions. Non-academic authors such as L. V. Kelly have presented a series of interesting episodes, their veracity often open to question, relating to the so-called cattle kingdom but making

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[10]See for example, G. F. G. Stanley, "Western Canada and the Frontier Thesis," Canadian Historical Association Annual Report, (1940), p. 111.

little attempt at historical analysis.[11] On the other hand local scholars, typified by John Blue[12] or Dorothy Diller,[13] have taken an essentially statistical and legalistic approach in their examination of the ranch community. Blue contends that the era of the large cattle ranches was a brief phenomenon lasting until 1888, and otherwise confines his analysis to the listing of important dates and items of federal legislation relating to the cattle industry. Though Diller's study is more exhaustive the approach and conclusions are the same. The most recent monograph (1930) on the Canadian ranch community is by C. M. MacInnes, who sympathetically perceives the cattlemen as the unfortunate victims of a plot, carried on by the Canadian Pacific Railway and the federal government after 1884, to extinguish the ranching industry.[14] He thus supports the traditional view that the industry was hardly established before it fell in the face of the onrush of prairie settlement. The inference is, as always, that the ranching period is of very short-lived

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[11] L. V. Kelly, The Rangemen (Toronto: William Briggs, 1913).

[12] John Blue, Alberta Past and Present (Chicago: Pioneer Historical Company, 1924).

[13] Dorothy Diller, "The Early Economic Development of Alberta" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Alberta, 1930).

[14] C. M. MacInnes, In the Shadow of the Rockies (London: Revingtons, 1930).

consequence in western history and, if we are to discover a western ethos, we must quickly turn to look at the prairie farmer. From the sheer weight of numbers this emphasis is reasonable, but the concomitant assumption that the ranching minority was cut from essentially the same social fabric or that the Canadian cattlemen despite a vested economic interest against settlement simply acquiesced to greater numbers and were simply integrated into the main stream to contribute to a common agrarian heritage is open to question.

The foregoing discussion of related literature is not meant to imply that there has been more than fleeting interest in the social and political history of the Canadian cattlemen. Preoccupation with lease acreages, federal lease laws, immigration returns and beef exports, has done little to place the ranch community within the total context of political evolution of southern Alberta. Consequently our knowledge of the genuine character of the ranch community, as well as of its role in the development of western Canada, remains incomplete or inaccurate. In the rush to examine the broad sweep of prairie settlement, the Canadian cattleman has been too quickly dismissed as the "picturesque" representative of a momentary interlude before the settler and "progress" arrived. Within the total context of western settlement this emphasis may be justified, but such cursory attention fails to give due recognition to the peculiar nature of settlement in a sizable part of the Canadian plains.

The central purpose of this dissertation is to show that there is what might be legitimately described as a ranching frontier in the Canadian historical experience; that the Canadian cattlemen existed as a powerful political and economic force which for the better part of four decades was often directly opposed to and often actively hostile towards the more numerous farm population; and that the Canadian ranch community existed as a social entity distinct from the surrounding agricultural population as well as from their American counterparts. The study is divided chronologically into three separate periods beginning with the stockmens' arrival in the late 1870's and terminating with the first Great War, by which time the character of the Canadian ranch community had fundamentally altered.

# PART I

## THE FORMATIVE PERIOD: CATTLE COMPANIES AND THE OPEN RANGE 1875-1896

## CHAPTER I

## THE RANCHING FRONTIER IN CANADA 1875-1882: THE "FREE GRASS" YEARS

After the American Civil War the cattle kingdom expanded north and east from southwestern Texas into what was then popularly known as the Great American desert and by 1876-78 it had spread over the entire Great Plains area of the United States.[1] The cattle raising techniques employed by the northward moving Texans were of Mexican origin and had been acquired and perfected during the preceding two decades. This form of stock-raising was distinguished from eastern stock-farming by the use of the horse and by the necessity of immense unfenced acreages where cattle could graze freely on natural vegetation. While these early cattlemen had developed a system of stock growing perfectly adapted to their physical environment, the possibility of expanding herds beyond the size required to meet the limited needs of military posts and mining towns and thus utilizing fully the enormous pastoral resources available was dependent upon a connection with the Eastern urban market. As one prominent historian of the American West has cogently explained, the western railroad was the one essential upon

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[1] W. P. Webb, The Great Plains (Toronto: Ginn and Co.), pp. 207-223.

which the whole future of this new frontier rested and "the passing of the first stock train bound for the Chicago market meant that the utilization of [the] northern ranges had begun in earnest."[2] The tremendous incentive to move western range cattle east is suggested by the fact that a steer worth under ten dollars in Texas could be sold to eastern buyers for thirty to forty dollars.

The first substantial movement of Texas cattle northward came in 1866. This drive into the feeding areas of Kansas and Missouri rather than to a shipping point was not entirely successful, and it was not till the following year when the Kansas Pacific Railway reached a point some two hundred miles west of Kansas City at Abilene that direct shipment to the lucrative Eastern market was possible. The cattle drive of 1867 established what became the most famous of all cattle trails, the Chisholm Trail, along which larger Texas herds made their way northward each subsequent year. Though increasing dramatically in volume the business was still somewhat haphazard through the late sixties and early seventies. Of the estimated 630,000 head that crossed the Red River boundary of Northern Texas in 1871, most were shipped directly to eastern markets, only about 100,000 head being used to stock the ranges of southern Wyoming and

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[2]E. S. Osgood, The Day of the Cattlemen (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), p. 23.

western Nebraska.[3] As soon as the cattlemen crossed the Red River they were in the Indian Territory and until the problem of the final disposition of the Plains Indian was solved in the late seventies, permanent location in Eastern Montana and Northern Wyoming was a tenuous proposition at best. With the invasion of Indian country by miner and rancher hostilities became frequent, but it was not until after the defeat of General George A. Custer in June, 1876, that a determined federal effort was made to break the power of the northern tribes. As hostilities drew to a close in 1878 stockmen began to move into the Powder River and Big Horn country of northern Wyoming, and from the sheltered valleys of western Montana on to the eastern plains.

At the same time cattlemen were moving small herds into the foothill country of the southwestern corner of the Canadian Northwest Territories. The ranching frontier as it moved into Canadian territory did not represent a gradual movement northward after the ranges filled to the south. The development of the cattle industry in the Canadian southwest was coincident with that of the northwestern American plains. Though the cattle kingdom did not develop as rapidly or as extensively in Canada as it did south of the border, it was none the less an integral part of this startling continental expansion which began in 1875 and

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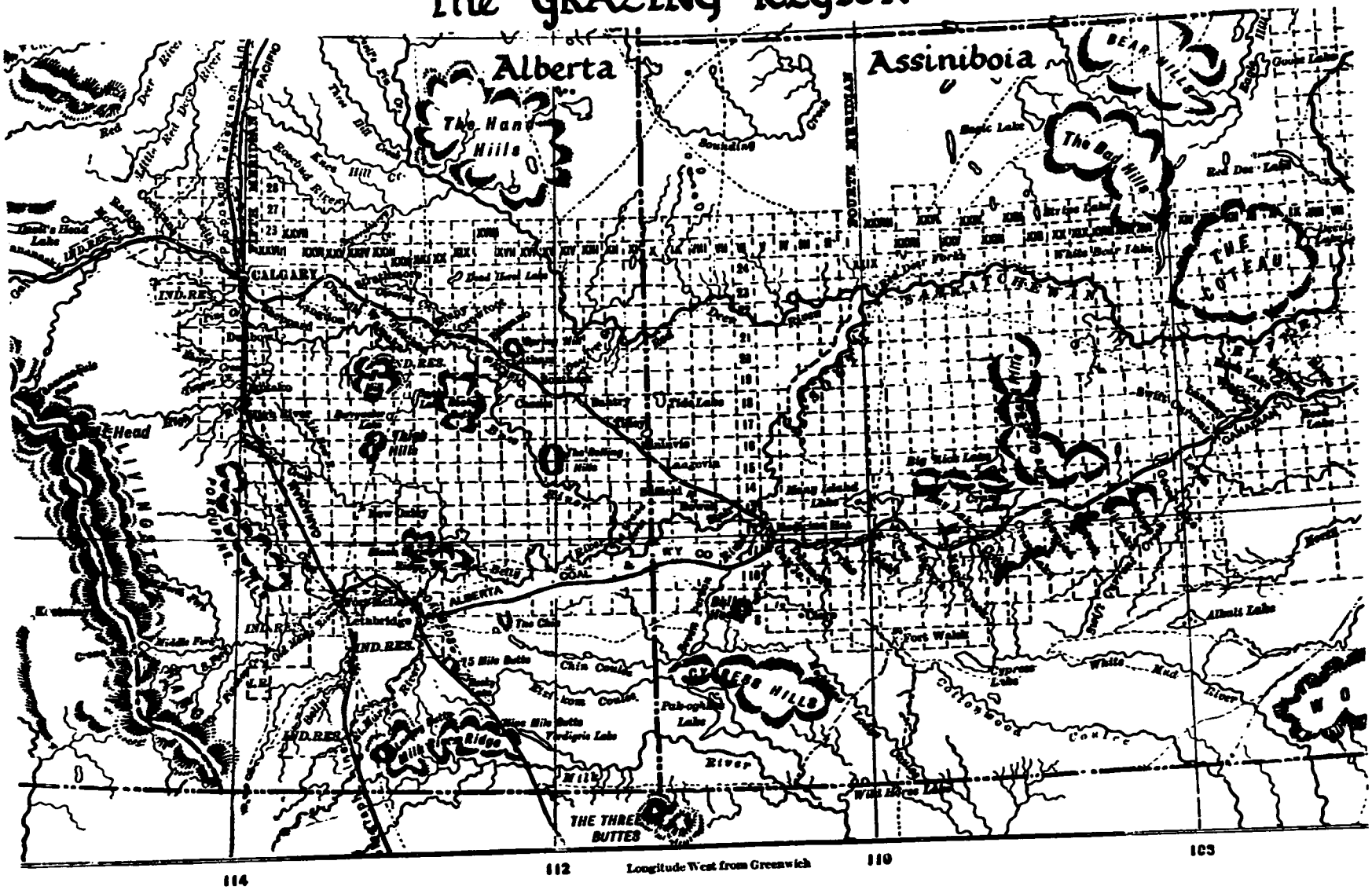
[3] Ibid., p. 46.

within three years saw cattle grazing as far north as the Bow River Valley, some 200 miles beyond the international boundary. The domain of the nascent Canadian cattle kingdom is shown on the following map. The domain of the nascent Canadian cattle kingdom is shown on the following map taken from The Home Knowledge Atlas published in Toronto in 1892.

# The GRAZING REGION



The movement of cattle into the Canadian foothill country at this time is hardly surprising. In terms of climate and topography the region was very similar to western Montana. In fact, the foothill region of southwestern Alberta comprised a potentially excellent grazing area. The region's unique climatic feature, the "chinook", brought warm dry winter winds which regularly melted the snow and exposed the grass for winter pasture. This desiccating wind also brought cattlemen an indirect advantage. Excessive summer evaporation of surface moisture rendered much of the region semi-arid, and hence less favourable for agriculture than regions further north. Consequently, the number of settlers with whom the ranchers later had to contend was reduced until after the turn of the century when dry-land farming techniques were better understood. The stock raising possibilities of the southwest were further enhanced by the highly nutritious short grass vegetation, by the numerous coulees which furnished natural shelter and by the large number of streams available for stock-watering.[4] This tremendous natural potential was well known to the former fur and whiskey traders from Fort Benton, Montana who were among the first to take advantage of this

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[4]Alexander Begg, History of the North-West (Toronto: Hunter Rose and Co., 1894), II, 361. C. M. MacInnes, In the Shadow of the Rockies (London: Rivingtons, 1930), pp. 3-6. Duncan McEachran, Impressions of Pioneers of Alberta as a Ranching Country, Commencing 1881 (Ormstown, Quebec: By the author, n.d.), pp. 4-5.

new opportunity.

Fort Benton traders had operated in the region for several decades and, until the arrival of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1883, effectively tied this territory to their town's economic hinterland. The American presence in the Canadian southwest actually dated from shortly after the Lewis and Clark Expedition in 1806. This early American advance was in turn countered by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1832 with the erection of Peigan Post or Old Bow Fort, on the Bow River west of the present city of Calgary. The general hostility of the Blackfoot Indians however, as well as the unbridled tactics of the American whiskey trader, proved too great an obstacle and the company retired from the region two years later. In any case, the unforested nature of most of the area was not conducive to the production of the more desirable furs. The region's economic potential seemed hardly to justify a competitive struggle and the Hudson's Bay Company was satisfied to restrict its activities to the region's wooded perimeter and trade with the foothill Stonies from their post at Rocky Mountain House. Further British attempts to establish a foothold in the southwest were discontinued until the arrival of the North West Mounted Police in 1874.[5]

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[5]John Blue, Alberta Past and Present (Chicago: Pioneer Historical Publishing Co., 1924), pp. 321-327.

Official and educated opinion of the day labeled the territory part of the Great American Desert and fully supported the Hudson's Bay Company's unfavourable appraisal of its economic possibilities. In the late 1850's as the transfer of Hudson's Bay Company lands to Canada was being discussed, Professor Henry Youle Hind, of the University of Toronto was dispatched to the west to report on a possible transportation route and upon the region's general prospects. Hind's assessment of the southern plains was scarcely encouraging. He dismissed the entire region south of the South Saskatchewan as a "treeless plain, with a light and sometimes drifting soil, occasionally blown up into dunes, and not, in its present condition, fitted for permanent habitation of civilized man."[6] Two years later the British Colonial Office organized an expedition under Captain John Palliser. After thoroughly traversing the region between 1859 and 1863 Palliser confirmed Hind's report. Of the region south and west of the Red Deer River he concluded: "the whole . . . is valueless, the grass being very scanty and timber very scarce."[7] These reports, particularly the latter, apparently precluded the possibility of successful farming and eventually became weapons in the ranchers'

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[6]Henry Hind, A Preliminary and General Report on the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Exploring Expedition (Toronto: John Lowell, 1859), p. 31.

[7]Capt. John Palliser, Palliser Report 1860 (London: Queen's Printer, 1860), p. 8.

arsenal during their struggle against agricultural settlement. These pronouncements of aridity initiated a protracted and often bitter debate that continued for the next eighty years.

After the expeditions of Palliser and Hind discussions concerning the territory's future continued intermittently. When confederation of the British North American colonies in 1867 finally demonstrated the plausibility of Canadian administration, the British Colonial Office used its persuasive influence to speed the transfer. Negotiations finally concluded in 1869 and the Hudson's Bay Company relinquished its sovereignty to the new Dominion. It was apparent from the outset that the new proprietor viewed the annexed territory as a colonial dependency.[8] The Manitoba Act of 1870 consigned all public lands to the federal authorities. This metropolitan control proved to be an important factor in the cattlemen's later ascendancy.

In 1870, however, it still appeared that the southwestern portion of this new acquisition would continue to be ignored. Captain W. F. Butler, who travelled as a government emissary through the region in 1870, reiterated the contentions of Hind and Palliser: "the great plains lying between the Red Deer River and the Missouri [constitute] a vast tract of country which, with few exceptions, is arid,

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[8]George F. G. Stanley, The Birth of Western Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960), p. 120.

treeless, and sandy--a portion of the true American desert. . . ."[9] Of more immediate and ominous import was Butler's account of Indian border warfare, the rapidly disappearing buffalo, and the debauching of the native tribes by the numerous American whiskey traders.[10] Ultimately, it was the depredations of these American free traders that occasioned national interest in the region. Rampant lawlessness and Indian unrest reached a climax with the massacre of fifty-six Indians by the traders in the Cypress Hills in 1873.[11] With some fear that the entire region might be engulfed by the Indian wars then raging in the American west, and to bolster Canadian sovereignty in the Northwest Territories, the federal government dispatched a small, specially created federal police force under Captain G. A. French in 1874.

The coming of the North West Mounted Police was of central importance to western development in general and to the stock raising industry in particular. The arrival of the police happened to coincide with the beginning of the rapid expansion of the cattle industry in the American west, and their presence meant that the cattlemen's empire could be established simultaneously in Canadian territory. Their

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[9]Capt. W. F. Butler, The Great Lone Land (London: Sampson, Low Marston, Low and Searle, 1872), p. 376.

[10]Ibid., p. 358.

[11]Stanley, p. 203.

success quickly insured the security that open grazing required. The police also provided a small local market of which certain Montana and Hudson's Bay traders, who had long recognized the territories' ranching potential, were quick to take advantage. In this regard the origin of the stock industry parallels that of the United States, in that the first stockmen were small indigenous stock raisers who responded to the presence of small local markets, created in the first instance by the police, later by the purchases of the Department of the Interior for Indian needs, and finally by the more extensive demands of the railway contractors in the early 1880's. The presence of the police at this juncture is also significant in another respect. The three year enlistment contracts of the police contingent that reached Fort Macleod in 1874 coincided precisely with the phenomenal expansion of the American cattle industry. Members of the force witnessed the arrival of the first small herds in the southwest between 1874 and 1876. This meant that by 1877 there were a number of men whose terms of enlistment were due to expire who were entirely aware of the growth and success of the ranching industry in the United States and of the unequalled opportunities close at hand.[12] They were to form the core about with the Canadian ranching industry later

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[12]Glenbow Alberta Institute, D. McEachran, "A Journey Over the Plains from Fort Benton to Bow River and Back," p. 22, from Gazette (Montreal), 4 November 1881, Glenbow Alberta Institute hereafter cited GAI.

developed and were in large measure responsible for drawing the attention of other easterners to the region's ranching potential.

During the summer following their arrival, the police at Fort Macleod were joined by Joseph MacFarland, an Irishman with long experience in the American west, who settled with a small herd in the vicinity of the new fort.[13] Others were quick to follow MacFarland's lead, among them, George Emerson, a former Hudson's Bay man who had frequented the area since the middle sixties, who also brought in a small herd from Montana. Their presence is confirmed in the 1876 report of the police Comptroller, Frederick White, who in addition to announcing his pleasure that the liquor traffic was now suppressed, observed that, "a number of Americans have crossed the border and engaged in stock raising and other pursuits" and that a small village had sprung up around the Fort.[14] These settlers were joined by a few of the 39 policemen whose terms of engagement had expired during the year.[15] In 1877 more enlistment contracts

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[13]University of Alberta, Pearce Papers. Letter Book II, "Schedule of Squatters to whom Entry is to be Granted Forthwith," 8 September 1885.

[14]Canada, Sessional Papers (Commons), 1877, X, Vol. 7, No. 9 "Report of the Secretary of State of Canada for the Year Ended 31 December 1876," p. 25.

[15]Ibid., p. 24. One ex-policeman, D. J. Whitney, has generally been singled out as the first constable to take up ranching. Whitney is alleged to have purchased cattle in 1876 and turned them out on the range to fend for themselves

terminated and additional officers and men became cattlemen. Inspector W. F. Shurtliff and Superintendent W. Winder sought the best of both worlds and made a joint purchase of stock which they left in the keeping of others while they continued in the force.[16] Such was the pattern each year so that by 1880, before the arrival of the big cattle companies, ex-policemen comprised the dominant element within the ranch community.[17] Their presence of course had important

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till his term expired the following year. While Whitney's ingenuity cannot be disputed it seems that there were in fact a number of policemen who had taken their leave of the force to begin ranching the year previous, though they may not have acquired cattle till 1877. See for example n.a., "Early Range History," Scarlet and Gold, Vol. 46, p. 102.

[16]GAI, Kenneth R. Coppock. Alberta Ranch Brands 1881-1900. Brand Index, p. 372.

[17]That a number of police left the force to engage in stock raising is confirmed in Police Registers, early press reports, and Department of Interior files. Possibly the best source of accurate information is the Pearce Papers. As the chief Department of Interior official in the Territory he was, among other things, responsible for the settlement of conflicting land claims. The information for such adjudication has the advantage not only of being collected within several years of the original settlement, but also being sworn under oath. There were particular problems concerning many of the individuals who settled prior to the original surveys of 1881-83 and resultant files kept by William Pearce are therefore one of the few sources of accurate information regarding the arrival of many of these original settlers. Some of the important early ranchers who came west with the first police contingents and who commenced ranching before 1882 include: D. J. Whitney (1877), E. H. Maunsell (1877), J. W. Bell (1878), George Maunsell (1878), G. Ives (1879), D. Allison (1879), J. D. Murray (1879), Sgt. W. F. Parker (1879), R. Patterson (1880), F. R. Morris (1880), D. Grier (1880), A. H. Lynch-Staunton (1880), Sgt. Maj. C. Bray (1881), A. Wilson (1881), C. Ryan (1881), Superintendent W. Winder (1881), Col. James Walker (1881); others before 1882 to whom a precise date cannot be fixed: C. Kettles, J. Brueneau,

social implications, their attitude to law and order, for example contrasted with that of ranchers south of the boundary. Vigilante justice was rarely part of the Canadian cattlemen's modus operandi.

The settlement of ranchers in the vicinity of Fort Macleod between 1875 and 1877 was paralleled to a lesser extent in the Bow River valley some 150 miles further north. Though Fort Macleod was for the first decade the recognized capital of the Canadian cattle kingdom, Fort Calgary soon appeared as a rival claimant. The arrival of cattle in this region actually predated the southern herds by two years. The first cattle in the Canadian southwest were those brought in 1873 by the Methodist missionary, John McDougall, from Fort Garry to his father's newly established mission at Morleyville on the Bow River. A second herd was brought to the mission the following year from Montana by Kenneth McKenzie.[18] The first large herd, some 450 head, was driven

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H. S. Smith, M. J. Gallegher, G. Genge, A. H. Henry, S. Sharpe, Capt. C. E. Denny, W. Pocklington, J. Hollies, F. Shaw, A. Shead, F. Pace, D. McAuley, R. Wilson, and D. Cochrane. In addition to the foregoing who established long term residence in the west, there were others who remained only a few years in the southwest of whom no precise record remains.

See GAI, Southern Alberta Pioneers Association, nominal rolls. A. L. Freebairn, p. 1. C. Lynch-Staunton, p. 5. Macleod Gazette, 18 May 1886. Pearce Papers, LB.II, pp. 491, 499, 501, 14B12, 14B16, 14B2. n.a., "Early Range History," Scarlet and Gold, Vol. 46, pp. 101-11.

[18]John McDougall, Opening the Great West: Experiences of a Missionary in 1875-76, ed. J. Ernest Nix (Occasional Paper No. 6; Calgary: Glenbow Alberta Institute,

into the valley in August 1875 by John Shaw.[19] These cattle came from the Kootenay Lakes in the British Columbia interior, where the cattle industry had developed a decade earlier to supply the gold rush mining camps. At the same time, in the middle seventies, large herds from west of the Rockies in Washington and Oregon were being driven through the mountains into Montana to join with Texas cattle in stocking the plains. In fact most of the early herds established in northern Montana and the Canadian southwest were built from western rather than Texas stock. The famous Cochrane herd of about 6000 head which was later driven into the Bow River valley was of this origin.

A clear signal that the development of cattle raising in the southwest could begin in earnest came in 1877 with the signing of Indian Treaty Number Seven. At Blackfoot Crossing the assembled tribes of the southwest, in return for promises and assurances of support if and when hard times should come, agreed to: "cede, release, surrender,

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1970), p. 26. The traditional date, 1871, ascribed to the arrival of McDougall's cattle is incorrect, being two years before the mission at Morleyville was established. This error is but one example of the countless number to be found in the literature on Canadian ranching and is possibly to be explained by the reminiscent nature of much of the source material commonly used as well as the tendency to rely on a very few sources which by virtue of publication and repetition for over half a century have gained the acceptance of unquestionable fact.

[19]GAI, Richard Hardisty Papers, 1861-97. R. Bennes (Bow River) to Richard Hardisty, Chief Factor H.B.C. Edmonton, 14 August 1875.

and yield up to the Government of Canada for her Majesty the Queen and her successors forever, all their rights and privileges whatsoever to the lands. . . ."[20] The Indians' renunciation of their title to the land, and the government's promise to supply them with beef,[21] provided a strong stimulus to the incipient industry. The treaty also meant implicitly that the "free grass" era in Canadian ranching history would be short lived for now that the lands were available, and the industry proven, eastern official and business interests began to think in terms of large scale stock raising.

In his 1878 report Police Commissioner James Macleod recommended to the government that "a large band of cattle be brought and herded somewhere in the Bow River country where pasturage is abundant, and where they can graze out all winter."[22] The Commissioner warned that settling the Indians down to pastoral pursuits would be slower than anticipated, that in the interval the buffalo were rapidly disappearing and would not last more than three years, and that by that time starving Indians could pose a serious threat. Beyond these practical considerations Macleod and

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[20]Begg, III, Appendix 14, p. ixx.

[21]The scale of supply was: Two cows for every family under five, three cows for families of five to ten, four cows for families over ten, and one bull for every chief.

[22]Canada, Department of the Interior, Annual Report, 1879, Appendix D, p. 22.

his fellow officers did not restrain their optimism as to the general profitability of the venture they proposed. "There is no question in my mind as to the investment," Macleod reported, "many men in Montana have made fortunes in this business; why should not the Government utilize the magnificent domain lying idle in the West. . . ." This unqualified assurance was supported by a report of the mildest winter since the arrival of the force. The winter in the southwestern part of the territory was alleged to have brought little or no snow and the mild weather was said to have been interrupted only by an "occasional cold day."[23]

Such local optimism was directly reflected in the industry's continuing growth as the number of ex-policemen and others joining the ranchers' ranks began to increase at a faster rate. By 1878 it was necessary for the Territorial Council to pass the first ordinance respecting the marketing of stock.[24] The expansion of the ranching industry in the Canadian southwest between 1875 and 1880 stands in contrast to the stagnant economic condition of the Canadian prairie region in general. There is no evidence for the tradition that the disillusioned ranchers deserted the territory in

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[23] Ibid.

[24] Canada, Journals of the Council of the North-West Territories, from 1877 to 1887 (Regina: Printer to the Government of the North West Territories, 1886), p. 11.

1879 in face of the depredations of starving Indians.[25] In truth that year followed the pattern set by the previous four and was marked by the arrival of many would-be ranchers, including the usual number of discharged police, certain eastern Canadians who increasingly claimed the Eastern Townships as their point of origin[26] and the first well-to-do Britons.[27] The industry expanded further with the government's decision to act upon Macleod's advice of the previous year and reduce expenses by establishing a ranching enterprise of its own. One thousand head of breeding cattle were brought from Montana to be used as foundation stock to increase local meat supplies for the Indians.[28] This seems to have lessened the problem of Indian cattle-killing that had begun to increase through 1878. During the winter of 1880 daily rations were provided at Fort Macleod for two to three hundred Indians.[29] In the interval ranchers watched their herds more closely and for the most part maintained

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[25]See, for example, L. V. Kelly, The Rangemen: The Story of the Ranchers and Indians of Alberta (Toronto: William Briggs, 1913), p. 125.

[26]Pearce Papers, 14B12.

[27]Ibid., 14B2

[28]R. W. Murchie, Agricultural Progress on the Prairie Frontier, Vol. V of Canadian Frontiers of Settlement, ed. W. A. Mackintosh and W. L. G. Joerg (Toronto: Macmillan Co. of Canada Ltd., 1930), p. 54.

[29]Canada, Department of the Interior, Annual Report, 1880-81, Part II, North-West Mounted Police, Commissioner's Report, 1880, p. 25.

"continuous" residence.[30]

By 1880 the cattle-grazing industry was firmly established in the Canadian southwest. At Fort Macleod and at Pincher Creek, thirty miles to the west, the nuclei of definite communities had been established.[31] In all there were about 200 individuals scattered between the American boundary and the Bow River valley who had begun small-scale ranching ventures. Already the community had developed distinctive social characteristics. In addition to the body of ex-policemen,[32] who tended to reflect the values of their middle class Ontario background, and the Canadian and American traders already mentioned, was another group of Canadians. The latter were mainly from the Eastern Townships and it would appear from Compton County in particular. One of the first police officers to leave the force in order to pursue a ranching career was Captain William Winder of Lennoxville, Quebec. While on leave in 1879 Winder apparently discussed the possibility of forming a large cattle company with a number of well-to-do farmers and merchants and in so doing was indirectly responsible for arousing the interest of the

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[30]Pearce Papers, Letter Book II, Schedule of Squatters. . . .

[31]Canada, Department of the Interior, Annual Report, 1880-81, Part II, North West Mounted Police Commissioner's Report, pp. 21-25.

[32]Ibid., p. 25. Of the thirty-nine men who took their discharge from the Fort Macleod detachment in 1880, twenty-five remained, for the most part to take up cattle raising.

most successful stock-breeder in the Townships, Senator Matthew H. Cochrane. Though large investors began to investigate the region's potential, they were not prepared to commit capital until the government's intentions regarding the proposed transcontinental railway were clearly understood. Meanwhile a growing number of individuals left the Townships to begin ranching on their own on a smaller scale.[33]

Several factors probably account for the interest evident in the Townships. The region's connection with and interest in the west dated from fur trade days. George Emerson, a former Hudson's Bay trader and one of the earliest ranchers in the region was, for example, from this part of Quebec. More important was the attention the southwest gained in the press through the exploits of the newly created federal police force. Such general interest gained particular strength in the Townships for two reasons. The increasing French Canadian immigration into the region was accompanied by a growing social pressure which encouraged many of the English speaking population to contemplate the possibilities of new lands in the west. This was particularly the case of the younger sons whose future in the

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[33]Pearce Papers, 14B12. One such person from Compton was G. S. Ives, whose father was a justice of the Quebec Superior Court.

Townships seemed limited by the competition for land.[34] The particular attraction of the grazing lands of the southwest over other western regions was related to the presence of a long established stock raising industry in the Townships, particularly in the County of Compton where cattle growing was the single most important industry.[35] As a result there were many farmers and merchants in the region acquainted with the cattle business who could evaluate the stock raising potential of the prairie southwest with a practiced eye and with special interest.

The embryonic ranching community, predominantly of Eastern Canadian origin but including a minority of American and Canadian frontiersmen, was joined between 1879 and 1881 by another group that helped create the Canadian cattle kingdom's distinctive social milieu. From 1879 there began to arrive a number of Englishmen who typically wrote "gentleman" under the heading of "previous occupation" on their homestead applications.[36] Unlike Louis Garnet, one of the first to arrive in 1879, most of them did not insist on appearing for dinner in "evening dress" in order to "keep

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[34]See, for example, Robert Sellar, The Tragedy of Quebec: The Expulsion of its Protestant Farmers (Huntington, P. Q.: By author, 1907).

[35]L. S. Channell, History of Compton County (Cookshire, P. Q.: By author, 1896), p. 33.

[36]Pearce Papers, 14B12.

from reverting to savagery,"[37] or go to the expense of having a piano delivered to the ranch while the railway was still several hundred miles distant, but Garnet's eccentricities indicate the social order which was to evolve. These prospective ranchers invariably had sufficient capital to establish ranches of their own, and were generally members of the middle and upper strata of British society. Most arrived with the moral and financial backing of influential friends at home and in Canada. Charles Inderwick and F. W. Godsal, for example, came west with considerable funds and the personal recommendations of Lord Lorne. Others had close relations in the upper echelons of British parliamentary and military circles.[38] Probably most numerous among Britons were those drawn from the lesser landed gentry, who either sold or left small properties expecting to regain

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[37] J. D. Higinbotham, When the West Was Young (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1933), p. 203.

[38] Some of the western ranchers who benefited from such high placed contacts included: Cave-Brown-Cave (banking), R. Newbolt (military), Higginson, (military), D. McPherson (military), W. Gordon-Cumming (banking), D. Fraser (banking), Hon. T. B. H. Cochrane (military), Recardo (banking), A. Samson (banking), G. Ross (banking), B. Hartford (banking), H. Eckford (military), A. Wyndham (military). In selecting the foregoing and following names as examples the author has restricted the selection to those who came before 1890. The list is not inclusive. The names were selected on the basis of prominence within the ranch community and in terms of longer residence in the west. Each list could be expanded by the addition of similar social types who arrived after 1890 and on to the late 20's.

their economic status in the Canadian West at a time when British agriculture was particularly hard pressed to meet the competition of agricultural imports.[39] Hartford and Sampson, the Oxford educated proprietors of the Bar XY, were typical of the many well educated second sons who could not be supported by the family estate at home. It was customary for the family in Britain to support these individuals with an annual remittance until they could become comfortably established in their new occupation. Associated with this group were many Anglo-Irish who left threatened estates in the south of Ireland. Other families of the English establishment were represented in the Canadian West by sons whose military pensions and gratuities provided sufficient capital to become ranchers. In fact the country abounded with ranchers with "Captain" prefixed to their names.[40]

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[39]Some of the more prominent representatives of the British squirearchy in the southwest included: W. Skrine, O. A. Critchley, W. Bell-Irving, Wilmot, L. Brook, L. Garnet, Goddard, D. H. Andrews, W. Huckvale, and J. Deane-Freeman.

[40]Captains Bryant, Wilson, Lyndon, Quin, Bedingfeld, and Scobie were counted among the more successful ranchers. For biographical information on the British population see the following: GAI, Southern Alberta Pioneers Association, Nominal rolls. GAI, Robert Newbolt, Autobiography, pp. 19-23. GAI, F. Ings, "Tales From Midway Ranch," pp. 4-40, 124-159. GAI, A. L. Freebairn, "The Story of Pincher Creek and District," 1958, pp. 1-8. A. E. Cross, "Round-Up of 1887," Calgary Historical Society, n.d., pp. 2-14. F. W. Godsal, "Old Times," Alberta Historical Review, XII (Autumn, 1964), 19-24. H. Frank Lawrence, "Early Days in the Chinook Belt," Alberta Historical Review, XIII (Winter, 1965), 9-19. C. Lynch-Staunton, "A History of the Early Days of Pincher Creek," Women's Institute of

The country had so filled with expatriate Britons according to one Canadian lady, that social discourse was hopelessly confined to "their childhood--the opera--military tournaments--Henley. . . ."[41] She was also critical of what she deemed to be the rather condescending attitude of many of her neighbors towards Canadians. "There are so many Englishmen here" she wrote to a friend the spring of 1884, "they nearly all have no tact in the way they speak of Canadians and Canada, and the last straw to me is the way in which they say 'but we do not look on you as a Canadian!' They mistake this for a compliment. It makes my Canadian blood boil." At the same time her own insistence that the cowboys on her ranch appear properly attired with collar and tie for dinner suggests that despite her complaints she probably fitted without too much difficulty, as did many of her Canadian counterparts, into the evolving social mould.

The English character and the presence of so many Englishmen "of good family" was consistently reported by visitors and residents of the region before the turn of the century. British journalists travelling with the Marquis of

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Alberta, n.d., 4-54. Gerald L. Berry, The Whoop-Up Trail (Edmonton: Applied Arts Products, 1953), pp. 99-110. High River Pioneers' and Old Timers' Association, Leaves From the Medicine Tree (Lethbridge, Alberta: Lethbridge Herald, 1960). Higinbotham, 95-102, 202-204, 259. Pearce Papers 14B2, 14B12.

[41]GAI, C. Inderwick, Diary and Personal Letters from North Fork Ranch, 13 May 1884.

Lorne on his western tour in 1881 were much impressed with the foothill country about Fort Macleod and Pincher Creek. The representative of the Edinburgh Courant observed with regard to the latter that "quite a little colony had been attracted by the beauty and fertility of the country, and among them men of high English Family. . . ."[42] Five years later in the opening address to the Territorial Council, Lieutenant Governor Edgar Dewdney commented that the Provisional District of Alberta had over the past number of years "received a very important addition to its population, consisting principally of wealthy families" who were chiefly engaged in stock raising.[43] Writing in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine of Canadian ranch life in the late 1890's, Moira O'Neill observed that the country "abounded" with Englishmen and that the region was "emphatically a land of the Younger Son." Herself chatelaine of a ranch near High River, she emphasized that life for an "English lady" on a ranch was not at all that of a household drudge; though homes were not as refined as in Britain no walls could compare with her cedar panelled ones as the "perfect background for water colours, china, books, . . ." Above all else she stressed the beauty of the countryside where one could "find great

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[42]James G. MacGregor, "Lord Lorne in Alberta," Alberta Historical Review, XII (Autumn, 1964), 14. From original articles in the Edinburgh Courant, 18, 27, 28 October 1881.

[43]Canada, Journals of the Council of the North West Territories, 13 October 1886, p. 8.

refreshment in the shady side of a big haystack, and Bacon's 'History of the Reign of Henry VII'."[44] The life style of some of the wealthier ranchers at the turn of the century was accurately presented in Canada's first encyclopedia wherein many cattlemen were noted as having "established themselves in charming homesteads, surrounded by the same kind of comfort and refinement which Englishmen associate with the life of an English country house." By way of qualification the author did remind his readers that there were many stages of development from the small lumber shack "to the stone house spreading its red roofed verandahs in the midst of well-kept lawns and flower gardens. . . ."[45]

Though the squirearchy or "race of 'ranch patriarchs'" which Professor W. Brown of the Agricultural College at Guelph felt should be established in the pastoral regions of the southwest,[46] did not quite develop, a distintive society peculiar to the Canadian cattle kingdom did evolve. At the apex of the region's social pyramid was a wealthy and politically powerful elite composed principally of Britons

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[44]Moira O'Neill, "A Lady's Life on a Ranche," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 163 (January, 1898), 3-16.

[45]J. J. Young, "Ranching in the Canadian North-West," Canada: An Encyclopedia of the Country, ed. J. Castell Hopkins (Toronto: The Linscott Publishing Co., 1899), V. 62.

[46]Alexander Begg, "Stock Raising in the Bow River District Compared with Montana," Manitoba and the Great North West, ed. J. Macoun (Guelph: The World Publishing Co., 1882), pp. 273-277, quoting Prof. W. Brown.

and Eastern Canadians. The outward manifestations of this society of the early ranching period included among other things the fox hunt, in which the lowly coyote was the unhappy substitute for the fox, a polo league of international calibre, Chinese cooks, governesses, tutors and schools in the "Old Country" and eastern Canada, and winters in Calgary, Victoria, or Great Britain, depending on financial status. This group was definitely a minority, but they were none the less the arbiters of a social standard, artificial though it may have been.

As has been shown, the basic foundations of this society had been established as early as 1881, before the era of the cattle companies began. Up to this time the Canadian cattle kingdom had been the preserve of the small rancher. The first hint that this phase, the era of 'free grass,' was about to end came when the Department of the Interior reported in 1879 that certain individuals already were successfully engaged in the stock raising industry in the foothill region and pointedly predicted that there was "every possibility of the further development by gentlemen of experience in stock-farming, and possessed of large capital both from Great Britain and the older Provinces."[47] The report might in fact be viewed as the government's declaration of intent to promote the interests of the cattle

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[47] R. England, The Colonization of Western Canada (London: P. S. King and Son Ltd., 1936), p. 57, quoting C.S.P., (Commons), XIII, No. 4.

companies and the large stockmen.

Officials in Ottawa were more than eager to see the establishment of a large stock raising industry in a region hitherto considered to be practically a desert. By bringing investment and limited settlement to a region considered too dry for cereal agriculture, ranching seemed to fit perfectly into the general framework of western development. On the practical side, the recognized profitability of the ranching industry also offered considerable scope for political patronage. In addition there was the immediate and pressing problem of meeting Indian beef requireme . . Dr. McEachran, Dominion Chief Veterinarian and a promi : early ranch manager and owner, summarized government policy towards the Indians at the time as operating on the premise that it was "cheaper to feed [Indians] than to fight them."[48] McEachran was referring to the obligation assumed by the Canadian government in 1878 to feed starving Indian bands after the disappearance of the great buffalo herds. While Macdonald probably did not seriously consider the alternative of fighting the Indians, he was no doubt aware, as Minister of the Interior, of the uncertain success of the ranching enterprise the government had initiated in 1879, and of the considerable cost of importing beef from Montana. This urgent concern within his own department motivated Macdonald to

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[48]McEachran, p. 4.

encourage the establishment without delay of large ranching companies in the western foothills.

There were at the same time many eastern capitalists, particularly in Montreal, who were increasingly interested in the possibilities of western stock raising. Up to this point several factors had precluded more extensive development of the industry. Larger investors had been reluctant to establish themselves in a region where land tenure as it was known in the East had yet to be defined, where "range right" was determined by only a vague mutual understanding between parties, rather than by legal contract, and where it seemed cattle were simply turned loose on the prairie. More important, the Liberal government of Alexander Mackenzie, faced with a severe depression, showed little enthusiasm for the construction of the transcontinental railway which was the prerequisite for the establishment of cattle export markets. Thus the situation altered completely in 1878 when Sir John A. Macdonald and his Conservative government were returned to power and gave first priority to completion of a transcontinental. The prospect of railway construction crews at work across the west promised a substantial increase in the immediate local market. At the same time the decision of the British government in 1879 to impose an embargo on live cattle imports from the United States gave Canadian cattle a privileged position in the British market, thus presenting the possibility of huge export sales and

engendering much enthusiasm.[49] Hereafter potential stock raisers and land speculators expressed a lively interest in the grazing lands of the Canadian southwest.

Given the government's desire to see the rapid expansion of the ranching frontier in Canada as well as the definite interest of certain eastern capitalists, it remained for the two sides to come to some mutually agreeable system by which expansion could take place. Of first concern was the matter and manner of land tenure. This question was eventually resolved after much negotiation between the Canadian Prime Minister and Senator Matthew H. Cochrane. As possibly the most prominent stock-breeder in Canada, and as one who had been engaged in the stock business most of his life, Cochrane's great interest in the western range is hardly surprising.

Cochrane was born on a farm in Compton county, Quebec and resided continuously in the county except for a seventeen year interval in Boston where he learned and eventually prospered in the manufacture of shoes and leather goods. He returned to Canada in 1854 and continued his business in Montreal. By the mid-eighties, in partnership with Charles Cassils, his firm employed some 300 people and had a yearly business volume of about $500,000. This business

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[49] A. A. Lupton, "Cattle Ranching in Alberta 1874-1910: its evolution and migration," The Alberta Geographer, II (April, 1968), p. 50.

success, which assisted his appointment to the Senate, provided the initial resources to support his main preoccupation, animal husbandry. Cochrane was determined to have the best animals money could buy. In 1868 he purchased a female shorthorn, "Duchess" for 1000 guineas, the highest price ever paid for a female of that breed. During 1870 for example, he expended $60,000 on breeding stock. The progeny of his own herd soon brought considerable reward and made Cochrane's Hillhurst farm a highly respected name in British and American breeding circles. The Senator's herd played a significant part in the rebuilding of American breeding herds following their serious decline during the Civil War. Cochrane's emphasis on quality herds and his later importation of superior breeding stock into the Canadian southwest contributed in no small measure to the general superiority of Canadian over American range animals.[50]

Before 1881 grazing regulations were ill defined. The first Dominion Lands Act in 1872 anticipated that stock raising in the west would follow the traditional Eastern pattern, that it would be primarily a small scale activity conducted to supplement the farmers' other agricultural endeavors. Consequently the provisions for land tenure were designed specifically to apply to the "bona fide homesteader"

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[50]The Canadian Biographical Dictionary (Chicago: American Biographical Publishing Co., 1881), pp. 281-82. J. K. Johnson, The Canadian Dictionary of Parliament (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1968), p. 127. Montreal Gazette, 13 August 1903, (obit.). Channell, p. 45.

rather than corporate organizations.[51] When the suitability of certain parts of the western territory for stock raising became apparent in 1876 the Act was amended to make provision for the grant to non-residents or companies of leases subject to a two year notice of cancellation. In the grazing country however none of the early ranchers bothered with such a formality. In this regard Canadian ranching practice followed the American pattern, where it was mutually understood by the small local stockmen that "range rights" were acquired by the first cattlemen to bring his herd into the valley of a stream or river. Though this practice was officially restricted with the arrival of the big cattle companies, many small ranches continued, with some difficulty, to graze their animals on public and company lands till well after the turn of the century.

Senator Cochrane's first official request for grazing lands along the Bow River came on 26 November 1880.[52] Shortly thereafter the Senator sent to the government tentative plans for his proposed ranching scheme, along with his request for certain considerations not specifically covered by provisions in the Dominion Lands Act. Cochrane first

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[51] Canada, Statutes, 1872, cap. 23, sec. 34.

[52] PAC, Department of the Interior, Timber and Grazing Branch, Vol. 10, 142709 (Cochrane Ranch) pt. 1, M. H. Cochrane to Col. Dennis, Deputy Minister of the Interior, 26 November 1880. The extensive Department of Interior Timber and Grazing files will hereafter be cited according to their archival listing, RG15, B2a.

presented what he considered to be the advantages that would accrue to the government and to the nation were a viable ranching industry established. He stressed that the government would no longer be obliged to purchase beef supplies for the police and Indians from foreigners and would at the same time be favouring the growth of industry on its own side of the border. In addition to tying his own interests to Macdonald's National Policy, he emphasized the benefits of such an enterprise to future immigrants to the Territory. They would gain the opportunity of stocking their farms with improved breeds of cattle and horses rather than with inferior animals from the United States and without having to face the excessive cost of transportation from Ontario. Cochrane also expressed his belief that a large cattle export trade could be developed. The cost of establishing in the west a herd of two or three thousand animals including about seventy-five thorough-bred bulls was estimated by Cochrane to be about $125,000. To warrant this large outlay he asked for a lease sufficient to expand the herd to 10,000 and "the right to purchase a sufficient acreage within the leased area for a farm on which to erect the necessary buildings for a certain amount of winter protection and forage. . . ."[53] Last of all Cochrane assured Macdonald that the lands he desired along the Bow River were to the best of

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[53] Ibid., M. H. Cochrane to Sir John A. Macdonald, 17 December 1880.

his knowledge unoccupied and of no "special attraction for settlers who desire to farm. . . ." This general outline was followed on 10 February with a more specific and somewhat expanded proposal. Cochrane now proposed to establish a herd of about 8000 breeding cows and three to four hundred thorough-bred bulls, together with horse and sheep breeding stock and the necessary fencing and buildings. In return for this commitment, which Cochrane estimated would represent an investment of about $500,000 within two years, he requested the right to purchase 10,000 acres of his choice within the bounds of the lease. He asked in addition that he be allowed to purchase outright all lands along the lease's outer boundary. The Senator argued that such government cooperation was necessary if the government wished to ensure the successful inauguration of improved stock breeding on an extensive scale in the Territories.[54]

In a memorandum drafted for the consideration of Privy Council, Macdonald ignored the proposed boundary purchase and rejected the 10,000 acre request as excessive. He did initially concede however that Cochrane's request for a base of freehold land from which to operate the ranch could be considered a legitimate security. With this in mind he submitted that Cochrane be allowed to purchase, at two dollars per acre, 5000 acres selected by him from within a

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[54] Ibid., M. H. Cochrane to the Minister of Interior, 10 February 1881.

leased tract of 100,000 acres, also to be selected by the Company. An annual rental of ten dollars per thousand acres and provision for return of the lease to the Crown on two years notice was also suggested.[55]

Before final approval in Cabinet the government's draft terms were submitted for Cochrane's consideration. One of the shareholders in the Senator's proposed venture, Dr. D. McEachran, was quick to charge that the government's terms were far from liberal. As McEachran saw it the lease was simply a two year lease, renewable every two years for two more years. He argued that it would take five to six years to build a herd of improved stock and should the government of the day see fit to cancel the lease the company would be ruined. McEachran stated that unless the company could have uninterrupted possession for twenty-one years, with the option of purchase of all or part of the land at expiration of the lease at the value of the land at the time the lease commenced, he for one would not be interested in such a venture.[56]

The government's terms were finally established at a meeting of the Privy Council on 11 May 1881. Rental was set at ten dollars per annum for every thousand acres, the lessee would be charged $1.25 per acre for homestead land and

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[55] Ibid., Draft of Memorandum to Privy Council, 21 February 1881.

[56] Ibid., D. McEachran to Col. Dennis, 10 March 1881.

given the right to import American cattle duty free during 1881 and 1882.[57] Cochrane's case before cabinet seems to have been presented and supported by his good friend and Compton neighbour, John H. Pope, Minister of Agriculture. It seems that Cochrane was also given the verbal promise that he would have the right of first selection of grazing lands in the west.[58] J. P. Wiser, a wealthy Ontario distiller and stock raiser, who had joined Cochrane in negotiations with the government in the final stages, and who was to receive second choice of lands in order to locate next to Cochrane, at this stage transferred his interest to the American West and established the 1,750,000 acre Dominion Cattle Company ranch in the Texas Panhandle.[59] The Senator's plan was to control the entire Bow Valley region and when Wiser dropped out he had shareholders in his own Company apply for adjoining leases.

The Government's comprehensive lease policy was finally introduced to the general public by an Order-in-Council dated December 23, 1881, a month after the first Cochrane herd had reached the Bow River Valley. Leases of

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[57] Ibid., Copy of a note from Sir John A. Macdonald to J. Pope, Minister of Agriculture, 12 May 1881, as enclosed in letter of J. A. Gemmill to Minister of Interior, 31 July 1882.

[58] Ibid., M. H. Cochrane to Deputy Minister of the Interior, 31 May 1881.

[59] An Encyclopedia of Canadian Biography (Montreal, 1904), p. 55.

up to 100,000 acres were to be granted for a period not exceeding twenty-one years. The rental was set at one cent per acre per year, or ten dollars for every 1000 acres. In order to deter speculators and ensure a means of cancellation the lessee was obliged to place on the tract one head of cattle for every ten acres embraced by the lease within three years of the assignment.[60] This provision was also intended to set the maximum number of cattle that could be put on a lease and thus prevent over stocking. The government also reserved the right to terminate the contract for any reason on two years notice.[61] The lessee's right of purchase was left somewhat vague, permitting the option of purchase within the leasehold "for a home farm and corral," without specifying the amount of land that could be purchased. The per acre cost of such lands was also raised back to the original two dollars. As negotiations had proceeded through 1881 the government became aware that interest in western stock raising had greatly increased and that there was a great demand for leases, and consequently reverted to a somewhat stronger position than it had taken in May. Moreover Senator Cochrane had already made his commitment and his presence in the west ensured that others would follow.

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[60] Alberta, Department of Lands and Forests, Orders-in Council, Department of the Interior, 1864-1932, Vol. III, Order-in-Council, No.1710, 23 December 1881, pp. 805-812.

[61] Ibid., Vol. IV, pp. 159-161. Text of the first grazing lease.

Cochrane on the other hand felt betrayed. He insisted that he had been promised the right to 5 per cent of the land leased at $1.25 per acre and had his solicitor press the claim using Macdonald's note to J. H. Pope on 12 May 1881 as evidence.[62] He continued to advance his demand for the next two years, lamenting for instance in June 1883, that winter losses had cost the company over $100,000, and that he would not have invested a dollar in the enterprise had it not been for the promise.[63] His efforts were all to no avail and the issue dragged on for a full decade before it was finally settled at a conclave of ranchers and government officials in 1892. Cochrane's plea was probably thwarted by the commanding position his company had already assumed despite the alleged handicap of which the Senator complained. Cochrane and his associates controlled and had excluded all others from a fifty mile stretch of the river valley from Calgary to the mountains in the west.

Overall the cattle companies had gained some significant concessions from the government. Though the right of purchase was unclear, there was a "no-settlement" clause

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[62] RG15, B2a, Vol. 10, 142709 pt. 1, J. A. Gemmill, Solicitor for Cochrane Ranche Co., to the Minister of the Interior, 31 July 1882, enclosing copy of letter from Sir John A. Macdonald to J. H. Pope.

[63] Ibid., M. H. Cochrane to D. L. Macpherson, Minister of the Interior, 7 June 1883.

which prohibited homesteading on lands covered by a lease. This meant that a prospective homesteader would, if he could convince the government that certain lands should be withdrawn from the lease, be compelled to wait for two years after the notice of cancellation had been sent to the lessee. Many prospective settlers as it turned out were not prepared to wait two, three or four years and consequently moved to lands further north. This provision had a profound effect upon the early history of the region. It set in motion a conflict between the large stockmen and companies on the one side and the small stock raisers and would-be farmers on the other. It was a conflict that was to last with a varying degree of bitterness until the First Great War. The new lease system in effect gave control of the region to the big operators.

Lessees were also accorded the right to import their foundation stock from the United States duty free during 1881 and 1882 (later extended to 1 January 1886)[64] while settlers and small stockmen who were non-leaseholders were required to pay the regular 20 per cent customs levy, thereby adding a second source of bitterness between the two groups. Though the first small ranchers who located in the region before customs regulations were strictly enforced did not suffer the disadvantage, it meant that non-leaseholders and intending

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[64]RG15, B2a, Vol. 3, 11007, Order-in-Council, 3 February 1885.

stock raisers arriving after 1886 were faced with paying the duty on imported American stock or buying from one of the established Canadian ranchers, giving the latter a marked advantage.

Beyond these specific details as they related to individual ranchers and settlers, the new lease system meant that the Canadian range would develop in a manner quite different from the American pattern. "Free grass" was the motive force behind the vast expansion of the American cattle industry in the 1870's. Theoretically the range was free to all. In practice the traditional phenomenon of the American frontier, squatter sovereignty, determined control. Such sovereignty was based upon the custom of priority; when a cattleman drove his herd into some likely valley and found cattle already present he continued elsewhere. Early legislation in the cattle country provided punishment for those who drove stock from their "accustomed range." Though designed against cattle rustling, such laws indirectly recognized the fact that by grazing in a certain area the stockowner gained a kind of prescriptive right to the range as opposed to one who might come later. Such a system worked well as long as there were new valleys into which the industry could expand. The cattle boom of the early eighties put an end to this easy system. As the range became more crowded, large companies bought ill-defined range rights which proved very difficult to defend in court. The best

security came in the form of full legal title to springs and water courses. He who possessed title to a river front or a spring controlled the surrounding range and consequently a great rush developed for such properties. In the end ranchers on the vastly overstocked American range met disaster in the severe winter of 1886.

While the known deficiencies of the American free range practice motivated the Canadian decision to adopt the lease system, the idea of the grazing lease was actually borrowed from the Australian experience. Development of the Australian grazing lands began on a large scale during the 1830's and in an attempt to control this movement the government first imposed a per capita tax on stock. This system, like the free range idea in the United States, did nothing to check the vigorous and sometimes violent competition between graziers for control of choice areas. Thus the agitation for permanent holdings which soon followed resulted in 1847 in the passage of regulations which provided for the granting of grazing leases. The measure appealed both to the government which gained a means to control development and to the grazier who secured a degree of security hitherto absent.[65]

In Canada, by leasing the public domain rather than allowing it to be used as common pasture, the government

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[65]RG15, B2a, Vol. 172, 145330 pt. 4, "Grazing Regulations," 6 November 1903.

maintained a much closer control on land use, and by establishing a clear basis of legal ownership helped prevent the range wars that occasionally developed in the American west among ranchers disputing one another's rights to a particular range. The legal position of the Canadian leaseholder was clearly defined by statute and this, with a federal police force at hand to uphold the provisions of national laws, provided a security that the American rancher dependent on "range rights" did not possess. The lease system also tended to prevent the rapid expansion which led to the overstocking of the southern range. With most of the foothill region divided into leases large enough to allow for vast increases in the initial herd size, and given the lessees' legal right to keep others off little used or excess range, the Canadian range never faced an overstocking problem. By giving the cattle companies such extensive leaseholds the government also greatly restricted the activities of the small or beginning cattlemen who could not afford to buy or lease land, and even those who could afford to lease often found that the desired range had been given to someone in the east who had important friends in Parliament. The new lease system fundamentally altered the basic structure of the Canadian cattle kingdom as it had evolved to 1881 and was the direct cause of much of the ill feeling that arose among the smaller stockmen or intending settlers who saw about them great tracts of little or never used land

upon which they could not legally locate. Consequently, while the system was in part designed to counter some of the more obvious difficulties characteristic of the American system, and had much economic and legal merit, it initiated a struggle that was to plague the federal authorities for the next four decades.

While the government's lease policy was being finalized in the summer of 1881, the Marquis of Lorne, Canada's Governor General and the son-in-law of Queen Victoria embarked, on behalf of the Canadian Government, upon a journey to the Canadian North-West intended to bring the region to world and especially British attention. After agreeing to meet their expenses, Lorne was able to persuade correspondents of five British journals, The Edinburgh Courant, Edinburgh Scotsman, London Graphic, London Times and the London Telegraph, to accompany him on his western tour. Though the rich soil of Manitoba and Saskatchewan was a source of great amazement,[66] it was the foothill region of the Rockies that made the greatest impact on Lorne's party. The Governor General and his friends were impressed by the beauty of the region, by the well-watered and wooded nature of the terrain and by the obvious ranching possibilities which were vocally reinforced by the ranchers

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[66] The Times (London), 5 October 1881, p. 4.

already established in the area.[67] While Lorne's western tour did much to publicize the fact that most of the Canadian prairie region was fertile and suitable for farming, the further endorsement of the ranching prospects in the southwest simply confirmed what was already widely known. The cattle industry was in fact already firmly established in the southwest by the summer of 1881. Though the industry expanded rapidly between 1881 and 1884 with the arrival of the large cattle companies, it was really the small stockmen who had laid its foundation and proved the country's potential. There were already thousands of cattle grazing on the range when the company men arrived. In the ten months immediately preceding the arrival of the first company herd (the Cochrane herd) in April 1881, seventeen independent local stockment in the Macleod region, for example, had brought in over 5000 head.[68] Cattle had in fact grazed in the Bow River valley for almost a decade before the Senator's celebrated herd of 6600 were driven into the valley in the spring of 1881.

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[67]The Governor General was particularly impressed and remarked to a friend, F. W. Godsal, who visited him at Rideau Hall the following year: "If I were not Governor General of Canada, I would be a cattle rancher in Alberta." F. W. Godsal, p. 19. Lorne's enthusiasm was shared by his staff, many of whom later established ranches in the west. Lorne himself, along with other titled friends, also became a shareholder in a western ranch.

[68]RG15, B2a, Vol. 3, 11007. "Statement showing the number of Horses, Cattle and Sheep, and the name of the Importer, entered in the District of Alberta from the first of June 1880."

The foundation established by the small ranchers during the free grass era before 1882 is particularly important, for in this period the basic traits were acquired that were to distinguish the Canadian ranching community from its American counterpart and from their later farming neighbours. In the first place the Canadian cattle kingdom was not simply a northward extension of the American ranching frontier. It developed not after but coincidentally with the ranching frontier in northern Wyoming and Montana, and with some differences peculiar to its own distinct setting. Whereas the nature of the economic enterprise and the stock-raising technique was largely the same on both sides of the border, the social structure which evolved north of the boundary during this period was fundamentally different and it set the tone for the following three decades. Though some of the first ranchers were American, they were never near a majority and as a body they carried practically no social, economic or political weight. Canadian frontiersmen were also few in numbers, and more often than not they were ex-Hudson's Bay men of a somewhat different temperament than their whiskey-trading American counterparts. By far the majority of the early ranchers were former members of the North-West Mounted Police and they contributed a special quality to the early settlement. A third group of Canadians can be identified by the place of their former residence. This group from the Eastern Townships of Quebec was often well acquainted with

stock raising and in general strengthened the community's eastward and Canadian orientation. Added to these groups was a host of immigrants from the British Isles. These prospective ranchers very often had sufficient capital to establish ranches of their own, and were generally members of the middle and upper strata of British society. Cowboys employed on the ranches were of similar background. Their number included many former members of the police, experienced stockhands from the Eastern Townships, Americans who had driven the first big herds into Canada and then were induced to remain, as well as a few adventuresome youths from the British Isles. Given the composition of the small closely knit embryonic community that evolved before 1882 it is apparent that most of the individuals who had come to the southwest comprised a class of people who were collectively very different from the American ranch community and distinct from the western farm population with whom they are often equated. This social difference tended in many instances to compound the economic differences which later divided the farm and ranch communities. Ranching required more initial capital than did farming, and consequently tended to attract persons with greater resources. The vast majority of these newcomers were not part of an advancing frontier that had moved slowly westward. They were instead representatives of the metropolitan culture of the east, or of the stratified society of rural Britain and their social orientation was eastward rather than southward.

## CHAPTER II

## THE CATTLE COMPANIES AND THE "BEEF BONANZA:" 1882-1891

It is important to emphasize that the ranching industry should not be considered simply as an arid land adaptation. The advantage of ranching compared to alternative patterns of land use within the same region is determined in the long run by return on investment. Ranching is not a subsistence occupation. If grain growing for example offers a greater return, then the ranching industry predictably contracts. Cattle ranching as it developed in the early 1880's was strictly a business operation and in this sense is a product of the industrial revolution. The industry is dependent upon the presence of large urban markets as well as a massive processing and transportation infrastructure to link producer and consumer. The required technology came with the westward advance of the railway after the American Civil War and the subsequent development of the refrigerator ship in 1879[1] which meant that cheaply grown western beef gained access to the high-priced markets of the eastern United States and Europe. The situation presented intense speculative appeal as the rapid organization of numerous heavily

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[1]Simon G. Hanson, Argentine Meat and The British Market (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1937), p. 46.

capitalized cattle companies attests. In the broadest sense the phenomenal expansion of the ranching frontier in the late 1870's and early 1880's is as much an expansion into the working class areas of London and Manchester as into the grasslands of the northwestern plains.

The primary reason for the vast expansion of the North American stock raising industry during the late 1870's was the dramatic increase in beef exports to Great Britain. Beef shipments to Britain from the United States, which began in 1874, amounted in 1876 only to 380 head, and then suddenly climbed to approximately 75,000 head in 1879.[2] British annual imports of fresh beef increased from 1732 tons in 1876 to an average of 30,000 tons between 1878 and 1880, of which 80 to 90 per cent came from the United States.[3] The increasing demand for beef in Great Britain coincided with a decline in her own production. The anthrax which had ravaged continental herds in the 1860's eventually spread through British and Irish herds despite a quarantine and resulted in the slaughter of thousands of animals. In a situation where the British demand was increasing at the same time as herds

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[2]W. Turrentine Jackson, "British Interests in the Range Cattle Industry," When Grass Was King, ed. Maurice Frink (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 1956), Part II, p. 139, citing Herbert O. Brayer, "The Influence of British Capital on the Western Range Cattle Industry," Westerners' Brand Book (Denver, May, 1948), pp. 3-4.

[3]Ibid., citing Great Britain, Final Report on Her Majesty's Commissioners Appointed to Inquire in the Subject of the Agricultural Depression, 1897.

were decreasing and where the price of beef had accordingly risen, a highly profitable market for American cattle emerged almost immediately.

The magnitude of the resulting cattle imports was such that by 1878 there was growing concern among British farmers over the competition of cheaper imported American beef. At the same time financial circles, particularly in Edinburgh, became excited about the investment potential of American cattle ranching. Popular journals were soon filled with the reports of enthusiastic visitors and investment agents who outlined the tremendous potential profits. In 1879 such optimistic assessments gained official confirmation in a British Royal Commission on Agriculture established to assess the competitive threat. Two of the assistant commissioners sent to America to investigate explained that the key to the western stockman's success was free public land. After the purchase of a herd and a minimal amount of river or stream frontage for watering, the cattleman faced no operational expenses save that of herding his cattle. They reported that it was "generally acknowledged that the average profit of the stockgrower has been for years fully 33 per cent." With the singular advantage of "land for nothing, and an abundance of it," ranching was described as clearly the most profitable branch of American farming.[4] Such was

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[4] Ibid., citing Great Britain, Clare Read and Albert Pell, "Further Reports of Assistant Commissioners, Ministry

the tenor of numerous books, articles and pamphlets that continued to appear until the crisis of 1886. Books like General James S. Brisbin's, Beef Bonanza or How to Get Rich on the Plains presented the themes of cheap land and fabulous profits and gained wide attention.[5] British newspapers carried quotations from American sources which claimed profits averaging 100 per cent for each of the five years between 1877 and 1882.[6] Even the more conservative estimates of profits ranging from 33-1/2 to 66-1/2 per cent by writers such as the Scotsman, J. S. Tait, in a small brochure entitled, The Cattle-fields of the Far West,[7] were sufficient to create an investment craze. The arithmetic of profit was blatantly straightforward; a good calf worth five dollars at birth could be fed on almost free grass and would bring forty-five to sixty dollars when ready for market three or four years later. By 1879 the great "cattle boom" was underway and by 1883 a host of British financiers and titled investors had established heavily capitalized individual and

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of Agriculture and Fisheries," Royal Commission on Agriculture, 1879-1882, pp. 7-16.

[5]Cited in Marie Sandoz, The Cattlemen (New York: Hastings House, 1958), p. 238.

[6]John Clay, My Life on the Range (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962), p. vii.

[7]Sandoz, p. 239. See also, W. P. Webb, The Great Plains (Toronto: Ginn and Company, 1959), p. 235. W. Baillie, "Cattle Ranches in the Far West," The Fortnightly Review, XXVIII New Series (July-December, 1880), pp. 438-457.

company enterprises. The foreign controlled giants of the industry, the Prairie Cattle Co., Ltd., the Texas Land and Cattle Co., Ltd., the Matador Land and Cattle Co., Ltd., the Hansford Land and Cattle Co., Ltd., the Western American Cattle Co., Ltd., and the Swan Land and Cattle Co., Ltd., some of whom later extended their operations into Canada, were all formed in this interval. In 1882, for example, ten major British-American cattle companies were incorporated, the smallest, the Western Land and Cattle Co., capitalized at $575,000 and the largest, the Matador Land and Cattle Co., at $2,000,000.[8]

Ranching fever developed simultaneously in Canada as certain Canadian capitalists were pleased to discover that a comparable grazing area, already proven by small stockmen, existed in their own West. Moreover the decision of the British government in 1879 to impose an embargo on live cattle imports from the United States meant that American cattle had to be slaughtered on arrival in port, which seemed to leave the feeder market open to Canadians, and it was on this market where the western steer gained the greatest price advantage.[9] The possibilities appeared highly attractive and the Canadian press joined that of the United States and Great

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[8]Jackson, p. 160.

[9]Feeder cattle were purchased on arrival by farmers who fattened or "finished" the animal for several months and then marketed the animal gaining substantial profit on the animal's improved weight and quality.

Britain to proclaim this new Eldorado. The Winnipeg Times for example, asserted that "Our North-West Territories afford choice locations where the veriest novice could embark in the raising of horses or cattle, almost without limit, and with a sure promise of great reward."[10] Opinions from the most reputable sources were equally unrestrained. M. Macoun, the respected and nationally known agronomist and botanist at the Ontario Agricultural College at Guelph, predicted a glowing future for the ranching industry in the Canadian West, saying that the region must become "the chief stock-raising country in America."[11] Such glowing reports persisted to the turn of the century.[12] Given such a universally optimistic assessment, Canadian and some British investors quickly began to seek locations in the foothills of the Canadian Rockies. Capitalists saw in this region the opportunity for rapid and immense gain, an almost intoxicating prospect in a period which, in Canada at least, was one of severe recession.

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[10]GAI, C. Acton Burrows Papers, Vol. II (scrapbook) p. 93. The Times (Winnipeg), 30 March 1881. See also, The Gazette (Montreal), 4 November 1881.

[11]J. Macoun, Manitoba and the Great North West (Guelph: The World Publishing Co., 1882), pp. 277-280.

[12]See for example, Sir Francis De Winton, "Canada and the Great North-West," The Journal of the Manchester Geographical Society, VIII, Nos. 4-6 (April-June, 1892), pp. 91-93. The Times (London), 21 October 1898. University of Alberta, Rutherford collection. n.a. A Stockman's Paradise (Lethbridge: The Alberta Railway and Coal Co. and The Canadian North-West Irrigation Co., 189?).

The stock raising techniques which promised such substantial rewards required considerable capital and thereby excluded most of those outside the financial circles of eastern metropolitan centres. The first group of capitalists that gathered about Senator Cochrane is typical of those attracted and warrants detailed attention.

Shareholders in the Cochrane Ranche Company Limited, incorporated 5 May 1881 and capitalized at $500,000, included Senator M. H. Cochrane, his son James, Dr. Duncan McEachran, James Walker and J. M. Browning. Other shareholders by 1885 were L. H. Massue, George A. Drummond, James Gibb and E. T. Brooks.[13] Scottish born Dr. McEachran was the leading Canadian veterinary surgeon of his day and the founder of the Montreal School of Comparative and Veterinary Medicine. His concern over the danger of importing diseased animals was instrumental in 1876 in the establishment of quarantine stations at all principal ports of entry and later in the creation of the Health of Animals Bureau in Ottawa. From 1885 until 1902 McEachran served as Chief Veterinary Inspector of Canada and in this position was always a powerful ally of the large stock raisers. His own stock raising interests included a farm at Ormstown in the Eastern Townships and a directorship in the Cochrane Ranch Company as well as the

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[13]Canada, Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, Companies Branch, Cochrane Ranche Company Ltd. According to the usage of the period most British and Canadian rancher's, unlike their American counterparts, chose to spell ranche with an "e".

managership and vice-presidency of the English owned Walrond Ranche Company. Colonel James Walker, ex-Superintendent of the North-West Mounted Police and first resident manager of the ranch, terminated his investment in the company when he resigned his managership after two years of disastrous stock losses. The company's business manager, John Milne Browning of Longueuil, was one of Quebec's leading estate agents. He had managed the extensive holdings of the Right Hon. Edward Ellice which included the seigneury of Beauharnois. Browning also possessed extensive agricultural holdings of his own and served for some years as President of the Quebec Council of Agriculture. The Seigneur of Trinité and St. Michel, Louis Huet Massue, was an extensive farmer and stock raiser and was, from 1878 to 1887, Conservative Member of Parliament for Richelieu. Scottish born George A. Drummond was one of the most prominent members of the Montreal financial community. He was the major owner of the Canada Sugar Refining Company and was successively director, Vice-President and President of the Bank of Montreal. In 1888 he was called, as a Conservative, to the Senate and in 1904 received a knighthood. Edward T. Brooks was also a well known Conservative politician. From 1872 to 1882, when he was appointed a Judge of the Superior Court, he had represented the constituency of Sherbrooke. Brook's other business interests are indicated by his presence on the boards of directors of several Eastern Townships railway ventures. The remaining shareholder,

James Gibb, cannot be definitely identified, though there seems reason to believe that he was connected with Gibb and Company, an old Montreal firm of merchant tailors.

The wealth and political power represented on the shareholder list of this one ranching company bears witness to the kind of support that the cattlemen could command when the occasion warranted. When to these names are added those directors of other ranching companies the list reads like a "Who's Who" of the Canadian parliamentary and financial worlds. Another patriarch of the Canadian cattle kingdom, the North West Cattle Company, was mainly owned by the Allan family. The majority interest of these powerful owners of the Montreal based Allan Steamship Lines was seconded by that of Charles and Frederick Stimson which, as in the Cochrane example, joined Montreal capital with practical stock raising experience from the Eastern Townships.[14] Charles was a well-to-do Montreal leather goods merchant and Frederick, who was sent to manage the ranch, was a farmer and stock raiser from Compton.

The Compton-Montreal connection is also illustrated within the organization of the Winder Ranche Company. Captain Winder's company was formed in May 1880 when he was on

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[14] Ibid., North West Cattle Company Ltd. Frederick S. Stimson was also the brother-in-law of Capt. W. Winder who seems to have been in large measure responsible for publicizing ranching prospects in the Canadian west among his friends and relations in Compton.

leave from Fort Macleod. Shareholders included Captain William Winder, formerly of Compton County, Quebec; Charles Stimson, Winder's father-in-law and also a shareholder in the Allan ranching venture; George Barry, a Montreal merchant; W. M. Ramsay, a well-known Montreal financier; J. M. Lemoine, a Compton stock raiser, and John L. Gibb and Charles Sharples, both Quebec City businessmen.[15] While the shareholders of this smaller company could not command the same influence within the power structure as Cochrane or the Allans, they were all none the less part of a closely knit cattle-company fraternity that tied together all levels of the Quebec business community and made Montreal the financial capital of the Canadian cattle kingdom during its heyday.

The formation of these companies was in fact part of a frantic rush on the part of Canadian businessmen between 1881 and 1883 to use what influence they could to obtain western leases, lest they be left out of what business opinion of the day judged to be a "sure thing". In applying for the Winder lease, Charles Stimson urged the Deputy Minister of the Interior to act quickly on their behalf, as a Halifax group with the support of the Honorable Charles Tupper was after the same range.[16] Though B. W. Chipman and his Halifax

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[15] RG15, B2a, Vol. 19, 175296 (Winder Ranche), George Barry to Lindsay Russell, 25 August 1882.

[16] Ibid., C. Stimson to Lindsay Russell, 29 May 1882.

partners did not obtain the lands of their first choice they were, through Sir Charles Tupper's good offices, able to obtain a lease elsewhere.[17] Influential conservative businessmen and barristers from Ottawa formed the Stewart Ranch Company.[18] In Toronto a group associated with the brother of the federal Minister of Justice, C. J. Campbell, acquired a lease of 100,000 acres.[19] In Winnipeg a powerful group of contractors gathered about the railroader, Donald D. Mann, to found the Glengarry Ranch Company.[20] The activities of similar groups of business and professional men, supported by the local Conservative Member of Parliament or Senator, in St. John, Windsor, Oshawa, Niagara, Hamilton, Collingwood, Barrie and Port Hope, all seeking leases for porposed ranching enterprises,[21] testify to the extent of the ranching craze in Canada.

As a group the investors in the various ranching ventures, speculative or otherwise, carried great political

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[17] Ibid., Vol. 20, 179180 (Chipman lease).

[18] Canada, Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, Companies Branch. Stewart Ranch Company Ltd.

[19] Macdonald Papers, MG26, A1(e), Vol. 575. Letterbook pt 1, Sir John A. Macdonald to C. S. Campbell, 22 June 1883.

[20] Canada, Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, Companies Branch. Glengarry Ranche Company. file.

[21] See RG15, B2a, Vol. 170, 145330, pt 1; Vol. 46, 43887, Vol. 19, 174372, and Vol. 3, 11007.

and economic weight. Some such as A. W. Ogilvie, the Montreal milling magnate, T. N. Gibbs of Oshawa, and J. Boyd of St. John in addition to being important businessmen had, like Senator Cochrane, the advantage of being Conservative members of the upper house. Conservative members of the House of Commons were even more numerous in their involvement with various ranching enterprises.[22] The award of the big grazing leases by Order-in-Council to so many friends of the government during April 1882, just two months before the 1882 election, was perhaps more than coincidence. With their influential eastern directors and head offices in Montreal or Ottawa the cattlemen enjoyed the advantage of close contact with the seats of political and financial power. Though decisions made thousands of miles from the base of operations often resulted in less efficient ranch management, an eastern headquarters nevertheless enabled the leaders of the ranch community to operate more effectively as a political pressure group.

The aggressive interest in the grazing lands of Western Canada also reached Great Britain. While the

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[22] Ibid., Some M.P.'s were active ranch promoters while others like D'Alton McCarthy, M.P. for Simcoe, Ontario; R. R. McLennan, M.P. for Glengarry, Ontario; A. T. H. Williams, M.P. for Port Hope, Ontario; J. C. Patterson, M.P. for Grenville, Ontario; T. Temple, M.P. for York, New Brunswick; the Hon. John Henry Pope, M.P. for Compton, P.Q.; E. T. Brooks, M.P. for Sherbrooke, P.Q.; L. H. Massue, M.P. for Richelieu, P.Q.; C. C. Colby, M.P. for Stansted, P.Q.; D. O. Bourbeau, M.P. for Drummond-Athabaska, P.Q.; were directors or investors in various ranch companies.

British capital invested in the Canadian cattle industry was small compared to its vast inflow into the American west during these years, British interests were included among the larger ranching enterprises. Of the four great patriarchs of the Canadian range, the Cochrane Ranche Company Ltd., the North-West Cattle Company Ltd., the Oxley Ranche Company Ltd. and the Walrond Ranche Company Ltd., the latter two were British owned. The Oxley Ranche Company was established in 1882 under the guidance of Alexander Staveley Hill, a Conservative Member of the British parliament, and a personal friend of the Canadian Prime Minister. The other major shareholder was the Earl of Lathom who at the time was Lord Chamberlain.[23] Lathom, a well-known Hereford breeder, had become interested in the Canadian west the year before, when Senator Cochrane's son visited his farms to purchase Hereford bulls to be sent to the Bow River.[24]

In 1883 British interests led by Sir John Walrond-Walrond founded the Walrond Ranche Company. Like so many of his fellow investors Sir John was also a former Conservative parliamentarian. Lord Clinton and Dr. Duncan McEachran, who was also a shareholder in the Cochrane Ranche, were the

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[23]John R. Craig, Ranching With Lords and Commons (Toronto: William Briggs, 1903), p. 108.

[24]GAI, "Lord Lorne's Expedition to the North West", clipping from Liverpool Journal of Commerce, 24 October 1881.

other major shareholders.[25] McEachran also acted as General Manager. In addition to the two major British companies, a number of smaller ones were established, such as the Alberta Ranche Company, owned by Sir Francis de Winton, the Marquis of Lorne, Canada's Governor General and Sir F. F. Mackenzie, which added Britain's bluest blood and much social prestige to the ranch fraternity.[26] Viscount Boyle, Lord Castleton, Rear Admiral Thomas Cochrane and certain other titled Britons took properties of their own to join numerous others of the lesser gentry who had already begun ranching and in general strengthened the British social milieu characteristic of the Canadian ranching community.[27]

While the British element was strengthened with the arrival of these aristocratic ventures, the Eastern Canadian orientation was also greatly strengthened with the arrival of the cattle companies, and the influence of Fort Benton rapidly declined. The eastern and metropolitan influences wielded by company directors were further strengthened and secured by the men sent West to manage affairs. Examination of the management of the most important ranch companies

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[25]C. W. Buchanan, "History of the Walrond Cattle Ranch Ltd.," Canadian Cattlemen, VIII (March, 1946), p. 171.

[26]GAI, C. E. Harris, "Trip of Charles Edward Harris to the Canadian West: 1882," MSS, pp. 1-3. Henry J. Morgan (ed.), The Dominion Annual Register and Review (Toronto: Hunter, Rose and Co., 1882), p. 370 and 1883, p. 340.

[27]RG15, B2a, Vol. 8, 140708 and Vol. 25, 196009.

during the period 1881-1892 reveals that, with few exceptions, the resident managing directors were Canadian or British. Members of the managerial ranks, if they were not part owners or personal friends of principal shareholders, were recruited from eastern business circles. The manager of the very successful Allan enterprise, Fred Stimson, had been a successful merchant and farmer in the Eastern Townships before coming west to superintend the North West Cattle Company. Though most of these individuals could not claim an Oxford training like Arthur Springett, the son-in-law of Alexander Galt and manager of the Oxley Ranch, the majority were well educated. Men and officers of the North-West Mounted Police often came from a similar background, and in the early years were sometimes favoured as ranch managers because of their knowledge of the country. The Marquis of Lorne sent a former member of his household staff to manage the Alberta Ranche, while Dr. McEachran chose to retain close personal direction of his company.[28]

The men sent west to manage the ranches during the

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[28] H. Frank Lawrence, "Early Days in the Chinook Belt," Alberta Historical Review, XIII, No. 1, 1965. Other sources of biographical information used for this paragraph were: Craig, 170. A. E. Cross, "Round-Up of 1887", Calgary Historical Society, 1923, pp. 2-14. A. L. Fairbairn, "The Story of Pincher Creek and District," (Glenbow Foundation, 1958), pp. 1-8. C. Lynch-Staunton, A History of the Early Days of Pincher Creek (Women's Institute of Alberta, n.d.), pp. 4-54. Henry J. Morgan (ed.), The Canadian Men and Women of the Time 1897 and 1912 (Toronto: William Briggs, 1898 and 1912). High River Pioneers' and Old Timers' Association, Leaves From The Medicine Tree (Lethbridge, Alta.: Lethbridge Herald, 1960).

company era contributed in an important way to the peculiar nature of the ranching frontier in Canada. By virtue of their cultural and educational backgrounds, the managerial staff of western ranch companies was simply a transplanted part of the eastern managerial class. The Canadian range was never in the hands of "wild and woolly" Westerners,[29] either American or Canadian. The ranch country was instead under the supervision of middle and upper middle class easterners, who were often educated and professional men. Power in the Canadian West was exercised not by men carrying six shooters and wearing chaps but rather by men in well-tailored waistcoats who often knew the comfortable chairs in the St. James and Rideau Clubs. Unlike the American West, early management did not arise from the indigenous frontier population.[30]

The homogeneity of the Canadian and British managerial class suggests that American influence, contrary to popular belief, was restricted to the few American foremen and cowboys whose duties were confined mainly to the physical

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[29]W. S. Macnutt, "The 1880's," The Canadians: 1867-1967, ed. J. M. S. Careless and R. Craig Brown (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1967), pp. 83-84. "Macleod could produce Canada's best version of a wild west. The famous Camoose House, kept by an ex-trader, ex-preacher, and squawman, was the resort of all the whisky vendors, bull-whackers, and mule-skinners of the region who called themselves ranchers."

[30]Sandoz, pp. 63-83, 296-310.

management of cattle.[31] Moreover after 1885 the number of Americans was constantly diminishing and by 1890 even most of the cowboys were Canadian or British. American company influence was essentially restricted to one large company; namely the Circle Ranche owned by the Conrad Brothers and I. G. Baker of Fort Benton, Montana. The manager of this company, Howell Harris, a reformed American whiskey trader, presented a respected voice of experience in early ranch councils, but neither his influence, nor that of several other American foremen like George Lane of the Bar U and J. Lamar of the Walrond, predominated during the early period. Though these few undeniably contributed to the economic foundation of the Canadian cattle industry, especially during the three or four years after 1882, their presence seems to have had little effect upon the ranch community's social or political development before the First Great War.

The arrival of the company men brought to a close the first stage in the development of the ranching frontier in the Canadian West. The new lease system took control from the small "free grass" stockmen of the initial period and gave it to the large operators. From the early 'eighties' the cattle business ceased to be a frontier industry. Although the small stockman did not disappear, his influence

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[31] Gazette, 30 November 1886, quoting The Times (London), Autumn, 1886.

in the cattle community became less and less compared with that exercised by the owners and managers of the larger companies. Beyond this he was forced to alter drastically the manner in which he conducted his business. Often he found that the land on which he had ranged his cattle was now part of another's lease and in applying for a lease of his own, which many refused to do, he found that his remoteness put him at a distinct disadvantage in his dealings with Ottawa. On the practical side he was confronted with other serious problems. His own small herd represented a manageable quantity, many of his animals were raised on the range close to his homestead and were inclined to remain in the area. When the companies arrived with vast herds purchased hundreds of miles to the south the small owner lost control of his cattle. As the big companies did not fence their leases their cattle wandered over tremendous areas, mixing with the stock owned by the small owner and taking these animals with them as they drifted. It became of little use to provide winter feed as the cattle were mixed and scattered. If he remained in business the small stock raiser was forced to adopt, at considerable disadvantage to himself, the manner of operation of the large outfits. This tended to reduce his calf crop as he could no longer effectively supervise his herd during the calving season and at the same time increased his expenses as he now had to attend the one to two month long spring round-up. Faced with these new conditions some of the

smaller cattlemen sold their cattle; others, refusing to be driven out, continued their operations in the hope of eventually gaining the advantage of size. Meanwhile, their growing differences with the big concerns is clearly evident within the early stockgrowers' organizations.

With their eye on the British market, one of the first aims of the large companies was to improve the quality of the herds on the western ranges. Consequently valuable breeding stock was brought into the region from eastern Canada and Great Britain. These animals and their progeny were more valuable than the Texas longhorns and the necessity of affording protection to this scattered and exposed property representing nearly the whole of the ranchers' capital investment was uppermost in the owners' minds. Problems of ownership and cattle theft have plagued the pastoral industry from the beginning of time. For the sake of mutual protection the stockmen attempted to band together in associations to enforce the customs indigenous to the range country and provide a forum to meet new problems as they arose. The primary aim of the Stock Association was always protective, namely to protect the stockman's ownership of his herd and its increase. To this end the cattlemens' associations attempted to enforce local regulations concerning brands and branding, roundup times and organization, the control of bulls on the range, and the ownership of unbranded cattle, or "mavericks" as they were known to cattlemen. The range

cattleman, despite his vaunted independence, required a degree of community protection that the farmer and other western settlers never required, as the number of police posts and special summer stations in the ranching country during the early period attests. The ranch community always reacted vigorously to any suggestions that the North West Mounted Police be eliminated or reduced in number. Another fundamental difference between the stockman and his farming neighbors is reflected in the basic nature of their respective organizations. Unlike the western farmer, the stockgrower did not seek cooperative effort to remedy the wants growing out of isolation such as roads, schools, social amenities and increased land values. His motivation towards organization came from the reverse reason, not because of isolation, but because his isolation was threatened and in this sense his organization is unique to the western experience. His problems tended to increase as the number of ranchers and later of farmers increased. Settlement was a potential threat to his range and his rewards were potentially the greatest when his isolation was most complete.

The ranchers' organizations as they evolved in Canada during the early 'eighties were patterned on the stock growers' associations in Wyoming which since 1871 had evolved by 1879 into the powerful Wyoming Stock Growers' Association. The Montana Stock Growers" Association was also formed in 1879 but did not become a permanent body with regular

meetings until the summer of 1884. The Canadian cattlemens' organizations also date from this period, from the arrival of the large cattle companies. The first stock association on the Canadian range was naturally formed in the Pincher Creek region, the first area to have any concentration of ranch population. The Pincher Creek Stock Association, established in 1882 with Jim Christie as president,[32] was the successor of the more informal groups that had organized the general round-ups over the previous three seasons. Though known as the Pincher Creek Stock Association, it had a much wider territorial membership. The presence and appointment to the managing committee of C. E. Harris of the Halifax Ranch near Calgary indicates that local associations had not yet been formed and that the Pincher Creek group included ranchers from almost the entire range area then in use.

In the spring of 1883 the ranchers met again to reorganize and expand their association. The new body, the South-Western Stock Association, was intended to be a general association drawing on the American example.[33] This new association was structured as the central body through which the collective will of local associations, to be established at Pincher Creek, Kootenai, Kipp, Willow Creek and High River, could be directed most efficiently towards common goals. The

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[32] Gazette, 3 February 1883.

[33] Ibid., 14 April 1883.

pro-tem chairman, J. Herron of the Stewart Ranche, declared that the purpose of the meeting was to unite all stockmen in order to protect their interests. Cattlemen were informed: "if we want the government to make stock laws for us we must propose them." J. McFarland, the first rancher in the country, was accorded the honor of being chosen as the Association's first president, while M. Dunn and F. S. Stimson were selected as vice-presidents. Following the election of officers and discussion of general business the meeting concluded by establishing a reward of one hundred dollars for information leading to the conviction of any person charged with any of the three most serious ranch crimes: cattle-killing, horse thieving or fire-setting.

The small stockmen were the main force behind the first association and were initially well represented in the second, but between 1883 and 1885 a fundamental change occurred within the ranchers' organization. Nearly all those present at the third annual meeting of the South West Stock Association were the representatives of companies or large individual holdings. The following list of elected officers in 1885 is revealing: J. R. Craig (Oxley Ranche) president; F. S. Stimson (North-West Cattle Company) first vice-president; Capt. Winder (Winder Ranch Company) second vice-president and W. Black, secretary-treasurer. C. C. McCaul was named solicitor and the management committee consisted of: D. W. Davis (later local M.P.); F. W. Godsal;

G. Levigne (Mount Head Ranche Company); J. Garnett; O. S. Main; W. F. Cochrane (Cochrane Ranche Company) and J. Dunlap (Cochrane Ranche Company).[34] The top three executive positions were thus controlled by the large companies and the committee of management was entirely composed of company men or large leaseholders. In short the corporate leaders of the ranch community had taken over at the expense of the smaller operators. Those gathered included the most powerful members of the community, and as a group they were capable of exerting much local and extra-territorial pressure, but they could not claim to be the collective voice of the ranch community nor could they claim to speak for a complete or united economic unit.

The division between large and small rancher was compounded later in the year by a geographic division which further split the group. Northern ranchers decided that their interests were not being properly looked after by the southern group, and hence formed the North-West Stock Association.[35] Thus divided the industry was more vulnerable to increasing outside pressure for open settlement, but it was not until the government announced a proposed change in the lease structure in 1886 that ranchers were reminded of their common interests. New government interest in settlement following the North West Rebellion prompted a special meeting of the

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[34] Ibid., 2 May 1885.

[35] Herald, 16 September 1885.

South West Stock Association to draft a petition to the Minister of the Interior, in which the Minister was reminded that the southwest was not agricultural land and was essentially a stock country. The company spokesman argued that they had been induced by the government to invest large sums of money in the western stock business and that in consequence "the Government [was] bound to afford such protection by such legislation as may be necessary to the safe and profitable carrying on of the industry induced."[36] The stock industry's concern regarding growing agitation for open settlement and abolition of the lease system as well as growing uncertainty regarding government policy at this juncture is reflected in their request that the government set up a commission to meet with the stockmen to discuss the general question of leases and settlement.

With this added incentive to unite as an economic and political unit, a large group of ranchers assembled in Macleod on March 4, 1886. It was generally acknowledged that the old association was subject to widespread discontent, and that it was not representative. The secretary of the South West Stock Association thus summed the requirements of a new general stock association: the new association must in its membership offer clear advantages to all; each district should conduct its own local round-up; each

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[36] Gazette, 12 January 1886.

district should send delegates to the general association meetings; the question of mavericks must be settled; incorporation was necessary to achieve legal status; international relations should be established with the association in Montana; and the new organization should employ stock detectives to guard the interests of the association.[37] An extended discussion ensued concerning the question of mavericks (unbranded cattle). It was well understood that after a day's branding on the general round-up there would be a number of calves whose mothers, and hence ownership, could not be determined. Range custom solved the dilemma by dictating that such cattle be sold by the association to finance its operations and thereby benefit all stockmen equally. Many small ranchers, especially those not belonging to the association, resented the association's claim and were much more concerned about losing a few calves than were the owners of large herds. One individual at the meeting attempted to argue that mavericks legally belonged to the Crown. Doc Frields, a Texan from the Walrond ranch was quite disturbed by this logic and insisted that," The Queen has got no cattle in this country, and she is a Jo Dandy if she gets ere a maverick from the W. R."[38] In the end, regardless of the

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[37] Ibid., 9 March 1886, Supplement.

[38] Ibid.

dissatisfaction expressed, no one could present a better solution.

The main purpose of the meeting, however, was to formulate the basis for a new and more representative organization. Consequently a committee consisting of S. Pinhorne, W. F. Cochrane, W. Bell, F. W. Godsal and J. J. Barter was appointed to draw up and distribute a constitution and by-laws before the next meeting. Though a very deliberate and ostensibly sincere attempt was being made to make this association a lasting one, the membership of the appointed committee had a rather ominous appearance to some of the smaller ranchers. The committee was composed entirely of large ranchers, which suggests that this group felt the most urgent need for a strong association. The Gazette, aware of complaints, reminded its readers that this committee was only to draft by-laws, that it had no power, and that the larger ranchers were not trying to gain advantage. "Let the small men come to the meeting," the editor counselled, "and give free expression to their views."[39]

A large gathering assembled on April 13, 1886 in Macleod to discuss the constitution of the proposed association. The minutes record a protracted and somewhat bitter debate between large and small owners. J. R. Craig, President of the old association, succeeded, after much debate,

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[39] Ibid., 9 May 1886.

in taking the floor to explain that he saw no reason why confidence should have been lost in his association. The men of the old association, he maintained, were men of experience in the country, men who knew people in the East and in England with whom the ranchmen had to deal. They would not "be taught by men who came here with very crude notions of what they wanted. . . ."[40] Northern ranchers stalked out of the meeting and all semblance of order disintegrated. Finally, the meeting adjourned for a second attempt in the evening.

The evening's discussion resulted in the founding of a new association, the Canadian Northwest Territories Stock Association. Most discussion centered about the proposed constitution and reveals much about the composition and attitudes of the ranch community at this time. One rancher present noted that most settlers had a few cattle and that some clear distinction had to be made between settlers and dealers in livestock. The last persons the rancher wanted in their new organization were "sod-busters." The point of greatest contention concerned the individual rancher's voting strength or, in other words, who was going to control the new association. The manager of the Oxley Ranche, speaking for the large ranchers, proposed that "the districts vote on delegates according to the number of cattle owned." A number of cattlemen immediately objected, claiming that "this was

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[40] Ibid., 20 April 1886.

the very thing that split up the old Association." Smaller ranchers expressed their fear that "the big companies would be able to elect their own men as delegates" on this basis. One rancher warned that he "could not see the use of the small men joining" if the motion were adopted. The large ranchers countered by reminding the gathering that, if members paid dues to the association in proportion to the number of cattle owned, they should exercise proportionate voting rights. The solicitor of the large ranchers emphatically stated that "it was absurd to propose that the men with 5,000 cattle could be outvoted by the man with 100 head." Chaos ensued when one dissenter, after appropriately affirming that "he was a Conservative to the backbone," rebelled against the idea of "two or three getting together and thinking that they were going to run the world." When the chairman was able to bring order out of the profanity that followed, the question was put and the motion was carried by a considerable majority.[41] As a result, voters at district meetings were entitled to vote in proportion to the number of cattle owned. The scale was as follows:

One vote for 500 head and under
Two votes for 500 to 1,000 head
Three votes for 1,000 to 2,000 head
Four votes for 3,000 to 4,000 head
Five votes for 5,000 to 8,000 head
Six votes for 8,000 to 12,000 head
Seven votes for 12,000 to 17,000 head[42]

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[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid., Supplement

Thus the struggle for power within the ranch organization was temporarily resolved in favour of the large ranchers, but it is important to note, as the vote indicated, that only a small minority of ranchers opposed domination by the larger operators. Most smaller cattle owners realized that they had essentially the same economic goals and that unity was essential if the stock owners were to withstand general settlement. In addition, there seems to have existed within the ranch community a degree of social contiguity that bound many cattlemen together regardless of the number of head of cattle owned.

The only other point of contention was the disposal of unbranded cattle or cattle whose ownership could not be determined. The potential loss of several calves was of much greater concern to the smaller rancher. It was decided after considerable discussion that stray calves should be advertised in four issues of a paper at Macleod and Calgary and then, if not claimed to satisfaction, they should be sold and the receipts turned over to the district association. While this pacified some of the cattlemen, the issue, one of the major sources of contention between the large and small stockmen, remained a matter of controversy for the next two decades. Many small stockmen could not afford to attend the various general round-ups and repeatedly charged the association with arbitrary action. Such charges were impossible to substantiate and the practice was widely continued till 1895

when the matter eventually reached the courts. Then the presiding judge warned that "if the ranchmen think that they can make a law of this kind to suit themselves it was time their mind should be disabused of any such idea".[43] The Calgary Herald challenged the new judge, without success, to advance a fairer method. The problem and the customary practice remained as long as the range cattle industry existed and finally, in 1903, the sale of mavericks by round-up parties was made a criminal offence.[44]

The first meeting of the newly formed Canadian Northwest Territories Stock Association was held in Macleod on May 11, 1886. Regional delegates elected J. Herron as President and J. J. Barter and J. Dunlap as vice-presidents. C. E. D. Wood, editor of the Macleod Gazette, was appointed secretary-treasurer.[45] This new assembly was much more representative of the ranch community and struck a much better balance geographically and economically than had the older associations. Within two weeks the editor of the Macleod Gazette could claim that, "almost every stockman in the Pincher Creek, Willow Creek and High River districts

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[43] Ibid., 27 December 1895.

[44] Canada, Department of Agriculture of the North West Territories, Annual Report, 1903, pp. 69-70.

[45] Gazette, 18 May 1886. Official delegates included: W. Skrine, T. Lynch, and J. J. Barter from the High River district; J. Herron, F. C. Inderwick and Sharpe from the Pincher Creek district; and W. Frields, E. H. Maunsell and S. Pinhorne from the Willow Creek district.

belongs to the new association."[46] The success of the new organization was further exemplified, later in the month, when the association disposed of collected mavericks with no complaints tendered.[47]

The association was the first formed by the ranchmen that could claim to speak for the total community. Its formal constitution gave the association considerable control over the conduct of ranching and ranchers. The avowed purpose of the organizers was "the advancement and protection of the interests of stockmen," by moulding the cattlemen into a carefully controlled and closely-knit group.[48] Membership was occupationally restricted; a system of fines and penalties was authorized to be exacted for infraction of by-laws, such as failure to help a neighbour fight a prairie fire, failure to notify the association before undertaking a cattle drive or branding between round-ups. Refusal to abide by the regulations or to pay assessments and fines resulted in expulsion from an association that offered its members many obvious benefits, not the least of which was a united front against the most feared threat to the cattleman's ascendancy--massive agrarian settlement.

The collective support of the ranch community for the leadership exercised by the large cattle ranchers through

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[46] Ibid., 1 June 1886.

[47] Ibid., 22 June 1886.

[48] Ibid., 20 April 1886, Supplement.

their control of the association was generally forthcoming and if there were differences they were usually of degree rather than principle. Besides, what differences did exist within the community the large stockmen could effectively ignore; their control of the range and their control of the stock associations in large measure allowed them to dictate the manner in which the industry would be conducted locally. Control of the general association also provided a platform from which the large stockgrowers could claim to speak as the legitimate and official spokesmen of the cattle industry to the world outside. By virtue of their local political and economic control coupled with their intimate metropolitan connections, the cattlemen by 1886 had assumed the status of a regional élite. In addition a homogeneous social background, which seems to have created a sophisticated and highly stratified society on the frontier, was bolstered by common vocational interests, and led to the development of a closely knit community of interest set apart from its western neighbours. It was a society that was aggressive and self-sustaining. Given their remarkable position, the western ranch community might be described as a "cattle compact".

The encompassing strength of the cattle compact was manifest in many ways. The question of duty and quarantine on American cattle might be taken as a case in point. When Senator Cochrane negotiated the terms of the government's proposed lease structure with the Canadian Prime Minister he

secured the leaseholders' right to bring cattle from the United States duty free between 1881 and 1883. The cattle companies were able to have this deadline extended three times, eventually to August 31, 1886, while they stocked their leases.[49] During this time settlers protested bitterly that they were being denied the same advantage and forced to pay the 20 per cent levy.[50] The law provided for the entrance of cattle "solely for ranching purposes" and the farmer, or even the intending stockman without a lease, was not allowed by the customs department to place his cattle under this provision.

Once the companies had stocked their leases they became ardent protectionists. Those who wanted to bring in large herds, or start ranching companies after this date, protested that the established ranchers sought to restrict further development so as to prevent reduction of their own great profits.[51] What the big ranchers really feared was that the few seeking entry to the Canadian range from the south might be the vanguard of a general invasion. It was

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[49]Macdonald Papers, MG26, A1(a), Vol. 420, J. L. Evans to Sir John A. Macdonald, 8 October 1885, and T. White (Minister of Interior) to Sir John A. Macdonald, 20 November 1885.

[50]Herald, 9 April 1885.

[51]Macdonald Papers, MG26, A1(d), Vol. 420, William Carter to Sir John A. Macdonald, 2 March 1887; C. Drinkwater to Sir John A. Macdonald, 18 December 1886. A special plea from the Canadian Pacific Railway to exempt Sir John Lister Kaye from the newly imposed duty.

already apparent to many, both in Canada and the United States, that the American range was vastly overstocked and Canadian cattlemen, along with high officials within the Department of the Interior, feared an impending flood of American cattlemen and their herds.[52] Stockmen in the Canadian foothills had been greatly alarmed with the arrival in August 1886 of a herd of 8,000 cattle belonging to the influential Powder River Cattle Company of Cheyenne, Wyoming. It seems in fact that the last six month extension of the duty free provision had been gained through the engaging connivance and well placed London contacts of the company's manager and part-owner, Moreton Frewen.[53] Canadian stockmen protested that the Americans had ruined their range and now wanted to crowd into Canada where they would eventually bring about the same unfortunate overgrazing. They recommended that in addition to the duty a rigorous veterinary inspection be added.[54] When it was rumoured after the disastrous winter of 1886-87 that the agents of American cattle companies were in Ottawa seeking leases, vigorous protests

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[52]Pearce Papers. I B 6, William Pearce to the Minister of the Interior, 10 November 1886.

[53]Canada, Department of the Interior, Correspondence of the Deputy Minister. Vol. 131, 142083 (Powder River Cattle Co.).

[54]RG15, B2, Vol. 159, pt. 1, 141376, H. S. Pinhorne, Mgr. New Oxley Ranch Co., to the Minister of the Interior, 14 October 1886; W. E. Cochrane to the Minister of the Interior, 21 October 1886.

against the Americans were renewed.[55] In response the government imposed a stiff quarantine impounding Canada-bound cattle at the border for ninety days. This measure almost completely ended the importation of American range cattle and it was not long before the small stockmen and settlers began to charge that the companies were merely protecting their own high profits, as much of the range was still unstocked, and that the government's adviser in quarantine matters, Dr. McEachran, had a vested interest in the restriction of American imports.[56] The cattle companies, determined at this juncture to protect their British market and to calm British fears that diseased American cattle could reach their ports by way of Canada, had the quarantine regulations tightened even further so as to apply also to the cattle in possession of settlers seeking entry into Canada.[57] Pearce's attempt to intercede with the Deputy Minister on behalf of the settlers was turned down with the caution "we have the whole influence of the cattlemen in the Calgary

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[55]Ibid., D. McEachran, Mgr. of the Walrond Ranch to the Minister of the Interior, 5 August 1887; F. S. Stimson, Mgr. of the North West Cattle Co., to the Minister of the Interior, 1 September 1887.

[56]Pearce Papers, I B 6, Pearce to the Minister of the Interior, 8 March 1888; Minister of the Interior to Pearce, 16 March 1888. Gazette, 11 October 1888.

[57]Ibid., Department of the Interior to W. Pearce, 20 February 1893.

District against us in this matter."[58] The quarantine on all American cattle remained for some years until the large stock growers began to petition the government for removal in the hope that the Americans might reciprocate by allowing them to export to the Chicago market.[59]

In addition to exercising such strong influence on the government in its tariff policy towards the cattle industry, the "cattle compact" was also able to exercise its persuasiveness to advantage in the crucial matter of land regulations. Above all other issues in the range country stood the matter of ownership and control of land, especially lands adjoining streams and rivers. The same kind of influence that had been used to obtain leases in the first instance was also used to obtain title to choice land along streams and rivers. In recognition of the value of such properties to stock raisers, the government began in 1886 to set aside for public use at strategic locations areas known as stock watering reserves, in order to prevent a few individuals or companies from monopolizing vast territories. This was done at the ranchers' request and squatters or would-be settlers were kept off, by force if necessary. Yet it seems that certain well-placed cattlemen were on occasion able to have such reservations cancelled and then purchased to become

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[58] Ibid., W. Pearce to A. M. Burgess, Deputy Minister of the Interior, 14 December 1892; A. M. Burgess to W. Pearce, 29 December 1892.

[59] Ibid., W. Pearce to A. M. Burgess, 3 January 1896.

part of their own deeded holdings, despite the strong objections of smaller stockmen and Department of Interior officials. In one such case involving a water reserve on Pincher Creek the recommendation of William Pearce, the department official with final authority on such matters, that a rancher's request to purchase the reserve be denied, was countermanded by the Deputy Minister after a visit was made in support of the request by the rancher's Member of Parliament, D. W. Davis.[60] Pearce resisted to the end, insisting on the principle that such reserves were necessary if harmony was to prevail and the small stockmen were to be protected, especially where water was scarce as he claimed it was in this instance. Pearce was no doubt pleased to forward to his superior the letters of protest once the notice of sale became public.[61] Water reserves in the area were completely eliminated when the government allowed another purchase, several years later, again despite Pearce's persistent opposition. In this instance, D. W. Davis, who in addition to his parliamentary position also happened to be a rancher, again interceded on behalf of an applicant. In the end Pearce was informed confidentially by the Minister's

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[60] Ibid., 4B12, A. M. Morden to W. Pearce, 21 March 1888; Department of Interior to W. Pearce, 27 June 1889; A. M. Burgess to W. Pearce, 7 August 1890.

[61] Ibid., A. McLennan, Mgr. Stewart Ranch Co. to W. Pearce, 13 September 1890.

Secretary that it was

> very desirable, for reasons which will be so obvious to you that I need not enlarge upon them, to meet [the applicant's] wishes, and I have now to ask you whether or not, on a review of all the circumstances, you could withdraw your opposition to the granting of [the] application.[62]

In this manner a lengthy section of Pincher Creek fell under the control of two individuals.

While the cattlemen were often in vigorous competition between themselves for certain lands, there was another competitor for the use of the rangelands whom they unanimously sought to exclude. The sheepman made his presence shortly after the arrival of the cattle companies and against this "odious" individual the cattlemen were quick to close ranks in order to drive him from the region or at least restrict his area of operation. Sheep cropped the grass more closely than did cattle and when in competition for the same range successfully drove the cattle before them. With the knowledge that on any fully or overstocked range the sheep and the sheepman could stay the longest, the stockmen initiated a posture of unstinting hostility from the moment of their earliest arrival. The Department of the Interior was reminded of the vicious feuds between sheep and cattle men in the American West and in 1882 an Order-in-Council was passed at the cattlemens' request that sheep

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[62] Ibid., Secretary to the Minister of the Interior to W. Pearce, 18 February 1896.

grazing be prohibited without special ministerial permit.[63] With one important exception the stockmen were able to maintain a united front to contain the sheep rancher. This one exception which first opened the door to limited sheep grazing in the southwest was the work of Senator Cochrane and is illustrative of the great influence exercised by individuals within the ranch community, in this case even against the wishes of the community itself. After suffering extensive stock losses during the winter of 1882-83 the Senator was convinced that the Bow River valley was situated too far north and took a second lease far to the south near the American boundary. Cochrane proposed to move his cattle to this southern range and put sheep on his northern holdings. To achieve this he reversed his stand of the year before, and through one of the company's shareholders advised the Minister of the Interior that there was room for both cattle and sheep in the territory, and that in fact the high and colder Bow River country was better suited for sheep.[64] The

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[63]RG15, B2a, Vol. 170, 145330 pt. 1, Memo regarding amendment to the draft lease form, 26 April 1882. RG21, Vol. 228, P.C. 892, 11 May 1882. The original Order-in-Council would have prohibited sheep raising altogether had it not been for the caution of the Governor General who withheld the original. MG 26, A1(a), Vol. 82, Lorne to Macdonald, 23 April 1882.

[64]Macdonald Papers, MG 26, A1(d), Vol. 249, C. Colby, Conservative M.P. for Stansted, P.Q., to D. L. Macpherson, Minister of the Interior, 21 March 1883; D. L. Macpherson to Sir John A. Macdonald, 22 March 1883; M. H. Cochrane to J. H. Pope, Minister of Agriculture, 18 June 1883.

Minister acceded to the request and exercised his right to give special approval. Stockmen in the southwest were greatly alarmed and pressed the government to set a boundary which would confine sheep grazing to the north. The boundary suggested by the South-Western Stock Association was Sheep Creek, about thirty miles south of Calgary.[65]

The great antipathy between cattleman and sheepman was never really understood in the east. The Winnipeg Times, for example, charged that "the cattlemen of the west cannot be accused of modesty. They want the whole country to themselves; sheep are not to be permitted to come between the wind and their nobilities."[66] Despite appearances, it was not a "dog-in-the-manger" attitude. The two forms of ranching could not co-exist on the same open range and this was fully understood by government officials in the west. The stock association's boundary request was fully supported by William Pearce who lectured his superiors in Ottawa that "from what [he] had seen in Colorado, New Mexico, and California, [he was] satisfied that sheep will in a very few years ruin the best cattle range."[67] The government granted the boundary request and later, after a petition from stock

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[65] Gazette, 12 September 1884.

[66] Ibid., citing the Winnipeg Times, n.d.

[67] Pearce Papers, Letterbook, P, p. 315, W. Pearce to A. M. Burgess, 20 September 1884.

raisers in the Bow River Valley, and after Senator Cochrane had abandoned his sheep raising enterprise, the sheepmen were further restricted.[68] Eventually they were pushed from the foothill country altogether and on to the plains of southeastern Alberta and southwestern Assiniboia where separate sheep grazing reservations were established in 1890 and 1892. Here they remained largely unchallenged till the turn of the century when they were again faced with their old adversary, the cattleman, who had retreated in turn onto the plain in face of the farmer's advance. The conflict was renewed and the sheepmen were confronted with further restrictions.[69]

The competition of the sheepmen for the western range was easily controlled by the solidly entrenched cattlemen. The real struggle was with the other major competitor for the stockman's domain, the farmer. The granger, or the "sodbuster" as he was more uncharitably known in the cattle country, posed a serious threat almost from the beginning and taxed the full resources of the ranch establishment in a struggle that lasted nearly three decades. In the foothills and on the plains of the southwest the settler occupied the tenuous

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[68] RG15, B1a, Vol. 114, 108068, Petition of Morley settlers to W. Pearce, 19 February 1886.

[69] RG15, B2a, Vol. 173, 96831, J. Hargrave to the Minister of the Interior, 11 January 1901; Petition to restrict sheep ranchers and related correspondence. Ibid., Vol. 103, 476534.

position of an interloper. Here the prospective farmer ran the risk of forcible eviction. Relations were characteristically acrimonious and the smouldering threat of armed violence seemed ready on several occasions to erupt and destroy the heralded peace of the "last best west". While Canadian history does not record the armed altercations that on occasion broke out on the American range, the economically and politically powerful Canadian cattlemen were no less determined to protect their large and profitable holdings in face of general settlement. They were obviously not anxious to see the farmer's barbed-wire fences and plowed furrows encroach upon the great grazing leases.

The foundation upon which the Canadian ranching empire rested was the lease system and it was against this system the would-be settler directed his protests. By virtue of their early establishment and great size, about a dozen ranch companies rapidly achieved domination of the region, absorbing most of the purely speculative ventures. The Cochrane Ranche Company, for example, acquired the lands of the Rocky Mountain Cattle Company, the Anglo-Canadian Ranch Company, and the Eastern Townships Ranch Company, giving the Senator control of 334,500 acres.[70] By 1884, two-thirds of all stocked land in the southwest was controlled by ten

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[70]Canada, Sessional Papers (Commons), 1885, No. 53, pp. 2-9. Canada, Department of the Interior, Annual Report, 1885, p. 33.

companies.[71] The extent of company control is underlined by the fact that the four venerable giants of the Canadian range, the Cochrane Ranche Co., the Walrond Ranche Co., the Oxley Ranche Co., and the North West Cattle Co., held almost one-half of such lands. Settlers, who were arriving in increasing numbers by the middle 'eighties, were thus confronted with a very sparsely settled countryside in which most of the suitable homestead land was not open for settlement. Presented with this situation most prospective settlers continued to the better-watered lands north of Calgary. A minority, who were no doubt aware of the well-publicized financial success of ranching operations and who probably had a mind to become small-scale stock raisers themselves, remained to squat on the extensive leaseholds. The cattlemen, on the other hand, realized that if even a few squatters were allowed on the big leases they would soon be joined by others, and consequently maintained a posture of open hostility.

The campaign for open settlement in the southwest actually began with the establishment of the first big ranches in 1882. In strongly worded editorials the editor of the Macleod Gazette urged the government to allow homesteads to be taken on leased lands.[72] The Gazette charged

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[71] Ibid.

[72] Gazette, 24 August 1882; 23 September 1882.

that certain ranchers were acting "mean and ugly" towards intending settlers and that because of the existing situation the Canadian west was being labelled by American immigration agents as a territory where "landlordism" prevailed.[73] The first public protest meeting was not long to follow. This meeting, in October 1882, scarcely six months after the assignment of the great leases, proved to be the precursor of nearly three decades of settler opposition to federal land policy in the southwest. The fifty-odd people assembled at Ellis' billiard hall in Calgary denounced the government's land reservations as " . . . manifestly unjust to the many settlers and pioneers who [had] come hither to make their homes," and resolved, after lively debate, that it would be in the best interests of the Territory if the great grazing leases were cancelled at once and the American grazing system adopted.[74] The consequent petition made little impression, other than causing a certain annoyance to the Deputy Minister of the Interior who apparently took umbrage at the suggestion that certain government policies were retarding western settlement. He completely discounted the petitioners' complaint, that nearly all agricultural land was taken up with grazing leases and government reserves, as totally at variance with the facts. At this juncture the

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[73] Ibid., 14 November 1882.

[74] RG15, B1a, Vol. 59, 52928, 12 October 1882. Petition.

department had complete confidence in its lease policy and contemptuously dismissed the suggestion that the American grazing system be adopted, with the assurance that

> the Government had well considered the advantages and disadvantages of the ranging system of the United States, respecting which the Minister had information from much more reliable sources than evidently were accessible to those who passed this resolution. . . .[75]

Despite the Deputy Minister's defense of the lease system, glaring abuses were evident. As the Toronto Globe explained in its report of the Calgary meeting, while a few operations such as the Cochrane ranch were legitimate, many leases had been granted to people who had neither the ability nor the inclination to do anything more than hold their property on speculation, hoping to be bought out by others honestly desiring to bring in and breed stock. In support of this contention the Globe listed numerous companies and individuals such as one Major Barnes [Baynes], a son-in-law of Senator Cochrane, who possessed two and one-half townships (57,600 acres) upon which, it was alleged, only one-half dozen horses were kept.[76] Numerous companies having no stock whatsoever were identified as having leases of up to four townships. These great acreages seem to have consistently impressed the eastern press and public. Typical of such concern regarding what appeared to be the

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[75] Ibid., A. M. Burgess to J. Trotier, 5 December 1882.

[76] The Globe (Toronto), 11 December 1882, report of an October 11 meeting in Fort Calgary.

creation of great landed estates in the west was the subsequent dark warning of the Toronto News that a "New Ireland" was in the making.[77]

Persistent allegations to this effect in the Macleod paper were given broader coverage by the Toronto and Montreal press and eventually brought forth an official defence of government policy. The Acting Minister of the Interior, Sir David Macpherson, explained to the Fort Macleod editor that the ranchers had " . . . gone in there with large capital and taken great risks," and because they were paying rent for the land there consequently existed a contract between the cattlemen and the government which entitled the former to the full protection of the federal authorities.[78] Ottawa was convinced that, given the almost unlimited availability of lands elsewhere, there was no need to tolerate squatting in the grazing region. Macpherson warned that

> no favour can be extended to the class of speculative squatters who are not agriculturalists, who have or who may be dotting themselves down on lands which are held under lease for grazing purposes, and upon other Dominion lands.[79]

Macpherson's warning went unheeded and settlers continued to arrive through the spring and summer of 1883. In September a group of these settlers who had located in the

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[77] Herald, 25 June 1884, quoting the Toronto News.

[78] Gazette, 24 March 1883.

[79] Ibid.

Porcupine Hills, in the heart of the ranching country near Fort Macleod, forwarded a petition to the Department of the Interior. They complained that they had been encouraged to settle in the North West by pamphlets published and distributed by the department, only to be informed after having erected houses and ploughed the land that the properties claimed were under prior lease.[80] The settlers requested that their lands be freed and that the leaseholders be given a notice of cancellation in two years as provided within the terms of the lease. The Department of the Interior was not sympathetic and brusquely informed the petitioners that the lease had been in effect when they settled and that they were therefore in the hands of the lessee, who had power to evict trespassers.[81] The "trespassers" were summarily forced off their claims. With the exception of one who persisted for sixteen years finally to gain title to his initial homestead,[82] the settlers moved northwards to more hospitable country.

Aware that their prosperity was directly related to extensive land holdings and an open unfenced range, the stockmen initiated a vigorous defence of their interests and as

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[80] RG15, B1a, Vol. 77, 65793, Petition--Settlers in Porcupine Hills, 10 September 1883.

[81] Ibid., Department of Interior to A. Shead, 5 March 1884.

[82] Ibid., F. Oliver to the Deputy Minister of the Interior, J. Smart, 11 November 1899.

the pressure of settlement and the consequent number of evictions increased through the summer of 1884, the animosity between the ranchers and prospective settlers grew in proportion. One contemporary observer reported that the entire foothill region from the American border to Calgary, 150 miles to the north, was divided into two hostile camps. Explaining that the struggle between the "two clans" had recently "assumed a serious turn" F. Girard, a doctor on the Blood Indian reserve, sought to forewarn the government of impending violence.[83] Taking the side of the farmer Girard alleged that:

> Everywhere the will of the strongest is the law to which they [the farmer] have to submit. The Stock Raisers' claim this right, though they have no title to it, and proclaim loudly and in every way: "No farmers in this Country we have no need for them. The land is good but for pasture and nothing else; why, then, attempt, uselessly, to establish farms. Farmers coming here to establish themselves choose the lands on the rivers. It is a nuisance for us, because our cattle will soon be unable to reach water. Down with farming!"[84]

The essential difficulty, as Girard observed, was the "monopoly exercised by lease-carriers." Wherever farmers attempted to locate they were informed that the land was part of this or that lease. As there was no land office in Fort Macleod, an official check was difficult and costly. Consequently many settlers eventually squatted on whatever property suited them only to be quickly faced with a legal suit which they

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[83] Macdonald Papers, MG 26, A1(b), Vol. 409, F. Girard to Sir Hector Langevin, 18 November 1884.

[84] Ibid.

could not hope to win. After the usual proceedings the would-be settler was condemned to pay costs and expelled. Girard predicted that such expulsions would continue in increasing numbers.

The readiness with which ranchers were inclined to use their legal advantage through 1884 precipitated a crisis in the following spring.[85] On Sunday, April 5, 1885, a large group of harried settlers responded to a word-of-mouth summons to meet at the farm of John Glenn on Fish Creek several miles south of Calgary. It was plain to all assembled that this was the propitious moment for decisive action. Property rights had to be settled before spring seeding, only two months off. But most important was the ominous and weighty significance of the defeat of a Mounted Police and militia force at Duck Lake only ten days before. This defeat signalled the outbreak of the North West Rebellion and it was clear to all those gathered for the meeting that Ottawa would be most sensitive to settlers' grievances, at a time when the initiative lay with the rebels.

Sam Livingston, one of the first settlers in the region was elected chairman, and in his opening remarks vividly summarized the settlers' grievances. Livingston complained that though he had improved and cultivated his

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[85]See for example, Gallagher, v. John B. Smith and Stewart Ranch Co. v. Robert Auld, as cited in the Macleod Gazette, 14 August 1884 and 26 September 1884.

property in the vicinity of Calgary for nine years and was long ago entitled to a patent for his lands, this was denied. He observed that between "government reserves, leases, school lands, and Hudson's Bay lands, a man was unable to find a spot to settle," and that if one did settle he was certain "to be chased by someone, either by the police, land agents, or government officials of some kind. . . ." Reflecting the mood of the gathering, he concluded that a settler was "worse off than a wild animal, as a wild animal had a closed season in which he could not be hunted but a settler was chased at all seasons of the year." In Livingston's view the current situation left no alternative but a resort to arms. Rather than be "driven out" like some forty or fifty other settlers with whom he claimed personal acquaintance, he announced his determination to defend his claim with his Winchester.[86] Taking up this impassioned cry, John Glenn, the host of the gathering, related that he too had been unsuccessful during the several years past in his attempt to obtain a land title--as indeed was the case with most of those present. Glenn declared that he too was prepared to defend his claim by force of arms should the authorities try to compel him to leave. If settlers were not immediately given their full rights Glenn announced that he would be compelled to burn his place and leave and, if this came to pass, he threatened to

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[86] Herald, 9 April 1885.

leave few ranchsteads standing behind him.

The ranch companies were the natural focus of the meeting's hostility. They held the lands that Livingston, Glenn and their compatriots wanted. One of those assembled told of his eviction at the behest of the Bow River Ranche Company, while another protested his expulsion from the Cochrane lease. Several intending settlers claimed that they had sworn affidavits and had paid government agents to have titles drawn but had received no answer from the federal authorities. The testimonial of James Barwis underlined the sense of final resolve and desperation. He had been removed once from his chosen property, had since returned, and now declared: "I hold it now and will defy all comers."[87] Unable to obtain legal titles, subjected to continued harassment, and despairing at the thought of being kept on the run, armed resistance seemed the only recourse unless the federal government could be persuaded to open the leases and grant the settlers "full and equal" rights. With this object in view the impatient crowd formed the Alberta Settlers' Rights Association as the official vehicle to forward to the Prime Minister their urgent request that all land suitable for agricultural purposes held under lease in Southern Alberta be opened for settlement, and that all townships in the vicinity of Calgary be opened immediately for homestead

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[87] Ibid.

entry.[88] Anticipating that the farm population would soon comprise a majority, the petitioners insisted that it was absolutely necessary that the region be represented at Ottawa without delay. The solution to their problems seemed to lie in federal representation, lauded as "the only means of quieting the present discontent among the settlers in the Territories," and the recent defeat in the Dominion parliament of such a bill by the Conservative government drew forth the dark and timely caution that immediate action was required "to prevent a repetition of the trouble which now unhappily exists in these Territories." To make it explicit to the Prime Minister where a refusal of their requests might lead and to indicate where their allegiance might be placed during the coming struggle for the North West, the petitioners concluded their telegram with a resolution that "the halfbreeds in these Territories are entitled to and should receive the same privileges as regards lands as have already been conceded their brethren in Manitoba."[89]

Despite their reckless temper, it is very doubtful that the small company gathered at John Glenn's farm would have joined the insurgents had their appeal gone unanswered. While the settlers were almost certainly prepared to fight for their homesteads, their bravado in announcing their right

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[88] Macdonald Papers, MG 26, A1(d), Vol. 414, pp. 200489-200498.

[89] Ibid.

to rebel was simply to impress a government they knew to be in a corner. In this the settlers were partially successful. Given the highly volatile situation in the West, the government was at first very concerned. Federal authorities had been warned of the impending meeting at Glenn's farm and were decidedly apprehensive regarding the situation in and around Calgary.[90] On April 10, Interior Department officials received "quit the city notices" signed with the traditional "triple 7" seal of American vigilance committees.[91] The order to leave the city at once was not obeyed but nervous officials kept Ottawa informed of the activities of those individuals known to have attended the protest meeting. Official assessment of the gathering was that most of those present were not bona fide settlers but agitators from the town who, as one official remarked, were "known and are watched."[92] As the defeat of the rebel forces in the north grew imminent pressure eased, but it was none the less clear that the demands of the several hundred new settlers in the vicinity

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[90] RG15, B1a Vol. 101, 87193, C. B. Elliott to David Macpherson, Minister of Interior, Telegram, 3 April 1885.

[91] Ibid., C. B. Elliott to Sir David Macpherson, Telegram, 10 April 1885.

[92] Ibid., G. F. Clark to Sir David Macpherson, 10 April 1885. Several of those "watched" were Calgary lawyers with suspected Grit or Fenian leanings. Another, Ramsay, was an agent of the North West Land Company, which had an obvious interest in seeing the leases cancelled. See, Macdonald Papers, MG 26, A1(b), Vol. 193, p. 80356, G. F. Clarke to A. M. Burgess, 8 May 1885.

of Calgary could no longer be ignored with political impunity. It was also clear that the real issue concerning the majority of the new inhabitants was land tenure rather than representative institutions.

Responding directly to the petition the Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, instructed his Minister of the Interior, Sir David Macpherson, to have all ranches inspected and " . . . all leases cancelled without mercy where there has been a substantial breach of the conditions."[93] The Prime Minister was quite aware of the speculation that had occurred and had in fact, from the beginning, become increasingly disenchanted with his leaseholding friends. Writing in the summer of 1883 to the Hon. Alexander Campbell, his old law partner and fellow Privy Councillor, regarding the ranching scheme of Campbell's brother, Macdonald had protested that:

> Some 8 or 9 companies get Ranches on [giving] the assurance that they were both able and willing to stock them. It turns out that they all lied and merely got their leases for the purpose of selling them. . . These speculators now club together to make one large company with a [range] the size of a province to speculate upon, and propose to hawk this around Europe.[94]

While the cancellation of speculative leases eliminated some glaring abuses, the problem of opening lands in

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[93] Ibid., RG15, B1a, Vol. 102, 87776, Sir John A. Macdonald to Sir David Macpherson, 20 April 1885.

[94] Macdonald Papers, MG26, A1(b), Vol. 525, Letterbook, Macdonald to Hon. Alexander Campbell, Minister of Justice, 23 June 1883.

the immediate vicinity of Calgary remained. To this end two townships of government reserve were opened. The most desirable lands in the area, however, and the region in which most of the squatting had occurred, was in the Bow River Valley from the edge of the Calgary village westward to the mountains. These lands were held by the most politically powerful of all the ranch groups, Senator Cochrane and his Montreal business associates. Moreover, his company was one of the few in the region that was meeting lease conditions.

It was to secure part of this river valley from Senator Cochrane, to allay the ranchers' apprehension of federal abandonment and to counter the growing clamour in the Opposition press, that the Deputy Minister of the Interior, A. M. Burgess, was sent to tour the region. In his subsequent report to Parliament he strongly defended government policy and asserted that there was no conflict of interests between rancher and settler, that the government was not withholding homestead titles, and that agitation was the result of "insinuations of ignorant and mischievous people, and the impression created by loose statements in the press. . . ."[95] While it is notable that he did not mention discussion with farmers in the southwest, he did provide authority for his view with the certification that he had

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[95]Canada, Department of Interior, Annual Report, 1885, p. 11.

"discussed the subject with a large number of the range managers." The government was in fact trying to buy time to solve a difficult political dilemma. Publicly committed to policy that gave settlement precedence over all other matters in the West, the government was confronted by an exceedingly powerful minority interest within the Conservative party that wanted to discourage if not prevent settlement in a sizable part of the southwestern section of the North West Territories.

Though the cattlemen were ready to utilize all the resources at their disposal to restrict settlement and are generally made out to be the villains in settler-ranch feuds, such is not entirely the case. The North American historiographical bias that has immortalized the sturdy westward-moving pioneer farmer has tended to obscure reality with an implicit theme of democracy and progress versus the autocratic and obstructionary forces of the cattle kingdom. As is always the case the picture is hardly so black and white. Apart from the basic question as to the region's suitability for agriculture, the ranchers had a number of legitimate complaints against the settlers and incipient stockmen. Many of the so-called settlers were not really settlers at all, but rather small-time speculators who squatted on the choice part of a lease hoping to be bought off. On the other hand, those settlers who were planning to make a permanent home usually chose locations on creek bottoms or near springs, and

began to fence off the ranchers' water supply. Others were not really interested in farming at all but instead hoped to become cattlemen, despite limited or non-existent capital, by stealing the beginnings of a herd of their own from among the numerous strays from the great herds on the open range. This kind of cattle rustling was always a serious threat, especially to ranchers with large herds who found it nearly impossible to keep track of all their cattle. Many settlers found the temptation too great, as did the chairman of the founding meeting of the Settlers' Rights Association, Sam Livingston. While demanding recognition of settlers' rights he seems to have had a strange interpretation of ranchers' property rights. About a month prior to the settlers' April meeting, W. F. Cochrane, writing to his father, reported the contents of a recently received letter from Sam Livingston: "He [Sam Livingston] had heard where 7 or 8 of our cows were, and a Hereford bull and offered to turn over the cows on condition of receiving a bill of sale for the bull."[96] Cochrane then wrote to the manager of company property near Calgary to make enquiries and to offer to pay to get the cattle back. "We might as well buy the cows off him. If he wants to buy a Hereford bull we will sell him one."[97] In spite of their

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[96]GAI, W. F. Cochrane, Diary and Letterbook, Cochrane Ranch: 1884-85, p. 103, 21 March 1885.

[97]Ibid., p. 107, W. F. Cochrane to W. D. Kerfoot, 22 March 1885.

great economic power the large ranchers were very vulnerable to the malice of those they offended. Regarding possible action against a known horse-thief, Cochrane cautioned: "he is a man that it is not very safe to make an enemy of as he is just mean enough to burn the range off or do any mean trick out of revenge."[98] The setting of prairie fires also offered another avenue of reprisal that could be accomplished without fear of apprehension and was potentially devastating to the rancher.

Through 1885 and 1886 the cattlemen began to marshall their local and national forces for the struggle that had begun to gain momentum. The electoral contest in the late summer of 1885 to determine the district's first representative in the Territorial Council at Regina clearly illustrates the attitude of the ranch community at this juncture. The candidate representing the more moderate element, Lord Boyle,[99] took the position that limited settlement was necessary and inevitable. At the same time he opposed the view of many of the smaller ranchers that speculative leases held by absentee owners should be cancelled. Boyle's group was prepared to lend cautious agreement to certain changes in the lease structure. G. C. Ives, the other candidate, represented the more extreme stand against any settlement,

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[98] Ibid., p. 138, W. F. Cochrane to J. M. Browning, 26 April 1885.

[99] Later the Earl of Shannon.

allegedly stating in his platform that "the poor man, . . . has no business in this section of Alberta . . . [especially the] agriculturist, who is too poor to be able to purchase stock. . . ."[100] Though the contest was bitter, and though, as the Gazette reported, "worse than insults were hurled at Lord Boyle" at a public assembly in the ranch town of Pincher Creek, he emerged victorious.

With the election over, the government was anxious to alleviate the squatter problem in the southwest which promised to become an increasing political liability. The problem faced by the government was how to amend the lease system and at the same time not antagonize the powerful ranch lobby. A compromise that would permit limited settlement and at the same time protect the interests of the established ranchers was the obvious solution. With this object in mind the government became increasingly receptive to the idea of a water reserve system. From the cattlemen's point of view such a measure was definitely attractive. If the range could not be controlled through a closed lease system, it was apparent to all that the same ends might be gained even more efficiently through control of the region's springs, streams and river fronts. If a satisfactory system of stock water reserves could be established they were amenable to changes in the lease structure.

Certain members of the eastern ranch establishment

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[100] Gazette, 21 July 1885.

had in fact already approached Sir David Macpherson the year before to request that certain reserves be set aside for stock watering purposes. The Minister in turn instructed the Interior Department's superior official in the west, William Pearce, the Superintendent of Mines, to confer with the stock men on the matter.[101] Meanwhile the strong settler opposition to federal lease policy which had emerged before and during the North West Rebellion caused the new Minister of the Interior, Thomas Daly, as well as several of the senior officials within the Department in Ottawa, to question the political expediency of such a proposal. Pearce however argued convincingly for the policy. He drew attention to the fact that when squatters were permitted to take up bottom lands along the rivers they immediately fenced their properties, thus preventing stock from reaching the river for water and shelter during winter storms. To illustrate the nature and extent to which the problem had already developed, Pearce cited as an example recent homesteading along the Belly River between Fort Kipp and Slide Out, where eighteen settlers had fenced and made twenty-five continuous miles of river inaccessible and thus rendered the surrounding 30,000 acres of good winter pasture valueless.[102] The Superintendent insisted

[101] RG15, B2a, Vol. 159, 141376, pt. 1, W. Pearce to A. M. Burgess regarding Macpherson's instructions of 7 January 1885, 10 March 1886.

[102] Ibid., W. Pearce to H. H. Smith, Commissioner of Dominion Lands, Winnipeg, 10 September 1884.

that if the settlers' contention that only the valley bottoms were suitable for growing vegetables or grain, it was unwise to attempt to settle the water courses and render the remainder of the southwest useless. He maintained, moreover that the bottom lands were predominantly characterized by a stone and gravel surface, not 5 per cent of them arable. Pearce's main concern was to dispel the impression created by the eastern press that squatters in the southwest were intending farmers who were prevented from following their chosen vocation by a misguided federal land policy that favoured the ranch interests. He consistently maintained through the entire Territorial period that the region was best suited for grazing and that in fact nearly all the squatters had little intention of putting the land to crop but intended to become stock raisers. Consequently the legislation required was not that to assist and encourage a potential farming population but rather to regulate and facilitate the ranching industry already present. The most immediate need in this regard, and one that would be to the advantage of large companies as well as the small beginning stock raiser, was a system of water reserves.

It seems that Pearce saw the system of water reserves not as a means by which the ranch companies could retain control of the region but rather as a device to ensure that the land would be used to its fullest potential and as a means of protecting the smaller stockman. Fully cognizant of the

government's commitment to settlement, and aware of the nature of the main opposition to a water reserve system, Pearce emphasized the important benefits that would accrue to the small stock raiser. Citing the precedent set in the free range country south of the international boundary, he argued that experience had shown "that the large capitalists invariably drive out the small ones" and that they accomplished this mainly by placing men on and preempting all the bottoms. By denying other access to water they gained free pasturage on the lands thus rendered useless to others.[103] As a means of preventing the consequent "lawlessness" which Pearce implied was typical of the United States and would surely follow in Canada, he recommended that the government make certain reservations for water and shelter that would guarantee access to all. For the sake of political expediency he suggested that the initiative would best come from the stock associations and he expressed his confidence that the public would endorse such a policy.

The following month the Superintendent of Mines accordingly sent an unofficial letter to the stock associations at Fort Macleod and High River urging that they make a formal request to the government that reserves be set aside for stock watering and shelter.[104] The expected

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[103] Ibid.

[104] Pearce Papers, Letterbook 11, Pearce to Block, Secretary Stock Association at Fort Macleod, 30 November 1885; W. Pearce to F. Stimson, Vice Pres. North Western Stock Association, High River, 30 November 1885.

petitions were not however immediately forthcoming as the cattlemen were at this juncture fully occupied in an attempt to restructure their association so that it might hold the support of both the large and the small ranchers. The first response to Pearce's request came eventually from the northern association, the North-Western Stock Association. Taking Pearce's cue the cattlemen requested that a committee be appointed by the government to confer with the stockmen with regard to the setting aside of water and shelter reserves, the reservation of hay bottoms and the creation of cattle trails to marketing points.[105]

This contrivance between the cattlemen and Pearce was viewed with some misgiving by Deputy Minister, A. M. Burgess, who was anxious to check the growing impression that the department was pro-ranch, and he cautioned the Minister that, as such reservations would exclude settlers from a considerable section of the Territories, the Department should take care not to base its decision solely on the basis of representations of an interested class.[106] Pearce on the other hand, in his advice to the Minister, was untroubled by uncertainty as to the desirability of the ranchers' proposals. Through his long and important career in the west

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[105] RG15, B2a, Vol. 159, no. 141376 pt. 1, North-Western Stock Association to Minister of the Interior, 1 March 1886.

[106] Ibid., A. M. Burgess to T. White, 12 March 1886.

he was convinced that much of the southwest was not suitable for farming unless irrigated.

While the Minister of the Interior, Thomas White, was initially sceptical of the water reserve proposals earlier put forth by the Montreal group and defended by the Superintendent of Mines, he began to recognize the possibility of using the request for such reserves as the basis of a quid pro quo exchange. It was imperative however, lest the government have to face the accusation from small ranchers as well as the pro-settlement press that it was acting solely in the interests of the larger concerns, that the water reserve proposal be assured of the cattlemen's collective support.[107] When it thus became apparent in the late spring of 1886 that the ranchers had resolved their internal differences through the complete restructuring of the old stock association and that the newly organized political arm of the ranching community, the Canadian North West Territories Stock Association, was definitely a representative body, the Minister made plans to journey to Fort Macleod to discuss personally the lease and water reserve issues with the cattlemen.

The fact that White was prepared to undertake this long and still arduous journey to a district not yet accessible by rail, in order to negotiate government policy is testimony to the ranchers' political influence in government

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[107] Ibid., W. Pearce to T. White, 6 March 1886.

circles. At the consequent public meeting in Fort Macleod White prefaced his remarks with the acknowledgement that the region was "the best ranching country on the continent of America. . . ."[108] He then continued cautiously to express his government's feeling in favour of "reasonable settlement," and explained that all new leases would contain provision for homestead entry. White also expressed his hope that, while the previously granted twenty-one year closed leases would be honoured, Senator Cochrane's recent promise to give up certain lands to which settlement seemed to be tending might be taken as an example to be followed. In return for the stockmen's cooperation he promised that a system of stock watering and shelter reservations would be established on rivers, creeks and streams throughout the Territory and that farmers would not be allowed to fence cattle trails.[109]

On the basis of White's general assurances and promises of federal consideration, the ranchers forwarded memorials with specific proposals in order to press the government to take legislative action. The first memorial from Senator Cochrane, Sir Hugh Allan and other eastern presidents of the most important ranch companies, and the second from the

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[108] Gazette, 27 July 1886.

[109] Ibid., Cochrane's promise turned out to have a number of strings attached and it took another year for a compromise to be reached. See RG15, B2a, Vol. 5, 137261, pt. 1, Memo. Additional lands were gained in the south in lieu of lands given up along the Bow River, 23 August 1887.

Canadian North West Stock Association, stressed the ranchers' primary concern that access to and control of strategic watering places be assured.[110] But there was also a new demand in the petitions. Pointing to the seriously overcrowded American range, the petitioners asked that restrictions on the entry of American cattle be tightened further and that the lease stocking requirements be reduced to one animal for every thirty acres leased from one animal for every ten. Hoping to impress upon the government the need for quick action with regard to their requests, the Canadian North West Territories Stock Association gave notice that the situation on the Canadian range was in danger of serious deterioration. Pointing to squatters and others who would enter their leases, the ranchers warned that:

> the efforts of individuals to resist these unfair encroachments upon their legal rights have produced elsewhere encounters and consequences most prejudicial to the well-being of the community, and in the long run with disastrous results to the industry itself.[111]

Burgess, the Deputy Minister, found this allusion alarming. It lent weight to an earlier warning, in a confidential memorandum from Pearce, that the possibility of serious trouble between the leaseholders and homesteaders had to

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[110] RG15, B2a, Vol. 159, no. 141376, pt. 1, Cochrane, Allen et al to White, 9 October 1886; Canadian North West Stock Association to T. White, 3 December 1886.

[111] Ibid.

be seriously considered.[112] As noted before, Burgess lacked Pearce's conviction that the southwest was largely unsuited to agriculture and that since the squatters present in the region really intended to become stock raisers rather than farmers, the whole problem could be simply resolved by the setting aside of water reserves which insured equality of access to this essential resource for all. Consequently the Deputy Minister, in his final recommendations on the matter to his superior, prefaced his evaluation of the cattlemens' requests with the caution that certain forces were beyond the control of government, and warned that:

> . . . there can be no doubt that when an actual settler desires the land for the purpose of making his home upon it, it would be impossible, even if it were expedient, to keep him out. It is not meant by this that one or two speculative settlers should be allowed to disturb a whole grazing ranche, but when the wave of settlement reaches the confines of the grazing country, if that country be found fit for the purposes of actual settlement, it will in my humble opinion be impossible to maintain it for purely grazing purposes.[113]

Beyond this there were areas where Burgess felt government assistance to the ranching industry was feasible. To this end he recommended acceptance of the cattlemen's plan to prevent over-stocking, though he was of the opinion that 20 acres per animal rather than 30 would be sufficient. His position with regard to water reserves was similar. While agreeing that such reserves were necessary he expressed his

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[112] Ibid., W. Pearce to T. White, 11 November 1886.

[113] Ibid., A. M. Burgess to T. White, 9 January 1887.

anxious but unsuccessful concern that there be a provision for cancellation upon a year's notice.[114]

Despite Burgess' hesitancy the government finally, by Order-in-Council in December 1886, inaugurated the system of permanent water reservations that Pearce requested and withdrew from settlement or lease the first of a large number of such reservations.[115] This initial list was expanded zealously under Pearce's guidance. In some parts of the south where settlement had not yet become a problem and where few requests for reserves were forthcoming Pearce nudged the ranchers to action by reminding leaseholders that while they had the right to evict squatters, the lease did contain the provision for cancellation on two years notice, whereupon pasture, springs and all would be open to settlement. On the other hand, if certain springs and creeks on the lease were set aside in the form of stock watering reservations, Pearce argued that the public would understand that even if the lease were cancelled, settlement or fencing on certain lands would not be allowed. Such a step, Pearce explained, would " . . . prevent Ranchmen being harrassed [sic] by a very objectionable class of squatters whose aim is largely to levy black-mail, at least it is so asserted."[116]

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[114] Ibid., A. M. Burgess to T. White, 12 March 1886.

[115] Ibid., W. Pearce to T. White, 11 November 1886.

[116] Ibid., W. Pearce to H. S. Pinham [Pinhorn], Manager of the Oxley Ranch, 27 September 1886, enclosure in, W. Pearce to T. White, 11 November 1886.

The other request of the petitioners, the reduction of lease stocking requirements, did not gain federal approval until March 19, 1888. While it is debatable whether this new provision was responsible for stemming the anticipated invasion of American cattle, it did have important consequences on the southwestern range.[117] By persuading the government to reduce these obligations by one-half, one animal for every twenty acres rather than one for every ten acres, the cattlemen made it much easier to retain their vast holdings. Heretofore the main lever used by the federal government to cancel leases had been the failure to meet lease stocking requirements.

In all the government response to the settlers' demands of 1885 seems to have amounted to little more than a superficial gesture designed to divert public clamour. The dismayed editor of the Macleod Gazette pointed out that the new regulations applied only to new leases and as most of the area was still covered by the old form of lease the situation regarding increased settlement remained largely unchanged.[118] In fact the position of the cattlemen was greatly strengthened. With new water and shelter reserves on creeks, rivers and springs throughout the ranching country the ranchers gained a degree of indirect control outside

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[117] Ibid., Order-in-Council, 19 March 1888.

[118] Gazette, 21 March 1886.

the big leases that they had not had before. The ranch community had every reason to be pleased with a government in which they were so intimately represented and their attachment is well illustrated at this juncture by the returns of the first federal election in which they participated in 1887. The Liberal party, identified as the "farmers" party in the southwest, received only three of the 301 votes cast in the ranching communities of Fort Macleod and Pincher Creek.[119] Earlier, at a mass gathering held at Fort Macleod to discuss the question of federal representation, the ranchers had been particularly careful to disassociate themselves from certain farm groups elsewhere in the Territories who were also seeking a voice at the federal level. Those assembled were told: "This meeting [is] no Farmer's Union. We [are] a different class of men, and propose to raise no Grit howl (Hear, hear). Nor wish to harass the Government, the resolutions [will] be respectfully submitted for consideration. . . ."[120] The cattlemen's allegiance to the Conservative party was almost universal and it remained an enduring characteristic of the regional political structure until well after the turn of the century.

The government's new lease policy, the cancellation of some of the speculative leases, and the opening of

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[119] Ibid., 22 March 1887.

[120] Ibid., 2 January 1885.

government reserve land near Calgary to homesteading brought only brief tranquility to the Canadian range. The presence of the railway meant that settlement pressure was greatest in the vicinity of Calgary, especially along the Bow valley. The newly opened government reserve was quickly taken up, but the much sought after valley land that Senator Cochrane had promised to relinquish did not materialize for several years. Consequently the old struggle soon resumed and the Minister of the Interior was compelled to return to the west for the second consecutive summer to arbitrate between the contending groups. The Calgary Herald noted cynically that the settlers would be "glad to see him, once more, and once more have the promise that those townships are to be withdrawn from the Cochrane lease."[121] While Cochrane had agreed in principle to release two townships, he was not prepared to finalize the understanding without the firm commitment of government protection under the "no-settlement" provision of the remaining six townships, as well as compensation in the form of additional lands to be added to his southern lease.

As Cochrane and the government negotiated the situation grew continually worse and the agreement was no sooner final than the Senator was constrained to call upon Ottawa to honour its promise of unstinting support in keeping

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[121] RG15, B2a, Vol. 5, no. 137261, pt. 1. Herald, 16 March 1887, clipping.

squatters off the remainder of the lease.[122] The appeal to Ottawa was bolstered with a threatening extract from a recent report of the ranch manager.

> Morrison was out among some of the settlers the other day, pretending to be looking for land--asked one man if the B. A. R. Co. [British American Ranch Company] could not turn him off if he settled on their lease and the fellow's answer was 'Oh just show them a box of matches and they will leave you alone,' and then proceeded to tell how he was on one of the townships lately thrown open, but if he had not gotten his way before long he would have done some burning.[123]

The government, in keeping with the understanding, reassured the company of its full support.[124] Newspaper advertisements and handbills signed by the Deputy Minister were posted, specifically warning citizens to stay off leased lands along the Bow River belonging to the Cochrane-owned British American Ranch Company, as the Government would "in no way recognize such squatting."[125] The Calgary Herald in turn warned the federal government not to contemplate assisting the Company to eject settlers as "the squatters are not the kind of men to relinquish their rights merely because an arbitrary and unjust order has been issued against them."[126]

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[122] RG15, B2a, Vol. 5, no. 137261, pt. 1, official notice, 23 May 1887.

[123] Ibid., J. M. Browning to F. White, quoting the manager's report, 26 May 1887.

[124] Ibid., F. White to J. M. Browning, 28 May 1887.

[125] Herald, advertisement, 26 August 1887.

[126] RG15, B2a, Vol. 5, no. 137261, pt. 1, Herald, clipping, 23 August 1887.

For the next five years the Bow River valley remained in a state of constant turmoil and the Department of the Interior was the recipient of petitions, threats and counter-threats from the contending parties.[127] The eventual decision of the Bow River Horse Ranch to bring matters before the courts pushed the Department of the Interior into a difficult corner. Given the lease provisions the legal outcome was never in doubt and the department knew it would have to support an extremely unpopular decision. A local political friend of the new Minister of the Interior, Edgar Dewdney, warned of the possible consequences of the anticipated court decision. The friend explained that the settlers, knowing that their case had no chance in a court of law, had "resolved to stand by each other and defend themselves with their wincheter [sic] rifles . . . in case they are sherrifed [sic] off."[128] The Deputy Minister was also fully cognizant of the awkward position in which the case had placed the department. He informed Dewdney that they would be forced to decide whether the ranchers should be sustained, or whether the department should give two years notice of cancellation. Burgess recommended that the desirable

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[127] RG15, B2a, Vol. 5, no. 137261, pt. 1, W. Pearce to the Commissioner of Dominion Lands, 19 December 1888; Petition to E. Dewdney, Minister of the Interior (269 names), 12 January 1889; G. Goddard to E. Dewdney, 15 March 1889.

[128] Ibid., J. Cowan to E. Dewdney, 18 January 1889.

solution would be a compromise wherein the company would give up the portion of the land lying nearest to Calgary.[129] In the end the persistent efforts at compromise failed, and this, along with the crisis developing on the southern range, eventually forced the government to seek cancellation of all the old closed leases.

In the south the editor of the Fort Macleod Gazette, supported by the Eastern press, renewed his campaign for open settlement. On this occasion the editor, C. E. D. Wood, was careful to confine his attack to the large ranch companies, hoping to take advantage of the differences that existed between this group and the smaller proprietors. Wood began his offensive in May, 1888 with a strong editorial attack on the British-owned Oxley Ranche Company, charging that the company had only half the cattle required to meet the lease stocking requirements of its 287,000 acres and should therefore be compelled to give up excess acreage.[130] It was however upon the Walrond Ranche Company that the paper's main attention was focused over the next five years. While most of the large ranch companies policed their leaseholds with rigorous vigilance, this British-owned company seems to have pursued a particularly aggressive policy towards would-be settlers. The stern evictions ordered by manager, Dr. Duncan McEachran, particularly enraged the editor of the Gazette.

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[129] Ibid., A. M. Burgess to E. Dewdney, 26 January 1889.

[130] Gazette, 23 May 1888.

Wood's allegation that employees of the Walrond Ranche had "run several good settlers out of the country" brought forth not a denial of such activities but McEachran's contemptuous response that he was sad to have aroused the wrath of Macleod's "journalistic giant" and the warning that unless the Gazette altered its offensive policy he would start a new journal to be run "in the interests of the stock industry."[131]

By winter the feud had reached Parliament. Here the government was soundly condemned for not following its own publicly declared policy of open settlement. The Opposition charged that the cattlemen benefited from government policies developed mainly "in the interest of the speculator and moneyed man, and uniformly against the interest of the settler and the poor man." The Department of the Interior's defence of the stockmen's interests was similarly condemned and it was urged that this department be instructed to operate "in a spirit favourable to the settlers."[132]

Responding to press and parliamentary outcry, the new Minister of the Interior, Edgar Dewdney, cancelled some of the old leases whose holders had failed to comply with lease stocking requirements.[133] Though the Minister's action was little more than a token gesture which did not interfere with any of the legitimate ranching operations, the dispute did

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[131] Ibid., 4 July 1888, and 11 July 1888.

[132] Debates (Commons) 1, 28 February 1889, pp. 372-374.

[133] Gazette, 20 December 1888.

make a significant impression upon the ranch community. During the initial stages of the controversy the cattlemen found themselves without a reliable vehicle with which to conduct a public defence of their cause. They now sought to meet this deficiency through a reorganization of the Calgary Herald which saw the Alberta Livestock Journal and the Calgary Weekly Herald consolidated to form a new publication entitled the Calgary Herald and Alberta Livestock Journal. This new company was headed by the former rancher and new Conservative Member of Parliament, D. W. Davis. His associates in this venture included Fred Stimson, manager of Sir Hugh Allan's North-West Cattle Company, and A. D. Braithwaite, local manager of the Bank of Montreal.[134] By so augmenting their metropolitan influence with the most influential newspaper in the southwest the cattlemen were able to gain much wider public coverage of their counter-arguments in rebuttal to the persistent accusations of the pro-settlement press. The new paper protested, for example, that the Bow River Horse Ranche had been unfairly criticized for evicting squatters from its lease. The eviction of squatters was, according to the Herald, clearly justified. "If a farmer finds a person destroying his crops he summarily arrests him for trespass, and he has a perfect right to do so. Has not a rancher got an

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[134] Herald, 4 April 1888. Herald Magazine, 31 August 1963.

equal right to protect himself against trespass?"[135] It was argued that since it was the cattlemen who had opened up the country, "common justice" demanded that their investment be protected. So much land was available elsewhere, the paper claimed, that "no great hardship [was] sustained by an intending squatter in being summarily ordered off a lease when he first arrives."[136]

Further reorganization of the Herald the following year, which placed the paper's direction under Senator James Lougheed, Alexander Lucas[137] and several other local Tories, tied the journal more directly to the Conservative party. Editorial policy towards the stockmen, however, remained unchanged. The editor's affirmation that "it is the policy of this journal to give special attention to the stock growers' interests" and the promise "to put the policy in practice by all proper means and at every favourable opportunity. . . ,"[138] was consistent with the conviction of many prominent Calgary businessmen that the future of the southwest, and more particularly of their city, was intimately bound to the prosperity of the cattle industry, in which many of them had invested.

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[135] Ibid., 2 January 1889.

[136] Ibid.

[137] Later a member of the Conservative McBride government in British Columbia.

[138] Herald, 25 December 1889.

Consolidation of ranch strength in Calgary was not unnoticed by the Macleod Gazette. The "evil architect" of this manoeuvre in Wood's view was Dr. McEachran,[139] the man the Calgary Herald now lauded as "one of the ablest government officials we have."[140] By this time the economic sanctions initiated by the cattlemen in retaliation against Wood's outspoken criticism had begun to take effect. The four largest ranch companies, the Oxley, Walrond, Cochrane and North-West, had withdrawn their advertisements and twenty-four lesser companies and individuals followed suit. Many others allowed their paid up advertisements to run until the next year's rental was due and then declined to renew their contracts. Diminished revenue forced the Gazette to begin its eighth year of publication reduced from eight to four pages, and caused the despondent editor to lament that the government had left "the best country they have to the wolves and coyotes and the Walrond Ranche."[141]

The unparalleled political influence and domination of the large stockmen during the decade 1881-1891 is closely related to their initial economic success. The rapid corporate expansion into the grazing country was predicted upon the anticipation of substantial investment return. The cattle

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[139] Gazette.

[140] Herald, 12 December 1888.

[141] Gazette, 4 July 1889.

companies were thus looked upon by their eastern owners as strictly business ventures. For this reason it was the yearly balance sheet as much as the pressure of settlement that would, in the final analysis, determine the longevity of the cattle kingdom as it existed in 1891.

The want of accurate statistics for the early period makes a detailed assessment of the cattle industry at this stage almost impossible, but none the less a general picture can be drawn. Prior to the company period, signalled by the arrival of the first big Cochrane herd (6634 head) in the spring of 1881, it can be estimated that about 15,000 head of cattle were grazing on the Canadian range.[142] By the autumn of 1884, three and one-half years later, some 43,784 head had followed the Cochrane cattle northward.[143] This foundation stock brought from the United States, along with limited imports from eastern Canada and Great Britain, increased to an estimated 110,516 head by the end of 1889.[144] These cattle were mainly owned by the large stockmen, as is shown in the following tables which identify all stockholders with 400 or

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[142] RG15, B2a, Vol. 3, no. 1007, "Statement showing the number of Horses, Cattle, and Sheep, and the name of the Importer, entered in the District of Alberta, from the first of June 1880."

[143] Ibid.

[144] RG15, B2a, Vol. 23, 192192, "Stock Returns." 15 January 1890. W. Pearce to Secretary, Department of the Interior, 25 January 1890.

more head of cattle. The stock owned by settlers was excluded from this first enumeration by the Department of the Interior on the grounds that such stock was "hardly a sufficient element to be taken into serious consideration. . . ."[145] Livestock production in the Canadian west was completely dominated by leaseholders, and this remained the case until well after the turn of the century.

TABLE 1

STOCK OWNED BY NON-LEASE-HOLDERS--JANUARY 1890[146]

| District | Name of Stockholder (owning 400 head or more) | Cattle | Horses |
|---|---|---|---|
| Medicine Hat | German Colony | 500 | 25 |
| | Total stock owned by non-leaseholders with 400 head or more | 500 | 25 |
| | Total stock owned by all non-leaseholders in Medicine Hat district | 3168 | |
| Macleod | C. O. Card | 700 | 10 |
| | Joseph McFarland | 600 | 10 |
| | James Pierce | 400 | 8 |
| | Samuel Bird | 400 | 8 |
| | Shirley and Co., Oregon (cattle in quarantine) | 1200 | 10 |
| | Cornish Cattle Co. | 500(a) | |
| | A. M. Morden | 500 | 10 |
| | Black Bros. | 400 | 10 |
| | C. Smith | 450 | 50 |
| | Total stock owned by non-leaseholders with 400 head or more | 5150 | 116 |
| | Total stock owned by all non-leaseholders in Macleod district | 6765 | |

[145] Ibid.

[146] Ibid. The big companies were inclined to exaggerate their stock returns in order to appear to meet lease stocking

TABLE 1 - continued

| District | Name of Stockholder (owning 400 head or more) | Cattle | Horses |
|---|---|---|---|
| Calgary | Sampson | 700 | 6 |
| | Ross and Podger | 480 | 25 |
| | George Emerson | 700 | 10 |
| | W. R. Hull and Bros. | 700 | 40 |
| | Total stock owned by non-leaseholders with 400 head or more | 2580 | 81 |
| | Total stock owned by all non-leaseholders in Calgary district | 6426 | |
| Maple Creek | Judd | 500 | |
| | Shurtliffe and Wood | 450 | 40 |
| | Total stock owned by non-leaseholders with 400 head or more | 950 | 40 |
| | Total stock owned by non-leaseholders in district | 2335 | |
| | Total stock owned by non-leaseholders with herds of 400 or more in all districts | 9180 | |
| | Total stock owned by non-leaseholders in all districts | 18,694 | |

*(a) estimated

requirements. The four large herds over 10,000 head shown in Table II are probably in excess of the actual number by 1,000 to 1,500 head. Through the entire lease period the big leases were generally understocked.

TABLE II

STOCK ON LEASEHOLDS IN THE NORTH WEST TERRITORIES: JANUARY 1890[147]

| No. of ranch | Acres Leased | Name of Lessee (owning 400 head or more) | Cattle | Horses |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1,2,35 | 157,960 | North West Cattle Company | 10,410 | 832 |
| 22 | 23,000 | Stewart Ranche Co. | 2,149 | 330 |
| 25,26,34,300 | 204,500 | Cochrane Ranche Co. | 10,433 | 81 |
| 28 | 100,000 | A. B. Few | 600(a) | 20 |
| 31 | 60,131 | Military Colonization Co. | 2,000 | |
| 35a | 33,700 | Moore and Martin | | |
| 36,59a | 85,336 | C. W. Martin | 5,000 | 1,250 |
| 38 | 10,000 | Allfrey and Brooke | 750(a) | 50 |
| 42 | 34,788 | Bow River Horse Ranche Co. | 3 | 1,037 |
| 45 | 12,000 | Wells and Brown | 540 | 12 |
| 48 | 253,934 | New Oxley (Canada) Ranche Co. | 6,500 | 150 |
| 55 | 50,000 | Winder Ranche Co. | 1,800(a) | 500 |
| 65 | 6,000 | Bell and Patterson | 600(a) | 150 |
| 74,82,154 | 216,640 | Walrond Ranche Co. | 13,000 | 300 |
| 92 | 100,000 | A. G. Conrad | 6,000 | 100 |
| 94 | 20,000 | F. W. Godsal | 668 | 235 |
| 101 | 27,750 | Alberta Ranche Co. | 1,200 | 25 |
| 104 | 5,280 | W. Bell-Irving | 596 | 124 |
| 107 | 51,000 | Thos. B. H. Cochrane R.N. | 800 | 40 |
| 108 | 6,000 | D. McDougall | 440 | 320 |
| 111 | 1,920 | I. Walter Ings | 600 | 50 |
| 122,247,264 | 45,282 | George Alexander | 1,680 | 86 |
| 123,197 | 15,807 | Walter C. Skrine | 600 | 10 |
| 137 | 33,500 | Brown Ranche Co. | 1,000 | 70 |
| 146 | 80,000 | Canadian Agricultural Coal and Colonization Co. | 6,500 | 790 |
| 167 | 52,320 | Glengarry Ranche Co. | 1,262 | 13 |

[147] Ibid. Reacting to persistent complaints from the larger leaseholders that many of the small stockmen did not burden themselves with a lease, the Department in 1890 issued a warning that such grazing would henceforth render the herd liable to seizure. It is evident that the size of some of the smaller leases above do not correspond to the relatively large herd size, and that such leases were in fact meant, apart from securing certain choice watering places, simply as a token gesture.

TABLE II - continued

| No. of ranch | Acres Leased | Name of Lessee (owning 400 head or more) | Cattle | Horses |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 176 | 36,588 | McDermid and Ross | 1,200 | 70 |
| 185 | 40,000 | H. Samson | 1,400 | 30 |
| 189 | 8,960 | Greeley and Marsh | 750 | 12 |
| 193 | 38,750 | Cypress Cattle Co. | 1,172 | 135 |
| 217 | 5,120 | W. Carter | 550 | 10 |
| 225 | 17,000 | Medicine Hat Ranche Co. | 450 | 50 |
| 240 | 32,580 | W. I. Conrad | 2,500 | 180 |
| 248 | 11,000 | A. E. Cross | 500 | 150 |
| 263** | -- | H. W. Savony and others | 900 | 150 |
| 268 | 7,040 | F. W. and I. W. Ings | 650 | 20 |
| 307 | 11,000 | John Quirk | 500 | 8 |
| 289,309 | 55,000 | Canadian Pacific Colonization Co. | 453 | 92 |
| 311 | 6,400 | Boright and Parsons | 400 | 10 |
| 313 | 4,640 | E. Maunsell | 560 | 25 |
| 323 | 2,560 | R. G. Robinson | 500 | 400 |
| | 1,963,486 | Total stock owned by leaseholders with 400 head or more | 87,613 | 7,917 |
| | | Total stock owned by all leaseholders | 91,822 | |

*(a) estimated

**lease no. 263 not yet approved by Order-in-Council

TABLE III

OWNERSHIP AND DISTRIBUTION OF CATTLE ON THE CANADIAN RANGE: 1889[148]

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Total cattle owned by: | non-leaseholders | 18,694 |
| | leaseholders | 91,822 |
| | all stockmen | 110,516 |
| Total cattle in herds 400 or greater owned by: | non-leaseholders | 9,180 |
| | leaseholders | 87,613 |
| | all stockmen | 96,793 |
| Total cattle in herds 1,000 or greater owned by: | non-leaseholders | nil |
| | leaseholders | 75,206 |

The best means of determining economic distribution within the cattle community is through the number of cattle owned, on the same basis as cattlemen actually ranked one another. Lease size, which impressed contemporary eastern observers as well as subsequent historians, is of much less significance. A lease has only potential value until it is stocked and it is the number of cattle rather than the size of the lease that really determine the rancher's worth. The above tables, listing all the large ranchers in the southwest, clearly outlines the distribution of economic power within the ranch establishment and within the stock raising industry at large. It is apparent that the region and the industry were dominated

[148] Ibid., W. Pearce to Secretary, Department of the Interior, 15 January 1890. Even though the size of a few of the herds had to be estimated, Pearce assured that the aggregate was correct.

by a relatively few individuals and companies with herds over 400 head, who were in turn superseded by a closely knit "compact" of eighteen individuals and companies with herds over 1,000. Of the estimated 110,516 head of cattle on the Canadian range in 1889, approximately 96,793 or 87 per cent were owned by the "large" operators having 400 head or more. About 68 per cent of the cattle were owned by ranchers with herds of 1000 or more. A herd of 400 cattle, the minimum herd size from which the "large" stockmen have been arbitrarily ranked, represented a conservatively estimated investment of $10,000.[149] In the 1880's and 1890's this was no small amount, especially relative to the farmer or squatter whose assets were usually valued in hundred of dollars. The cattlemen, even at the lower end of the range hierarchy, enjoyed an economic status vastly superior to their few farm neighbours.

Though beef prices varied according to market factors, though many companies suffered the disadvantage of distant and sometimes inefficient management, and though there were substantial losses on some of the ranches during the unusually severe winter of 1886-87, operations through the period were generally profitable. The losses sustained by the Walrond

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[149] This is an average value subject to great qualification. A herd with superior blood lines was worth considerably more, and there were a number of such quality herds, particularly within the 300 to 500 size range. Below the 400 size, cattle herds tended to be grouped at two levels, about 200 or less than 100, with non-leaseholders predominating in the latter category.

Ranche Co. during that winter, for example, were no doubt eased in the minds of the company's shareholders by the dividend of 35 per cent which they had been paid the year before.[150] In 1886, at a time when the paid up shares of the North West Cattle Company equalled $162,000, the company reported a "clear profit" of $133,204.25.[151] Dividends of at least 20 per cent were not uncommon on other well-managed ranches.[152] In contrast to the dismal market faced by American stockmen, the Canadian market returned to a buoyant state in 1888. In that year the Calgary district alone marketed an estimated 5,000 head of cattle, and in spite of prices of fifty dollars per head and up for three year olds, it was impossible to meet the eastern demand.[153] By 1890, the cattle companies had achieved their major goal; they had firmly established themselves in the lucrative British market, and the livestock industry was described as flourishing.[154] It was the attraction of this particular market that had been the driving force behind the great North American cattle boom and

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[150] Herald, 26 June 1886.

[151] Canada, Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, Companies Branch. North West Cattle Co. Ltd.

[152] Craig, p. 234.

[153] Herald, 27 June 1888.

[154] Canada, Department of the Interior, Annual Report, 1891. RG15, B2a, Vol. 123, 192192, Pearce to Secretary, Department of the Interior, 26 January 1891.

finally, a decade after their establishment in the west, some of the larger Canadian ranchers were sending shipments in excess of 1000 head a year to the 'Old Country.'[155]

The economic condition of the industry in the early 'nineties was of course vital to its continued existence. As long as the profits to be realized were greater from grazing than from farming, the threat of an intruding farm population would be peripheral. The general subsistence level of agriculture as it was to be found in the west during the 'eighties and 'nineties was not a competitive factor, the full challenge of commercial agriculture would not be faced for another decade. For this reason the conflict within the cattle country before 1892 was mainly between the established rancher and those newcomers of limited means who planned to claim a 160 acre homestead and expand their assets, often at their larger neighbor's expense, from one cow to a herd and so become full-fledged stockraisers themselves. The owner of a small but growing herd was looked upon with suspicion and feared lest his example provide incentive to countless others. This antagonism between the large and small stockmen is reflected in the persistent internal strife within the stockmen's associations.

The contest between the larger cattlemen and their various competitors who sought entry into the southwest, the

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[155] Herald, 16 September 1891.

sheepmen, farmers and intending stock raisers, was unequal. The economic power of the established cattlemen at this juncture was greater than any other single force in the North West Territory except for the railway. Moreover their position as a regional élite was immeasurably strengthened by the fact that they were fully integrated into a larger and more powerful national élite. Given the remarkable position of the cattlemen in the Canadian west during this period, the often used regional description "Cattle Kingdom" seems to have a particularly accurate connotation.

## CHAPTER III

## THE CATTLE COMPANIES AND THE OPEN RANGE: 1892-1896

The tension which threatened to erupt into an open range war during the summer of 1891 climaxed a decade of persistent opposition to the large cattlemens' hegemony in the southwest. The crisis actually commenced after a year of deceptive calm. Forced to recognize his financial vulnerability in face of the economic sanctions imposed by the ranch community, the editor of the Fort Macleod Gazette, and self-styled champion of the settlement cause, avoided the lease or settlement question in his editorials after the winter of 1889 and thus terminated his position as information source for the eastern opposition press. Wood's conciliatory overtures through 1890 did not however bring a return of the ranch community's subscriptions and the paper continued to languish as the number of ranch advertisements continued to decrease. In the end, the ranchers' resolve pushed the Gazette to renew the challenge. If he was not to be forgiven by the local community for his past indiscretion, his belief in an increased farm population now became intimately connected to the paper's economic survival. Recognizing this, Wood gradually shifted the attention of his columns to the proposed construction of the Calgary and Edmonton Railway

which was to run from the American boundary to Edmonton. It seemed that this undertaking would bring the settlement that the region had hitherto failed to attract. Wood though broken was obviously not beaten, and, since he had nothing more to lose, rejoined the fight against the cattle companies. Reporting that an incendiary had put the torch to 300 tons of hay at the Walrond Ranch, Wood insisted that the incident had to be considered as one of the

> . . . . evil consequences of their manager's suicidal persecution of settlers. If settlers houses are pulled down about their ears . . . if, after making valuable improvements, settlers are turned out of house and home, and if, through some extraordinary influence with the government, the said manager [McEachran] can secure the cancellation of homestead entries, and secure government alliance in his war upon Canadian citizens, then retaliation is the only thing that the company can expect.[1]

This strong statement condoning violence, by an ex-policeman, illustrates the depth of frustration and despair felt by the ranchers' opponents. There was no way to meet the ranchers on equal terms and government contact or sympathy seemed almost non-existent.

The incident which had caused the incendiary attack and which set the Gazette and the ranch companies on a collision course seems to have originated in the eviction of several squatters from their homes in mid-winter.[2] Immediately

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[1] Gazette, 15 January 1891.

[2] Debates (Commons) XXIII (1891), p. 6466, 25 September 1891, citing a letter of 8 April 1891 from R. Dunbar to Sir John A. Macdonald.

following the fire, McEachran wrote to the Controller of the North West Mounted Police implicating several families that had recently been evicted from the Walrond lease. McEachran described the incident as " . . . the inauguration of a reign of terrorism and lawlessness which if not checked at the commencement will doubtless extend, and there is no saying what complications will arise."[3] The manager of the Walrond asked that police detectives be employed in the area and that the Crown join with him in offering a $250 reward for the conviction of the party or parties responsible. Despite the recommendation of the Lieutenant-Governor of the Territories that it would not be politically advisable for the Crown to be involved, McEachran was able, with the threat of a general range war, personally to prevail upon the Deputy Minister of Justice to instruct the Governor to offer this reward.[4]

Wood began his second attack on the cattlemen almost alone. To his chagrin the citizens and businessmen of the town refused open support of his cause.[5] They had suffered indirectly as a result of the Gazette's previous contest with Dr. McEachran, and on this occasion chose to remain discreet

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[3]PAC, Department of the Interior, RG15, B1a, Vol. 184, 255938, D. McEachran to F. White, Controller N.W.M.P., 27 January 1891.

[4]Ibid., J. Royal to Department of the Interior, 25 April 1891; R. Sedgewick, Deputy Minister of Justice to Department of the Interior, 6 May 1891.

[5]Gazette, 26 March 1891.

by-standers while the most serious feud to develop on the Canadian range began to unfold. Public attention was again drawn to the actions of the Walrond Ranche Company several months later by an editorial in the Gazette charging that company cow-hands had demolished the buildings of bona-fide settlers on the Walrond lease.[6] The charge related to the eviction of the Dunbar family, who claimed to have settled on the property before the 1883 survey. After Dunbar squatted, the land was granted under the old non-settlement regulations to a prospective rancher. Though he had the right to evict squatters, the new proprietor had allowed Dunbar to remain. In 1887 this original lease was cancelled and in the following year the area was granted to the Walrond Ranche under the new form of lease permitting settlement. At this point Dunbar successfully applied for a homestead entry. Later, after improving his holding, Dunbar was informed that his entry had been cancelled by the Department of the Interior. The explanation given to Dunbar was that "the land agent at Lethbridge had made a mistake in granting it."[7]

The cattlemen reacted to the mounting criticism of the press during the spring and summer of 1891 by policing

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[6] Ibid., 30 July 1891.

[7] Ibid., 3 September 1891. See also Debates (Commons) XXIII (1891), p. 6469. Pearce Papers 14B5. "Claims to Land, Fort Macleod." Correspondence in this file indicates that Dunbar's claim was legitimate; that he had in fact settled three months before the area was first leased.

their leases all the more vigorously; this in turn intensified the already inflamed relations between settler and rancher. The terse report from McEachran's ranch foreman of the eviction of one of Dunbar's neighbours illustrates the ranchers' determination, in face of the reluctance of the federal authorities, to enforce the "no settlement" clause in the lease themselves.

> . . . . two of the boys and myself went over to pull the house down and we met Dave [Cochrane] on our way over we told him what we was going to do he forbid us doing it but we went ahead and pulled it down just the same the whole tribe of them are boiling over with wrath, I hear Dunbars are saying that they are 6 or 8 of them are going to get together and put up a house some night and have Sam in it next morning I think this is only to make us uneasy at any rate we will only try to watch them the closer.[8]

Most ominous was the report's clear implication that without outside intervention, a vicious range feud or even an armed outbreak in the southwest was a distinct possibility. This was clear to McEachran, who immediately forwarded his foreman's letter to the Minister of the Interior and asked for police protection from "the spirit of lawlessness which we have to contend with on [sic] the Dunbar family."[9] He reminded the Minister that the land was unsuited for agriculture, that the "pauperism" of the Dunbars showed that farming

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[8]GAI, Dewdney Papers, enclosure in, D. McEachran to Hon. E. Dewdney, 13 August 1891.

[9]Ibid.

could not be successful. McEachran couched his appeal for government support with the warning that his men would prevent trespass and that a collision with the squatters was likely. The warning was not merely for dramatic effect. McEachran was genuinely alarmed by the deteriorating state of relations, as was the Superintendent of Police in the Macleod district. On the basis of a report from a police scout sent to observe the situation in the Porcupine Hills, Major S. Steele informed the police commissioner of the "very irritated feeling existing on all sides. . ." and predicted that "any more evictions would be followed by reprisals."[10]

Eventually the storm reached the 1891 autumn session of Parliament. The Department of the Interior attempted to defend the position of the Walrond ranch by explaining that the old lease regulations still applied to this new land grant because it had been given in exchange for a tract of land near Fort Macleod which that company had held under the old form. Hence McEachran had the legal right to evict squatters.[11] But the Opposition would not be assuaged by such legal niceties. After recounting the names of numerous settlers who had been evicted, one Member proclaimed:

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[10]PAC, Royal Canadian Mounted Police Records, Controllers Office Official Correspondence. RG18, A1, Vol. 56, F. 695. Report from Superintendent S. B. Steele to Commissioner L. W. Herchmer, 17 October 1891.

[11]Debates (Commons) XXIII (1891), p. 6470. The speaker was J. McMullen, the Liberal Member for North Wellington.

" . . . in all the hardships that I have ever read of, and the ejectments that have taken place in unfortunate Ireland . . . I have read of no case of hardship that exceeds the one I have now presented to the House . . .[12] Supporting a petition from twenty-five settlers in the Porcupine Hills, the Liberals demanded that the Walrond lease be cancelled and that all the old leases be altered to allow homesteading. Finally the Minister of the Interior, Edgar Dewdney, enunciated government policy on the matter. Using the arguments of the cattle compact, he cautioned that the large amount of capital invested in the ranching industry must be protected. He informed the House that there was good land available for settlement elsewhere. Dewdney argued that certain squatters made a business of settling on leased land, usually squatting on springs with the object of being bought out, and listed a number of examples to support his case. Developing the theme that ranchers were often victimized by squatters who settled and fenced stock watering areas, he concluded: "I think it speaks well for the ranchers and for everyone concerned that we have not had more difficulties."[13]

Despite Dewdney's strong verbal defense of the leaseholders in the House, the ranchers remained uneasy with regard to the government's future intentions, for Dewdney had remarked, under the pressure of Opposition charges, that some

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[12] Ibid., p. 6473.

[13] Ibid., p. 6464-6476.

changes in the lease system might be considered if the expected land rush materialized following completion of the southern extension of the Edmonton and Calgary railway.[14] As the confrontation continued into the spring of 1892, McEachran insisted upon a firm commitment from the government regarding leased properties and threatened to advise the directors of his company to withdraw completely from western operations unless the government guaranteed "permanent possession of the land or undisturbed possession till the end of the present lease."[15] The government for its part was certainly aware that the great weight of public opinion was with the squatters and was therefore reluctant to see the federal authority compelled to act as agent for the cattlemen, as would be the case if McEachran's demands were met. The ranchers were however determined to leave no avenue of influence untried in their effort to hold federal support. From their point of view the Dunbar dispute had become a vital test case. They realized that if settlers in the region once gained federal backing their cause was lost, and each squatter thus far established would bring numerous friends. This suspicion was certainly substantiated by Dunbar's testimonial to the Fort Macleod Gazette that "were it not for the present state of affairs in regard to settlement, he could induce forty good

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[14] Ibid., 4676. Dewdney Papers, McEachran to Dewdney, 29 March 1892, pp. 1-2.

[15] Dewdney Papers, E. Dewdney to A. M. Burgess, 30 March 1892.

settlers from the neighbourhood of his old home to come here and locate."[16] Senator Lougheed was quickly recruited to call upon the Deputy Minister of the Interior, A. M. Burgess, to emphasize the cattle industry's concern and to support McEachran's claim that every attempt had been made to treat the Dunbars justly. Burgess in turn promptly interceded with the Minister to suggest that "If the facts be as stated by McEachran. . . ." blame could hardly be accorded to the Walrond ranch for the continued unfortunate state of affairs.[17]

The Dunbar case was finally brought to a conclusion when the Department of the Interior, under attack from Wilfrid Laurier, leader of the Opposition, offered to give the Dunbars credit for improvements when they came to apply for a new location.[18] Significantly, settlement of the dispute involved compensation paid by the government, not by the Walrond ranch. Ottawa not only supported the existing lease structure, but in this case paid the cost of settling the family elsewhere. The government had the opportunity to call McEachran's bluff of withdrawal if it truly desired to open up the region. But as in the 1889 settlement imbroglio, the Conservative party had little desire to antagonize a group so intimately represented within its own membership. Bound

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[16] Gazette, 10 March 1892.

[17] Dewdney Papers, A. M. Burgess to E. Dewdney, 6 April 1892.

[18] Gazette, 21 April 1892, p. 2.

to its powerful capitalist supporters in the East, the government was compelled to help maintain their outpost in the West.

In the final analysis nevertheless the ranchers' victory proved transitory, and in a sense the year 1891 might be seen as a turning point in the lease and settlement question in the southwest. The cattlemen had compelled the government to stand by them, honour the terms of the no settlement lease, and see the squatters evicted. But their unyielding stand also served to focus public attention. Never before had the government to face such concerted opposition to its support of the cattle companies. Popular opinion outside the region clearly sided with the squatter and Ottawa was repeatedly called to account for the apparent disregard of the government's own longstanding commitment to western settlement. While the cattle interests were too powerful to ignore, the tide of criticism that advanced with the dispute through 1891 made it politically expedient to persuade the ranchers to compromise.

The excuse to effect such a compromise was ultimately provided through the government's railway policy. In order to fulfill its land grant obligations to the Calgary and Edmonton railway then under construction south of Calgary, the government had to reach an understanding with the holders of the great leased tracts in the southwest. The need for railway land thus provided a lever that could be used to

force the ranchers to accept a negotiated change in the lease structure without leaving the government vulnerable to the accusation that it was abandoning its friends in favour of the squatters and their Liberal supporters. On December 21, 1891, after a year of continuous feuding throughout the south-west, Dewdney invited representatives of the cattle interest to meet privately with him to discuss the land tenure issue. Included in the invitation for the ranchers' consideration was the proposal that leaseholders be allowed to purchase one-tenth of their leases at two dollars per acre and that the remainder be released under a new formula permitting settlement.

The ranchers hastened to respond to Dewdney's circular. Certain members of the corporate ranch establishment met in Montreal to decide on the course of action to be followed.[19] Those gathered in the financial centre of the Canadian cattle kingdom agreed that all leaseholders should be invited to be present at, or to send a representative to, a subsequent meeting to decide on what sort of collective action should be taken and to arrange for a deputation to meet with the government. The leaseholders' appointees who eventually met with the Minister on 29 February 1892,

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[19] RG15, B2a, Vol. 10, no. 142709, pt. 4, Circular, 15 January 1892. Those present were Dr. McEachran of the Walrond Ranche, H. M. Allan of the North-West Cattle Co., A. E. Cross of the A-7 Ranch, Messrs. Holt and D. Mann of the Glengarry Ranche Co., A. M. Nanton of the Cypress Cattle Co., H. McLennan of the Stewart Ranche Co. and P. S. Ross of the Cochrane Ranche Co.

included Senator Cochrane, Dr. McEachran and D. W. Davis, M.P.; three of Montreal's more influential Conservative businessmen, Sir Hugh Allan, P. S. Ross and W. M. Ramsay; three of the more prominent ranch managers from the west, C. Stimson, C. Kerry, and D. H. McPherson; as well as the Ottawa attorney J. A. Gemmill who had long acted as a parliamentary lobbyist and legal adviser to various Alberta ranches.[20]

Dewdney's broad conciliatory assurance to the delegation that "nothing would be done to disturb so large an industry,"[21] was tempered with the declaration that some of the leased areas would have to be given over to enable the government to meet its obligation to the Calgary and Edmonton railway, and that a certain degree of settlement must eventually occur along the new line. On this occasion the cattlemen found the government adamant. It was apparent to Ottawa that there could never be order and stability in the southwest until the "no settlement" leases were cancelled. The Dunbar episode for example had hardly been concluded after extended negotiation and national outcry, when McEachran's cowhands resumed the pulling down of settlers' houses.[22] The squatters for their part made it known that they were

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[20] Ibid.

[21] Herald, 9 March 1892. RG15, B2a, Vol. 10, no. 142709, pt. 4.

[22] RG18, A1, Vol. 63, "Macleod Monthly Report", Superintendent S. B. Steele to Commissioner L. W. Herchmer, 1 April 1892.

restraining their actions against the leaseholders, "pending the decision of the Department of the Interior on this subject."[23] Meanwhile the police kept the region under anxious surveillance for fear some incident might spark an open conflict. Aware that the government's decision was also eagerly awaited by important groups outside the southwest and aware of the direction of popular feeling, the department was insistent that the "no settlement" leases be cancelled. Finding that the government's determination to alter its grazing lease policy could not be resisted, the cattlemen naturally bargained for the most favourable terms. Provisions of the compromise, if indeed firmly established, were not revealed to the public in the official communique which announced only that a lengthy discussion had been held.

The Gazette's reaction to the communique was one of immediate apprehension. Noting that only the ranch interest was being consulted in what appeared to be a secret conclave, the paper protested that Ottawa was following its customary policy of yielding to the ranchers' "slightest demand."[24] Even the prospect of permanently alienating one-tenth of the great leases seemed excessive to Wood, who demanded that the settlers be heard. The cattlemen's journal, the Herald, like the Gazette, assumed that a deal had been made. It was the two dollar per acre levy however, rather than the one-tenth

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[23] Ibid., S. B. Steele to L. W. Herchmer, 1 May 1892.

[24] Gazette, 10 March 1892.

reservation, which this paper deemed excessive.[25] Finally on 12 October 1892, an Order-in-Council gave notice that all leases which did not provide for the withdrawal of lands for homestead or railway purposes would be terminated in four years, on 31 December 1896.[26] Ranchers were given the option of purchasing one-tenth of their leases at two dollars per acre, a price which the ranch lobby was later able to reduce to a dollar twenty-five per acre, or one-half the amount charged to homesteaders for pre-empted acres in the Macleod region.[27] Despite the speculation of both the Herald and the Gazette that a "deal" had been made, it was several years before the key to the agreement became generally known. As it turned out the real substance of the accord was the government's unwritten promise of a gradual but vast extension of the region's stock watering reserves.

This change of government policy has been interpreted as the climax of a gradual desertion of the ranchers by the federal government in face of the increasing pressure of settlement.[28] The decline of the great ranches has been

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[25] Herald, 9 March 1892.

[26] John Blue, Alberta Past and Present, Vol. 1 (Chicago: Pioneer Historical Publishing Co., 1924), p. 323.

[27] Ibid., Order-in-Council, 22 April 1893. See also Gazette, 21 March 1888.

[28] C. M. MacInnis, In the Shadow of the Rockies (London: Rivingtons, 1930), p. 242. A. S. Morton and C. Martin, History of Prairie Settlement and "Dominion Lands" Policy, Vol. II of Canadian Frontiers of Settlement, edited by

inferred from the subsequent decrease in the total lease acreage and the increase in the number of lessees as is shown in the following table.

TABLE IV

TOTAL ACREAGE LEASED: 1884-1896[29]

| Year | Acres | Number of Leases in Force |
|---|---|---|
| 1884 | 1,785,690.00 | 47 |
| 1888 | 3,252,378.00 | 111 |
| 1890 | 2,288,347.00 | 126 |
| 1892 | 1,801,209.11 | 142 |
| 1894 | 1,298,871.51 | 156 |
| 1895 | 904,186,73 | 185 |
| 1896 | 257,983.39 | 136 |

Noting this phenomenon, John Blue for example has concluded that by 1888 "the day of the great rancher with his 100,000 acre ranch had ended."[30]

While it is true that the declining total acreage of leased land does suggest a greater government concern regarding settlement, it cannot be concluded that the government had abandoned the ranchers from the date the leased acreage begins to decline, or that the large ranches were destroyed. The great decline in the leased acreage before 1895 is largely accounted for by the cancellation of speculative

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W. A. Mackintosh and W. L. G. Joerg (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd., 1938), p. 113.

[29]Canada, Department of the Interior, Annual Reports, 1884-1896.

[30]Blue, p. 323.

holdings whose owners had little or no intention of ranching. Changes in government regulations were not intended to, nor did they have any serious effect on the cattle compact whose holdings remained relatively constant until 1895.[31] What is significant is not that the total leased acreage was reduced, but who held the remaining acreage, and in what quantity. In this regard it is clear that reductions impinged very slightly on the holdings of companies or individual members of the ranch establishment. It should be noted moreover that it is of questionable validity in the first place to speak of the decline of the cattle industry from a list of lease figures without a corresponding measurement of herd sizes. The rancher's circumstances are as much, and possibly more, affected by herd size as by the expanse of the lease. As a group the cattlemen retained their dominant position in the southwestern countryside after 1896 by simply transferring

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[31] Canada, Department of the Interior, Annual Reports, 1884-1896. The lease statistics of individual ranches do not support Blue's assertion that by 1888 "the day of the great rancher with his 100,000 acre ranch had ended."

| Ranch | Acres 1884 | Acres 1894 |
|---|---|---|
| Cochrane Ranch | 189,000 | 163,868 |
| Oxley Ranch | 180,000 | 149,934 |
| Walrond Ranch | 180,000 | 120,238 |
| North-West Cattle Company | 59,000 | 157,925 |

Between 1884 and 1894 the large ranches had from time to time raised and lowered their acreages as the land and market situation warranted. Other important companies such as the Glengarry, Stewart, Brown and Alberta Ranches also experienced only minor lease reduction.

their operations to the largest deeded holdings in the Territory through purchase of great blocks of their former leases from the new Calgary and Edmonton railway at a dollar fifty per acre.[32] When the Cochrane Ranche Company decided to liquidate its assets in 1904 it had to dispose of 63,000 acres of deeded land.[33] The survival of this patriarch of the cattle kingdom in the Canadian southwest is typical. Both the North West Cattle Company and the Walrond Ranche Company, for example, retained holdings in excess of 50,000 acres to the mid-twentieth century.[34] Though the ownership of these old ranches altered from time to time, their continued existence along with newer grants such as the Medicine Hat Ranch, for example, which operated 270,000 acres in 1956, would suggest that the large ranch had been an enduring feature in the Canadian southwest.[35]

Cattlemen, with the aid of their efficient metropolitan political and financial connections, remained the undisputed masters of the rangelands in 1896 despite alterations in federal lease laws. The paramount factor in the

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[32] J. R. Craig, Ranching with Lords and Commons or Twenty Years on the Range (Toronto: William Briggs, 1908), p. 236. Morton and Martin, p. 323. RG15, B2a, Vol. 10, no. 142709, pt. 4, W. Pearce to Secretary, Department of the Interior, 28 September 1894.

[33] Herald, 5 July 1957. See also Family Herald (GAI, clipping file).

[34] Herald, 2-3 September 1955; 24 November 1956. Lethbridge Herald, 24 October 1911.

[35] Herald, 8 December 1956.

continuation of such control was the stock-watering reserve system begun by William Pearce in 1886 and vastly expanded between 1892 and 1896 before the old "no settlement" leases were opened. It was in fact this unwritten understanding, as in 1886 when the federal government negotiated lease changes with the cattlemen, that brought the leaseholders to accept cancellation. The leading individual at this juncture was naturally the Department of Interior's Superintendent of Mines, William Pearce. Persistent reminders from the Superintendent that the Department was under the obligation of a longstanding promise made in 1891 to the cattlemen at Fort Macleod to protect their interest through the reservation of suitable watering places for their stock, finally induced Ottawa to proceed.[36] In October Pearce forwarded a long list of properties to be set aside, with the footnote that the list would be added to as additional leaseholds were wound up.[37]

It seems that the cattlemen divided themselves into regional committees to draw up lists of reservations desired in their respective localities.[38] The lists were then sent

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[36]RG15, B2, Vol. 159, no. 141376, pt. 2, W. Pearce to the Secretary, Department of the Interior, 24 June 1893; 29 August 1893.

[37]Ibid., 5 October 1893.

[38]Ibid., F. W. Godsal to W. Pearce, 29 June 1893.

to the Superintendent of Mines, who inspected the properties and then forwarded his recommendations to the department in Ottawa. These selections were supplemented by the requests of individual ranchers and companies, and, in cases where the ranchers failed to take the initiative, by Pearce himself.[39] By and large the selections made by the stockmen were approved, so that by 1894 springs, creeks, and river bottoms were well protected throughout the southwest and especially in the foothill region.

Once the reserves were established the department, through Pearce's initiative and the ranchers' vigilance, vigorously prevented settlement on or even near them. Consequently the next rash of squatter evictions were from the water and shelter reservations rather than from the closed leases as in the past. In the squatter's eyes however it mattered little whether the eviction was from a lease or a water reserve, it was an eviction from a chosen location none the less, and the bitterness of the previous decade was perpetuated. The shot fired at Dr. McEachran through the window of his house on the Walrond Ranch was symptomatic of this longstanding hostility and a reminder that the danger of

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[39] See for example Ibid., A. E. Cross to Minister of Interior, 9 January 1894; D. McEachran to Pearce, 23 July 1894; Pearce to J. H. G. Bray, Secretary Medicine Hat Stock Association, 19 May 1896; W. F. Cochrane to Pearce, 22 August 1896. RG15, B2a, Vol. 50, no. 22852, Pearce to A. Mclennan, Secretary Pincher Creek Stock Association 6 October 1893.

the feud taking a violent turn was always a real possibility.[40]

In the spring of 1894 the department prepared a form letter to warn squatters that certain lands were reserved.[41] In June those who had failed to take heed were notified to desist making improvements on lands which they had been told to vacate. Squatters were warned that they would "be forcibly removed and if at any time thereafter any attempt be made to renew said improvements they [would] not only be forcibly removed but such further steps taken as [would] prevent if possible a repetition of the trespass."[42] Pearce's zealous and unsympathetic attitude in these matters is well illustrated in his report of a visit to a homesteader who had claimed an adjacent, but unfortunately reserved, quarter section. "I pointed out to her, that had it not been for the action of the government, this quarter section would long since have been acquired by parties who were here before they came to the country and that consequently she and her husband had no grievance whatever."[43] Faced with the plea that they

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[40] Gazette, 18 August 1893.

[41] RG18, A1, Vol. 116, no. 72, Memo from the Office of the Superintendent of Mines, 22 March 1894. Correspondence from the Department of the Interior relating to the evictions and eviction proceedings does not seem to be present in existing Department of the Interior files.

[42] Ibid., Department of the Interior to M. Max Hebert and Levite Cyr, Pincher Creek, 1 June 1894.

[43] RG15, B2, Vol. 159, no. 141376, pt. 2, W. Pearce to Secretary, Department of the Interior, 29 November 1893.

needed water for the house, Pearce conceded that a half inch pipe might be used to bring the water, but warned the couple not to make any improvements as they would certainly not get the land.

When by the summer of 1894 it became evident that written warnings were going unheeded, Pearce initiated formal eviction proceedings. He recommended that police in these cases simply follow the old method of removing squatters within leaseholds, except henceforth the directive would be sent to the police by the Department rather than by the leaseholder as in the past.[44] The past and apparently continued modus operandi, consisted of giving the squatter notice that on a certain day steps would be taken to eject him forcibly if he had not vacated before that time. The police officer in command of the nearest district was notified of the warning, and on the day indicated sent a detachment to the place in question to see that the peace was not disturbed as the buildings were pulled down.[45] Such a procedure was for example outlined to the manager of the Marquis of Lorne's Alberta Ranche, with accompanying instructions that the offending parties squatting on water reserves within that lease be given three weeks notice. Pearce then outlined his actions to the Deputy Minister along with the monition that

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[44]Pearce Papers, 14D3, Pearce to Secretary, Department of the Interior, 27 July 1894.

[45]Ibid.

it would be unwise to countermand the instructions he had given.

> I only desire to repeat, that weakening on the part of the Department at this juncture would be fatal to the welfare of the stock interest which are of paramount importance in the District south of Calgary. The squatters on the Alberta Ranche Company's lease state that in their opinion the letters sent them with reference to their vacating their present claims are merely "bluff" on the part of the leaseholder and Government and the sooner their minds are disabused of this erroneous impression, the better for all parties concerned.[46]

Pearce was convinced that a determined stand had to be made, that if such squatters were not "summarily ejected" within a year there would not be a valuable spring left and the district would be ruined as a stock raising area.[47] The department concurred.

Given this presumption, the Superintendent of Mines pursued squatters mercilessly. For the next two years he coordinated the efforts of the cattlemen and the police in the eviction proceedings. Notices of those who persisted in squatting were forwarded to the Controller of the North West Mounted Police to instruct his force to take possession of this or that property "on behalf of Her Majesty."[48] Though

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[46] Ibid.

[47] RG18, A1, Vol. 116, no. 72, W. Pearce to Secretary, Department of the Interior, 27 July 1894.

[48] See for example, Ibid., Memo to Controller N.W.M.P., 11 October 1895; Department of the Interior to Controller, 7 November 1895; Pearce to Controller, 5 December 1895; Pearce to Department of the Interior, 5 December 1895. RG15, B2, Vol. 159, pt. 2, no. 141376, Pearce to W. E. Smith, 13 April 1895.

the department also had an alternative to this method of eviction, namely, by taking legal proceedings in the court, it was invariably decided to procure eviction of squatters by using the police to resume possession on behalf of the Crown and remove improvements belonging to such violators.[49] Legal proceedings in court had on occasion been tried but this method took much too long to conclude and resulted in undue publicity.

The campaign against squatters came to a temporary halt in May, 1896. In a private letter to Major Steele, North West Mounted Police commander at Fort Macleod, Pearce suggested that it might be advisable that no further steps be taken against settlers on stock-watering reserves until after the federal election on June 23. As the Superintendent explained "A crop of things spring up which, were it not that a general election is on, would never be resurrected."[50] Pearce's decision to seek a month's moratorium is hardly surprising, for his actions in the southwest had aroused much opposition. With many of the leases still closed, and the increasing reservation of spring, creek and river bottoms, the intending settler found homestead selection increasingly difficult. There was, moreover, the longstanding and widespread feeling that the Department of the Interior was under

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[49] RG18, A1, Vol. 116, no. 72, Department of the Interior to Controller, 19 September 1895.

[50] Pearce Papers, 14D3, W. Pearce to S. Steele, 11 May 1896.

the thumb of those sympathetic to the cattle interests. To the farmer it seemed that the cattlemen were being allowed to select all the best lands before the agriculturalist was allowed entry, in a deliberate act to squeeze them out. As one settler complained to the Department, "The big stockmen claim most every section has been alloted and as they are the only ones that seems to know anything about it would you be kind enough to enlighten us a little about the matter?"[51] This query was followed with a petition from the few settlers in the region charging that the whole matter of water reserves was arranged by two or three stockmen whose intent was to reserve the range for stock grazing purposes. The petitioners requested that the matter of water reserves in the locality be decided by the majority of residents at a public meeting.[52]

The settlers received little sympathy. D. W. Davis, the Conservative Member of Parliament for the District of Alberta, to whom the petitioners entrusted the delivery of their memorial, advised the Minister against any changes in the system.[53] The response of the Superintendent of Mines was more directly hostile. He repeated his longstanding argument that the object of making such reservations, including the one on which the petitioners had built their meeting hall,

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[51] RG15, B2, Vol. 159, no. 141376, pt. 2, W. M. Gunn to Department of the Interior, 21 April 1895.

[52] Ibid., C. Elton to Minister of the Interior, 27 April 1895.

[53] Ibid., D. W. Davis to J. M. Daly, 8 May 1895.

was for the benefit of all and as such the government had no intention of altering its course. Pearce had little faith in the notion that a public meeting might best decide on what reserves were necessary for their locality and dismissed the plea for a democratic resolution of the problem with the rejoinder:

> Can you point out to me, if your request is granted, what ground we can bring forth in refusing any other applicants the right to squat on these reservations providing they go to the trouble of having a petition circulated as forwarded? The experience with petitions has, if I am not mistaken, been, that no great attention can be made to such documents. If those who are beneficially affected by squatting on these reservations are to constitute themselves as judges of the expediency or otherwise of granting such applications; then, good-bye to all ideas of reservations!"[54]

The Superintendent was convinced that there could not be too many reservations in a district where the stock interest was paramount.[55] Of the 115,000 acres under lease to the Quorn Ranch Company, for example, Pearce proposed to set aside some 9800 acres.[56] The fact that this acreage was concentrated about the water courses within the lease made settlement almost as difficult as if the old "no settlement" lease had been retained. Pearce methodically set aside such lands along the foothills from Calgary to the American border and finally out on the southern plains in the vicinity

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[54] Ibid., W. Pearce to Gentlemen, 17 June 1895.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid., W. Pearce to A. M. Nanton, 17 August 1895.

of Medicine Hat and Maple Creek. Settlement was just beginning in the latter region in the middle 'nineties and it was not till the spring of 1896 that the ranchers in this region began to forward to Pearce the locations of desired reservation.[57] But by the summer of 1896 an extensive system of water reservations had been established throughout the southwest.

Pearce's reserves were in large part responsible for the survival of the cattlemens' empire through a decade and a half of Liberal rule after 1896.[58] As one prominent stockman later remarked, this protection had "practically excluded settlement" in his district.[59] The cattlemen were entirely cognizant of Pearce's contribution to their well-being over the years and in 1899 members of the ranch establishment gathered at the St. James Club in Montreal to proffer a gift to the Superintendent, in recognition of services rendered "in the interests of the cattlemen."[60] In 1911 when the Conservatives returned to power the vestiges of Pearce's

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[57] Ibid., Stock Growers Association of Medicine Hat to W. Pearce, 9 May 1896; W. Pearce to Department of the Interior, 10 June 1896.

[58] GAI, H. M. Hatfield, "Letters to Alberta Provincial Librarian from Yarrow, Alberta, 1908."

[59] Craig, p. 293.

[60] Pearce Papers, 22-139, F. S. Stimson, Manager, North West Cattle Co. to W. Pearce, 11 March 1899. Pearce judiciously declined the gift. W. Pearce to F. S. Stimson, 13 March 1899.

reserve system still remained.

The water reserve legislation, like the lease system before it, manifested a definite attempt on the part of the federal government to treat the southwest as a region apart from the rest of the prairies in recognition of what the Department of the Interior deemed to be the country's peculiar physiographic qualities and so protect and encourage the stock raising interests. Such legislation presupposed a high degree of supervision which in turn meant that the federal police were burdened with a set of responsibilities that were also unique to this part of the Territory. Such responsibilities were often onerous and sometimes unpleasant, as the lease and water reserve evictions bear witness, and in the eyes of the small minority who were opposed to such legislation the police tended to be identified as the agents of the region's vested interest.[61] But given the general western approval of the police and their activities this kind of dissatisfaction remained the exception and at no time posed a threat to the administration of law and order.

In addition to the demands imposed upon the police by special legislation relating to the cattle industry, the nature of the cattlemen's occupation was such as to require protection on a day to day basis greater than that needed by any other economic group in the prairie west. The rancher's

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[61] Herald, 9 April 1885. Gazette, 18 April 1885.

cattle, representing almost his entire capital investment, wandered freely over a vast expanse with only the most limited supervision. The resultant problems of ownership and outright cattle theft which existed from the time man began to keep flocks and herds, took precedence over all other matters concerning the grazier. In the Canadian west the North West Mounted Police, in addition to the normal functions of a police force, were called upon to provide this kind of protection through a network of posts and regular patrols traversing the range country.

The cattlemen had come to rely upon the police from their date of first arrival and with the coming of the big cattle companies became even more demanding, particularly in their requests for protection against the Indians. W. F. Cochrane in a letter to his father reported that the North West Mounted Police had been somewhat tardy in their promise to post men at Stand-Off to guard against Indians killing Cochrane cattle. If action was not soon forthcoming, Cochrane suggested: "we'll tell him that if he does not do it we will write to headquarters about it."[62] Captain Cotton quickly sent the required men, and subsequently swore before a gathering of the South West Stock Association that "he had never forgotten their interests and never would."[63] The

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[62]GAI, W. F. Cochrane, Diary and Letter Book: Cochrane Ranche 1884-85, 4 January, p. 20.

[63]Gazette, 21 May 1885.

cattlemen never considered security so complete or automatically forthcoming as to be taken for granted, and they were prepared to use influence to achieve their demands when necessary. Police posts and patrols were constantly increased to keep pace with the expansion of the cattlemen's empire. By 1889 a vast surveillance network thoroughly covered the southwest. The cattlemen were served by five Divisions, "D" and "H" headquartered at Macleod, "K" at Lethbridge, "A" at Maple Creek, and "E" at Calgary. Stationed within each division's territory were numerous detachments from which regular and "flying patrols" operated in all directions. "A" Division headquartered at Maple Creek supplied small detachments at Swift Current, Saskatchewan Landing, Dunmore, Bull's Head, Josephburg, Willow Creek, Graburn, Battle Creek, East End and Medicine Hat, where one officer, four non-commissioned officers and sixteen constables were stationed. From the outpost at Willow Creek patrols connected with those from "K" Division at Lethbridge. Posts maintained by "K" Division included Kennedy's Crossing far to the east near the international boundary, Pendant d'Oreille, Writing-On-Stone and Milk River as well as Fifteen Mile Butte and Nine Mile Butte on the old Fort Benton trail between Lethbridge and Milk River Ridge. "Flying patrols" were operated from the St. Mary's River about twenty miles south of Lethbridge and the junction of the Little Bow and Belly Rivers to discourage rustling in the outlying regions. Daily patrols kept

careful watch, the coming and going of strangers was closely checked, and ranchers and settlers were visited at regular intervals.

Posts and patrols of the two Divisions at Fort Macleod connected in the south with the Lethbridge Division and in the north with the Calgary Division at High River. Detachments from the Fort Macleod Divisions of special concern to southern cattlemen included, St. Mary's about twenty-five miles west of the Milk River Ridge detachment and about eight miles north of the international boundary, Lee's Creek, Milk River near the American border, Big Bend near the Cochrane Ranch at the southwest corner of the Blood Reserve, Kootenai Fork twelve miles north of Big Bend, Stand-Off on the Belly River near the junction of the Kootenai (Waterton), and Kipp on the Old Man River between Macleod and Lethbridge. Detachments in the cattle country north of Fort Macleod were stationed at Leavings about thirty miles northwest of Fort Macleod, at Mosquito Creek approximately twenty miles further north amongst some of the largest ranches and at Porcupine Hills on Beaver Creek close to the Walrond Ranch, while a substantial detachment was maintained in the cattle town of Pincher Creek some miles up the Old Man River from Fort Macleod. "D" Division also operated a "flying patrol" south of Stand-Off to discourage cattle-killing by the Blood Indians. The northern ranching country was supervised by "E" Division headquartered in Calgary. In this division a

detachment at Gleichen watched over the Blackfoot Reserve and the plains of the east and south, the police at Morley patrolled the Stoney Reserve and the foothill country along the Bow River, the post at Sheep Creek looked after the region immediately south of Calgary, while the detachment at Pekisko further south near the home ranch of the North West Cattle Company patrolled the foothill cattle country as far south as to intersect with the patrols of the Mosquito Creek unit of the Fort Macleod Division. The High River post watched over the Calgary-Fort Macleod trail and patrolled the country to the east. The extent to which the Canadian range was patrolled is suggested by the more than 2000 mounted patrols performed by the Calgary Division during 1889.[64]

While the numerous detachments scattered throughout the cattle country were not intended to be simply guardians of the ranchers' interests and did spend much of their time on routine police duties, their single most important function after the maintenance of peace and order was to prevent the killing and stealing of livestock. The thoroughness of their activity in this regard is suggested by the numerous reports in police files, some of which run to hundreds of pages on cases which involved only a few head of livestock. Even more important than the thoroughness of their investigations was simply the preventive effect of their formidable

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[64] John P. Turner, The North-West Mounted Police, 1873-1893 (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1950), II, pp. 425-429.

network of posts and patrols which kept cattle-stealing to a minimum during the period before 1896. Each of the four largest ranches had a police detachment stationed within a few miles of its home ranch. On no other frontier was the cattleman afforded such protection as he established his herds. The vigilance committee was consequently practically unknown on the Canadian range. Such a committee was formed on rare occasions when some individual was suspected by his neighbours of tampering with their herds but where firm proof was lacking, but in no instance was the ultimate penalty exacted. The practice, as one ex-policeman and rancher explained, was for the committee to visit the suspect at night "get him up out of bed, escort him to the United States border, and warn him never to return."[65]

The presence of the police, coupled with their firm insistence that they alone were the sole agents of Her Majesty's law, ensured that "frontier justice" did not gain currency. Violence in the Canadian cattle country was most uncommon. Police reports reveal that between 1878 and 1883 only five murder cases were brought before the courts.[66] An

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[65] Pincher Creek Echo, 17 June 1909. Article based on an interview with John Herron, ex-policeman, one of the first ranchers in the district and, at the time, Conservative member of Parliament for the district.

[66] E. C. Morgan, "The North West Mounted Police, 1873-1888," (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1970), p. 174. There is no evidence to suggest that murder was dealt with in any other manner than through the courts.

incident in December 1895 in which the tough Texas foreman of the Walrond Ranch beat an adversary to the draw and shot him in the stomach caused the Fort Macleod Gazette to call attention to the rarity of such incidents with the observation that this was only the second time since the paper was established in 1882 that it had been able to report a gun fight.[67] Relations between the Indians and cattlemen were equally non-violent. The ranchers often complained, especially before and during the North West Rebellion, that the police did not take strong enough measures against Indian cattle thieves but they were never prepared to act on their own. Despite continuous bitter complaining and serious provocation, there is only one recorded incident of a rancher shooting and wounding an Indian caught stealing a horse.[68] The ranchers relied on the North West Mounted Police to catch and punish offenders, and only once in the history of the force was an Indian cattle thief killed by men of that body. The incident occurred in 1891 when several Indians, caught in the act of killing cattle, fired on a police patrol which returned the fire, killing one Indian.[69] That only one individual was

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[67] Gazette, 6 December 1895. Some cowboys, particularly Americans wore six-guns and the practice continued in the Cypress Hills country until well after the turn of the century. The carrying of side arms however was definitely frowned upon by the police and their use remained confined to a small minority in the foothill region and by the late 1890's was almost unknown in this area.

[68] Gazette, 12 October 1886.

[69] Ibid., 22 October 1891.

actually killed while attempting to commit the range country's most serious crime during the entire ranching era speaks well of the law enforcement agency and the men who settled the region.

The "law and order" ethos of the Canadian range was very strong. Violence and disruption was looked upon as an unwanted influence characteristic of the American West. The southwestern papers were insistent upon their region's separate identity and inherent superiority. They missed few opportunities to compare favourably their west with its "British justice" to the seemingly chaotic American west. In one of its first issues the Calgary Herald proclaimed for the record that: "The rough and festive cowboy of Texas and Oregon has no counterpart here. Two or three beardless lads who wear jingling spurs and ridiculous revolvers, and walk with a slouch . . . [but] the genuine Alberta cowboy is a gentleman. . . ."[70] The frequent reports of lynchings of cattle and horse thieves in Montana and Wyoming were usually accompanied with a lecture on the deplorable absence of the law on the American frontier.[71] Those individuals who argued for or patterned their actions on the American model earned enmity of all. The editor of the Macleod Gazette, for example, whose championship of the settlers' cause was long-standing and whose personal antipathy to the Walrond Ranche

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[70] Herald, 12 November 1884.

[71] See for example, Gazette, 21 February 1885 and 11 April 1885.

manager, Dr. McEachran, was recorded frequently in the Gazette's columns, was not deterred from warning the squatter who shot at McEachran that "the people of the Canadian North-West will object most decidedly to any attempt at a repetition of American western lawlessness."[72] Wood's warning significantly implied not only that the guilty party was American, but also that the act itself was characteristically American. Such rowdyism as did from time to time occur was typically ascribed in its lighter form to the English remittance man and in its more serious form, where activities ran afoul of the law, to expatriates from south of the border.[73] Given this feeling, the American cattleman or cowboy who moved northwards often found himself suspect, and considered by his neighbours and the police as a potential threat to their "orderly" society. This anti-American bias reflected a fundamental difference in attitude to law and order in the cattle country on the two sides of the border. Citizens in the Canadian range country by and large accepted the premise that the law should be formulated and imposed from above. This point of view was almost directly opposite to that characteristic of the American frontier where the cherished ideal was that such matters should be a local responsibility

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[72] Gazette, 18 August 1893.

[73] See for example, Turner, Vol. II, p. 531. Medicine Hat News, 23 August 1906.

and hence be responsible to and directed by the citizenry below. With regard to law and order the police, the ranch establishment and the majority of southwestern people were of common mind. They had, as the press repeatedly assured them, "British law" and "British justice" and with a conviction bordering on the conceit so characteristic of the late Victorian élite they looked frequently to the American cattle kingdom to be further assured of the superiority of their system. Even the few who dissented were more inclined to object to specific laws or what they deemed to be the undue influence of certain groups, rather than to the nature of the governmental or judicial system. Given the cultural and social composition of the population on the Canadian range, the predominance of such ideas is not surprising, and it is because of this feeling or attitude, along with the commanding presence and efficiency of the North West Mounted Police, that the Canadian ranching frontier was essentially non-violent despite the usual problems of cattleman versus Indian, sheepman and settler.

The solidarity of attitude in the cattle country during the early period brought a degree of stability not characteristic of most frontier societies. The remarkable unity of the southwestern population before 1896 is epitomized in the genial relationship between the cattlemen and the police. Both groups were cut from essentially the same social fabric so that the social and cultural milieu of the larger ranch

community was reproduced in miniature within the police force. About one-fifth of the officers in the period after 1885 were from the British Isles and the Canadian officers were recruited almost entirely from upper class families in Ontario, Quebec and the Atlantic provinces.[74] They came from the same families that dominated the professions, the church, the military, the government and the civil service, as well as the nation's business community. They came, in short, from the same group that comprised the ranch establishment and many of them moved easily from the life of police officer to ranch owner. Like many of the big leaseholders who had gained their lands through political connections, the officer class was recruited with careful attention to the dictates of party patronage, which meant that both groups had a vested interest in the well-being of the Conservative party. The constables of the force fitted into a similar mould. They were not the social rejects that comprised the ranks of most nineteenth century frontier military garrisons. They came in almost equal balance from the farms and the clerical and skilled trades of the East, and as such represented that part of the population that was most upwardly mobile in the late nineteenth century.[75] The composition of the force tended

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[74] R. C. Macleod, "Crime and Class: Some Aspects of Law Enforcement in the Canadian North-West, 1885-1905." (Paper delivered to the Eleventh Annual Conference of the Western History Association, Santa Fe, October, 1971), p. 5.

[75] Ibid., p. 10.

moreover to remain static in a social sense as there was generally a waiting list for enlistment which allowed the force to be selective in its recruitment. The process of selection was also continued after enlistment through the high rate of desertion. Those who rejected the standards and demands of police work soon departed with the covert blessing of the force, leaving a body relatively homogeneous in attitude and background.

At the community level members of the force, particularly the officers, identified with and were readily accepted by the leading local citizens. The cattlemen for their part were careful to establish and maintain close relations with the force. The commanding officer of 'E' Division at Calgary was always granted honorary membership in the Ranchmen's Club, Calgary's oldest and most select fraternity. The close relationship which developed with the Mounted Police was also advanced for reasons which went much beyond the utilitarian motives which both parties recognized. The Mounted Police and the ranchers had arrived on the grasslands at about the same time and a close affinity had developed quite naturally between the two. The bonds of friendship were strengthened by the fact that so many of the ranchers were originally members of the force. As has already been noted the class background of the police and the larger stockmen was remarkably similar and they tended to see the world from the same perspective. For these reasons it was usually

much easier for the Mounted Police to identify with the cattle kingdom, with its strong British overtones and equestrian tradition than with the few frontier squatters and the American dryland farmers who later moved into the southern region. The police officers and important ranch families understood that they were of the same social station and there was consequently much social interchange between the two groups. Mounted Police officers and their wives were frequent guests at ranch homes and social gatherings sponsored by the ranch community.[76] This social congeniality lent a special character to the Canadian cattle kingdom that lasted until the First Great War.

Despite their very close social contacts with the Mounted Police the cattlemen never came to take the support of the police as a matter of right nor did they ever presume to seek assistance beyond the letter of the law. Procuring the support of the police in persuading Ottawa to change unfavourable legislation was another matter, and in this regard the stockmen were not reticent.[77] The ranchers saw the police as vital to the protection of their economic interests and traditionally ended their association meetings,

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[76]GAI, F. Ings, "Tales from Midway Ranch," p. 42.

[77]See for example, Canada, North West Mounted Police Annual Report, 1896, Report of the Commissioner, pp. 11-12, 102; Annual Report, 1904, Report of the Commisioner, p. 91

which the police frequently attended, with a vote of thanks and a request for continued support.[78] Such practice was really a matter of good manners between men who understood each other and their respective needs very well. What they feared most were the recurring proposals for reductions in the Force which they were always quick to protest. At every occasion they were ready to defend the force's reputation.

The cattlemen's mastery of the range at this juncture is attributable not only to the powerful institutional support upon which they could call, such as the police at the local level or the influential voices within the Conservative party at the national level, but also to the internal consolidation of the ranch community which took place in the middle 'nineties. Growing uncertainty regarding federal support after the Dunbar case, and increased external pressure, acted as the catalysts that motivated cattlemen to resolve their differences during the four year period of grace before the old leases were abolished. This sense of urgency was compounded with the defeat of the Conservative government in the summer of 1896. In addition to seeing their federal influence placed in serious jeopardy, the cattlemen were confronted for the first time with a federal representative who was not their own man. The new Liberal Member for Alberta,

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[78] See for example Gazette, 3 February 1883; 9 March 1886; 20 April 1886, Supplement. GAI, "Western Stock Growers Association Papers 1896-1963," B1, F3.

Frank Oliver, had expressed himself strongly against the water reserve system and had been elected on the basis of a plurality in the now more heavily settled farming region from Calgary north.

Within six weeks of the election Oliver was called to meet with the stockmen in Fort Macleod. Here the stockmen pressed upon Oliver the necessity of maintaining the status quo and were able to elicit Oliver's verbal promise that "some very grave cause for a change would have to be shown" for alteration of the reserve system, coupled with the reassurance that he did not consider that "any good and sufficient cause could be given outside of the stock industry itself."[79] Though the ranchers had voted against him almost to a man, Oliver recognized that they represented one of the most influential bodies in the West at the time and thus felt obliged to agree to the cattlemens' request that he meet with them a second time at the incorporation meeting of the new stockmens' association.

The purpose of this meeting in Calgary was twofold. The ranchers' first objective was to bring to fruition the work of nearly three years' internal reorganization that had commenced in 1892 with the notification by the federal government that the old "closed" leases would be terminated in four years. Faced with increasing pressure on all sides the

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[79] Gazette, 14 August 1896.

larger stockmen sought to establish what had eluded the industry for over a decade, namely a strong central body that could claim the support of all ranchers in the southwest and speak with a single voice on their behalf. In December 1896, the entire ranch community, represented by delegates sent from the newly organized local associations at Bow River (Calgary), Maple Creek, Lethbridge, Pincher Creek, Willow Creek, High River, Sheep Creek, and Medicine Hat, met at Calgary to ratify the proposed terms of incorporation for a new universal cattlemens' association.

The second, and possibly the more immediately pressing reason for meeting, was the ranchers' growing unease regarding Oliver's continued pro-settlement activities. Not long after their first meeting with Oliver, the ranchers were in receipt of information that led them to completely discount the assurances they had been given early in November. William Pearce had passed to ranch circles certain correspondence which had come to his official attention. The illuminating document involved was a letter written by Oliver to the Acting Minister of the Interior, R. W. Scott, urging the Minister to investigate complaints of settlers who he alleged were being " . . . driven off their locations, on the plea of making stockwatering reserves."[80] In his appended letter Pearce justified his forwarding of this confidential

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[80]Pearce Papers, File 1-B-9, Frank Oliver to R. W. Scott, 29 October 1896.

information, which he admitted was " . . . a little out of departmental usage,"[81] with the explanation that the future of the region's most valuable industry was at stake. He gravely warned that "If Mr. Oliver's wishes regarding these squatters are to be met, the stock interest will in a very short time be annihilated or at least largely so." Pearce urged the stockmen to act together with their influential friends in and outside Parliament to counter such agitation.

Given Pearce's warning the cattlemen speeded up their incorporation proceedings. The first item on the agenda of this initial meeting in Calgary of what came to be the Western Stock Growers' Association was the preparation of a petition to the new federal government requesting the continuation of protective quarantine regulations against American cattle, and the maintenance of existing stock watering and shelter reserves--the latter being the key to limited, or at least controlled settlement in the southwest.[82] This accomplished, the chairman quickly put aside the consideration of the terms of incorporation and election of officers for later consideration and adjourned the meeting so that a separate gathering could be held with Oliver. The assembled cattlemen did their utmost collectively to impress upon the

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[81] Ibid., W. Pearce to A. B. Macdonald, 17 November 1896.

[82] GAI, Western Stock Growers' Association Papers, B1, F3, Minutes, p. 2, 28 December 1896.

new Alberta Member of Parliament that they were unalterably opposed to the cancellation of any of the existing stock watering reservations and that, in reality, additional reservations were necessary.[83]

While the subsequent election, after the regular meeting had reassembled, filled the executive with the directors or owners of large ranches in the traditional manner, and underlined the fact that the local associations sent mainly large ranchers as delegates to the meeting, the more significant long term result of this gathering was the fact of incorporation itself, which meant that members could be legally bound to the association's collective will. Moreover, as the general association was dominated by the large ranchers, it gave their position of leadership legal strength and thus helped to maintain their function as spokesmen for the entire ranch community.[84]

During this period, while the cattlemen were establishing a new general organization with affiliated locals, the Macleod Gazette was left to face the retribution of the community it had alienated. Wood's paper had never fully recovered from the economic consequences of its first

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[83] Ibid., pp. 1-3.

[84] The Western Stock Growers' Association was established on a firm basis and has maintained its protective function for stock growers to the present day. It is still regarded today by some stock raisers as an association for large ranchers.

altercation with the cattlemen in 1889, and the editor's subsequent attempt to bring the Dunbar dispute to national attention in 1891 made reconciliation impossible. The paper stagnated for want of subscriptions and advertisements, eventually forcing the editor to resign and the paper to be reduced in size for a second time. By October 1893 the number of ranchers advertising in the Gazette had dropped to ten from an average of ninety in the middle '80's. The new editors assiduously avoided antagonizing the ranch community and finally in 1894 announced their total capitulation.

> The years . . . have proved that Southern Alberta is essentially a Stock Raising Country. Stock raising is its chief industry now, and . . . we believe it will always be the foremost of its industries. It will be our aim therefore to make the Gazette a medium for advancing that interest; and if . . . we neglect any opportunity of doing all in our power to make their industry even more successful and profitable than it has been; if we fail in fact to make the stockmen's interests identified with our own, we shall feel that we have failed in our duty to the country.[85]

The seal of approval was immediately given by the three most important corporate members of the ranch establishment; the Walrond Ranche Ltd., the Cochrane Ranch Co., and the New Oxley Ranche Company, who returned their long absent advertisements to the paper. But the new editors' attempt at appeasement was too late to counter Calgary's firm grip on the title of ranch capital. Macleod and its paper never gained more than local importance after 1894. Thus by the middle of the '90's the newly organized strength of the ranch

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[85] Gazette, 6 July 1894.

community was accompanied by the decline of articulate opposition within the territory.

Much more significant than the elimination of local press opposition was the additional support of the Department of the Interior which came at this juncture. As the department officially responsible for western settlement, its policy was of singular importance to the ranching interest. Federal legislation as it applied to the stock raising industry, such as the quarantine laws, the duty on American cattle and the water reserve system is not to be explained simply as the work of an extremely powerful ranch lobby. There was a strong inclination within the Department of the Interior to treat the southwest as a region different from the rest of the prairies. This they attempted for over twenty years, arguing in support of the ranchers that settlers were a nuisance, if not a menace, in a region that was best suited for grazing. Though the department was on occasion prepared to make limited concessions to settlement in the name of political expediency, it did not before 1900 abandon its conviction that the southwest was "cattle country." In keeping with this tradition the department's 1896 report to its new Liberal Minister, Clifford Sifton, presented a case for the ranchers that was equal to any statement that the Western Stock Growers' Association might have prepared. The report explained that most ranchers planned to continue operations and had purchased their 10 per cent land option, and that it

was now the government's duty to see that stock watering and shelter reservations were not reduced. The report further inferred that settlement was not advisable even in the vicinity of water reservations as "range cattle will not go near any place where dogs are kept and every settler keeps one or more."[86] Nor should settlers' fences be allowed to block sheltered valleys, for in regions such as the Porcupine Hills it was alleged that a fence could cause the loss of 250 to 1000 head of cattle during a severe storm. Members of Parliament were moreover warned, that if the department did not keep reservations, much grazing land too dry for farming would become useless. The question of water reservations was held to be the key to the settlement problem and only through recognition of this problem, the department maintained, could one understand the much maligned position of the cattlemen. It was claimed in fact that: "The larger stockmen [had] never objected to settlement, if the settler [would] only leave free access to all the winter grazing, shelter and water, for his stock, essential to their welfare, in fact, to the very existence of all."[87] According to the Ministry, the clamour against the reserve system could be silenced simply "through the ejection of a few squatters and a firm

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[86]Canada, Department of the Interior, Annual Report, 1896, p. 33.

[87]Ibid., p. 34.

attitude on the part of the department. . ."[88]

The author of this section of the report was none other than William Pearce. Pearce's duties as Superintendent of Mines included the recommending of necessary regulations and legislation to protect and utilize the lands, forests, mineral resources and waterways of the territorial west. Also included within this wide jurisdiction was the settlement of squatters' claims. The plentitude of power attached to this office was hardly overstated by the colleague who wrote that:

> William Pearce, with his office in Calgary, was regarded as the ruling power in the West. We regarded him with fear and trembling, and he was undoubtedly a Czar in all western affairs which came under the jurisdiction of the Department of the Interior.[89]

The seventeen year supervision of this man who was committed to the protection of the region's "vested interests," and to what he sincerely believed was in the best interests of proper land use, was a trenchant factor in the assertion of ranch supremacy. Though Pearce was a founding member of the prestigious Ranchmen's Club and seems to have identified socially with the cattlemen, and though his decisions for the most part were favourable to the ranch interests, it seems evident that his motives were essentially based upon his honest conviction that the southwest was too dry for successful farming.

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[88] Ibid.

[89] Herald, 19 April 1930; 3 September 1955.

This conclusion was widely held, and was certainly sustained by the technical experts within the Surveys Branch of the Department of the Interior, who urged in their report of 1897 that colonization in the dry region be controlled for the "ultimate good of the country as a whole."[90] This dry area was described as extending from the fourth meridian to a location just north of Provost, from which its boundary was drawn southwesterly to a short distance west of Three Hills, thence straight west to the mountains.[91] Such boundaries were more extensive than even the most arrogant member of the cattle compact would have dared to suggest. Accumulated information by this branch of the department led them to insist in their section of the report that:

> . . . as long as the large area at present open for settlement in the humid portions of Manitoba and the Territories remain available for settlement by the incoming immigrant, the government will not be justified in attempting to further, in any marked way, the colonization of arid lands. . . .[92]

Such lands possessed natural advantages for ranching or stock raising that, according to these officials, were "too well known to need proof. . . ."

These convictions within the Department of the Interior were consistent from 1882 to 1896 and did not at first alter with the new Liberal government. The Deputy Minister,

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[90] Canada, Department of the Interior, Annual Report, p. 12.

[91] Ibid., p. 13.

[92] Ibid.

A. M. Burgess, and the Superintendent of Mines, William Pearce, retained their positions, which meant the cattlemen continued to have the advantage of powerful friends engaged in the critical task of formulating policy within the government department that most concerned them. Consequently the ranchers had more influence on the policy making process than most groups in the North West. In addition the cattlemen had access to other efficient and productive channels of communication through which they might intervene. They possessed the multiple advantages to be gained from sitting members within the Commons and Senate, the sympathy of important eastern businessmen, and paid parliamentary lobbyists. Special advantage was still to be gained through economic influence in the metropolitan centres. Many of these individuals found little difficulty adapting to Laurier's version of the National Policy. Dr. McEachran, for example, accompanied the Honourable Sydney Fisher, Minister of Agriculture (who incidentally was a neighbour and friend of Senator Cochrane at Compton, Quebec) to Washington for trade discussions and his voice on quarantine laws could be expected to reflect the larger ranchers' concern about American beef imports. The confusion and dismay of early 1896 after the defeat of the Conservative government was ameliorated by urban associates who lost little time in opening new channels of communication with the government. In the southwest itself, the compact possessed firm economic control

of the region and was able to buy local press support. Supplementary to this, a strong centralized organization had emerged out of the intermittent fraternal altercations between 1888 and 1895, and by 1897 it gave the cattle kingdom an unprecedented degree of organized strength. Such effectual modes of intervention at the local and national levels precluded the use of violence that was often characteristic south of the border, and enabled the ranchers to maintain their preferred position by essentially peaceful means. The ranch establishment in short, was largely able to control its political environment, and thus operated as an effective power élite.[93]

A dominant characteristic of the élite, as is apparent from the foregoing, was its intimate metropolitan associations. This relationship developed on two levels, each centred on a metropolis. On the national level, Montreal emerged as the financial and political centre of the Canadian cattle kingdom before 1900. The cattlemen's second metropolis, Calgary, also occupied a special place in the ranchers' world and as such merits further consideration than heretofore afforded. In an economic and political capacity the city of Calgary played only a minor supporting role during the early years of the ranching frontier. In fact, for the

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[93]Carl Beck and James M. Malloy, "Political Elites: A Mode of Analysis," Occasional Paper, University of Pittsburg, pp. 1-44. W. G. Runciman, Social Science and Political Theory (London: Cambridge University Press, 1965), pp. 66-81.

first decades of the city's existence the traditional role of the metropolitan centre was reversed and the growing town was dominated by the economically and politically powerful ranchers in the hinterland. It was as a social centre that Calgary initially played a more important, and in the long term, a more lasting part.

Calgary was fundamentally a product of the Canadian Pacific Railway. It might be suggested further that Calgary owed its early existence as a railway centre to the influence of the eastern ranch establishment. It does not seem unlikely that the decision of the Canadian Pacific Railway to select a more southerly route across the plains was partly influenced by the presence in the southwest of an industry already established by important members of the Montreal financial community who spoke confidently to their friends during the early 1880's of the development of a vast beef export trade. The railway represented the metropolitan umbilical cord upon which the town's ambition to become a distribution centre for the surrounding hinterland was entirely dependent, as was the burgeoning beef raising industry upon which the newly arrived merchants cast their eye. The cattlemen were a relatively affluent group and as they represented by far the most important economic force in the southwest before the turn of the century their business was sought aggressively. During the first years Fort Macleod, with its advantage of a central location within the grazing region, was an important rival for

this trade but by the 1890's Calgary's transcontinental rail connection had tipped the scales in that city's favour.

Calgary's growth between 1884 and 1894 was intimately related to the rapid expansion of the cattle industry during this decade. Beef prices had risen continually through the period and by 1894 over 150 ranches in the vicinity of Calgary were annually shipping thousands of head of cattle to the British market.[94] Stock of lesser quality was shipped in quantity to the mining communities of British Columbia. Calgary's merchant community, alert to the prosperity of the southwestern range, quickly provided the relevant services in the form of hotels, harness shops, livery stables and assorted general stores. The dependence of the town's business community on the cattlemen is suggested in part by church records which reveal that ranchers in the locality outnumbered farmers by a ratio of greater than five to one.[95]

The ranchers were especially important to Calgary's early economic development not only for the market they provided, but equally, if not more so, as one of the limited sources of investment capital available to finance the town's

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[94]Canada, North West Mounted Police, Annual Report, 1894, p. 9. See also, Maxwell L. Foran, "The Calgary Town Council, 1884-1895: A Study of Local Government in a Frontier Environment," (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Calgary, 1970), pp. 33-36. Cattle shipments from the southwest to Great Britain began during the autumn of 1886. Gazette, 7 December 1886.

[95]Ibid., p. 34. The portion of this chapter on Calgary relies heavily on this penetrating study of the first decade of Calgary's corporate development.

development. The small manufacturing base established by the early 1890's and which included the stockyards, slaughtering works, tannery, pork packing plant, cold storage plant and brewery, was wholly owned by local stockmen. Most of the large sandstone commercial blocks that began to appear in the business section of the town after 1889 were financed by the cattle interests.[96] Local lumbermen and ranchers also owned the community's waterworks, electric light, telephone and street railway companies.[97] The cattlemen therefore performed a critical dual function in Calgary's initial development by providing both the market and investment capital upon which the town's growth was dependent.

The political influence of the ranchers in early Calgary was equally remarkable, if less direct than their economic presence. Like certain other major investors whose main sources of revenue lay outside the town, the cattlemen did not take an active personal part in civic politics. Not only was the rough and tumble life of town politics considered demeaning, it was largely unnecessary. The business élite was generally consulted upon important matters and often, as a precaution, made certain that they had supporters on council.[98] Beyond this the ranching and investment

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[96]For example: Lineham Block, Alexander Block, Alberta Hotel.

[97]Foran, p. 34.

[98]Ibid., p. 96.

interests in the hinterland had access to superior levels in the political structure. The Calgary district was represented in Ottawa before 1896 by the rancher, D. W. Davis, in the Commons, and in the Senate by J. A. Lougheed. The latter held substantial property interests in Calgary and headed the legal firm that looked after most of the larger ranchers' business. At the Territorial Assembly in Regina, Calgary and its environs were represented for most of the period by J. Lineham, who complemented his stock raising enterprise with substantial investments in town properties.[99] In short, local government was subservient to the upper echelons of the ranch and business class who were of much greater political and economic consequence.

From the very beginnings Calgary was characterized by a distinctly stratified social and economic order that was dominated by a small group whose ranch and business interests were closely integrated. The strata below, at the city council level, was also of basically the same mould. During the period discussed city councils were comprised almost entirely of merchants, over 25 per cent of whom owned ranches outside the town.[100] This same class controlled both

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[99]Other district representatives were J. Bannerman, H. Cayley and O. A. Critchley. Though the first two individuals were not ranchers, they were reliable supporters of the ranch-business establishment. See, L. G. Thomas, "The Rancher and the City: Calgary and the Cattlemen, 1883-1914," Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada, Vol. VI, Ser. IV, (June, 1968), p. 207.

[100]Foran, pp. 36-46.

newspapers, and dominated practically all local organizations, whether economic, social or religious.

The foregoing observations bear witness to the degree to which the cattlemen in the hinterland influenced the economic development and the political life of the city. But there is also another aspect to Calgary's intimate relationship with the cattle interests. It was a relationship that emanated in the traditional manner from city to hinterland. Through the offices of the Western Stock Growers' Association located in the town, Calgary gradually became the administrative headquarters of the cattle industry. The town's position in this regard was strengthened further by virtue of the fact that Calgary, with its railway connections, stockyards, meat processing plants and commission houses also became the financial centre through which most of the cattle country's business was transacted. Calgary bankers long regarded the cattlemen as their most important clients. In this respect Calgary exercised the traditional function of a dominant regional metropolitan centre. Within the broader context of economic and political relations between the town and the cattlemen however, it is apparent that the interchange was very much a two way exchange in which both town and ranch benefited.

The remarkable integration of urban business and ranch interests in local affairs was complemented by the intimate social bonds between these two groups. The cattlemen

made Calgary the centre of their social activities and in so doing gave the city a special character that endured long after the ranchers' political and economic influence waned. Calgary's most exclusive group, the Ranchmen's Club, survives as a visible reminder of the cattlemen's social presence in early Calgary. Founded in 1891, the club was modelled on the St. James Club of Montreal and was intended to provide the characteristic amenities of the Victorian gentleman's club. The ranchers required a "respectable" place where they might wine, dine and enjoy the congenial company of colleagues during a game of whist or poker and where they might lodge when on business in the city. The club's founders were quickly joined by other prominent ranchers, most members of the bench and the more important representatives of the local professional and business class. The charter membership consequently reads as a "who's who" in the region's social, economic and political élite.[101] Provision for temporary or non-resident members was also provided to embrace officers of Her Majesty's Army or Navy as well as persons holding civil appointments under the Imperial

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[101]GAI, Ranchmens' Club Calgary, Minute Book, 1891-1904 (photo-copy). See also The Ranchmen's Club (Calgary, Rous and Mann Press, 1953). This is an outline history prepared for the club.

Prominent original members include among others: H. B. Alexander, D. H. Andrews, A. D. Braithwaite, E. C. B. Cave, T. B. H. Cochrane, W. F. Cochrane, R. W. Cowan, O. A. Critchely, A. E. Cross, W. F. C. Gordon-Cumming, H. Hartford, Col. A. G. Irvine, J. A. Lougheed, D. D. Mann, C. C. McCaul, W. R. Newbolt, Wm. Pearce, W. C. Recardo, Judge Rouleau, F. S. Stimson.

government and officers of the Canadian Active Militia or North West Mounted Police.[102] Though membership qualifications were meant to be vocationally broad, they were rather specific as to the type or class of people qualified. If applicants were members of the armed forces or police they had to be officers; if from the city, a profession or wealth was necessary; and within the ranch community, adequate social standing was essential. The extra-territorial and metropolitan interests of the club's membership are illustrated by the club's subscriptions.[103] Through the London Times, members could feel the strong pulse of Empire, just as the bust of Queen Victoria, prominently placed in the entrance way, vicariously reminded many members of their distant loyalites and of their "civilizing mission" on the Dominion's frontier.

More important than the congenial atmosphere that the club provided for its membership, through its dining or game rooms, or through its support of polo, racing and lawn tennis, was its influence in the subtle blending of the professional and business élites with the ranch establishment. In this way the Ranchmen's Club acted as a vehicle through which intimate social and economic understandings were cultivated.

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[102] GAI, Ranchmen's Club Calgary, Minute Book, 1891-1904, p. 5.

[103] Ibid., p. 93. The 1893 reading list included: Illustrated London News, World, Scribners, Graphic, Scientific American, Century, Punch, Saturday Review, Life,

Beyond the confines of the club existed a much travelled social circuit between the town and the nearby ranches. "Grande Balls," as they were inevitably called, held alternately between the two were well attended and typically described as the "event of the season."[104] After the turn of the century Glenbow, fifteen miles to the west in the Bow River valley, came to dominate the social scene. Glenbow boasted four great sandstone mansions of more than thirty rooms each as well as an excellent race track and polo field to which the region's affluent thronged for various special events.[105] The most popular form of social gathering amongst this group centered about sporting occasions, particularly polo and race meets. Both were of high calibre and the polo teams of the southwest were known internationally. In addition to the formally organized public race meets, some of the larger cattlemen held private race tourneys with attendant social convivialities at their ranches. Lady Cochrane for example contributed to social harmony at her race gatherings by providing a gayly decorated tent to protect the ladies from the sun while they took their tea or punch.[106]

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The Field, Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic, Pall Mall Budget, Harpers, Review of Reviews, and the weekly edition of the London Times.

[104] See for example, Herald, 29 January 1885.

[105] GAI, Clipping file.

[106] Ibid., Daily Colonist (Victoria), 28 October 1962.

The society described was exclusive but not closed and the outsider with the proper credentials was hospitably welcomed. The sister of one rancher who came directly west from her Paris boarding school was able to adjust readily to the social setting, much to her brother's relief.[107]

This evident social congeniality was materially strengthened through intermarriage, which enabled the ranchers to secure and further their economic and social ties with the judiciary as well as the professional and the business community.[108] Thus by 1896, as external pressure on the compact began to increase, they had evolved into an even more closely knit social group. These kinship ties within the ranch community were a paramount factor in the preservation, until World War I, of the community's very distinct character.

The ease with which the ranchers were able to coalesce with the town's business establishment was quite predictable given the similar origins of both groups. These entrepreneurs from town and ranch came mainly from the same eastern background and the British ranchers found congenial entry into a society that displayed an especially strong attachment to all things British. Many ranchers had in fact

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[107] Ings, p. 43.

[108] Some of the family chains in the compact include: (1) Macleod--Cross--Pinkham; (2) Galt--Magrath--Springett; (3) Sharples--Macdonald; (4) Bell-Irving--Kerfoot--Critchley--Cochrane--Newbolt;

never really left the urban business environment. The large stock raisers, especially the company men, were businessmen in much the same sense as their town counterparts and many managed ranches and city businesses with equal success. On perhaps no other frontier were the cattlemen so much a part of the urban environment at both the national and local levels. This helps to account for the perpetuation of the cattlemen's influence long after his relative economic importance in the hinterland had declined.

The social and economic unity of the élites of town and country led Calgary to interpret its position in the prairie west quite differently from other prairie communities. Calgarians, like the Department of the Interior, viewed the southwest as a region distinct from the prairie proper and were determined to ensure that this hinterland remained their preserve. Confident in the future of their region, Calgary rejected the concept of a single western community[109] and has remained indifferent to this idea. The capital of the cattle kingdom has never inclined to bend to Winnipeg's guidance and rather early in its career came to see itself as the capital of what it hoped would become a new southern province.[110] Such economic pretensions were implicitly assisted

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[109] P. F. W. Rutherford, "The Western Press and Regionalism, 1870-96," Canadian Historical Review, Vol. LII, No. 3, (September, 1971), p. 290.

[110] Herald, 29 June 1891. Tribune (Calgary), 6 February 1891.

by the social character of the region's élite who, when they looked beyond Calgary, did not really identify with the rest of the prairie west. Extra regional ties were with Montreal, London and the warmer climes of the British Columbia coast.

The mythology of the western "cow town" which post-war city administrations have promoted for commercial advantage seems to have completely obscured the true nature of the city-rancher relationship. This "stampede ethos" has in turn imposed a largely artificial American stereotype upon the ranch community at large. The city's intimate relationship with the dominant economic group in the hinterland did impart a special quality to the community, but it was of a quite different character. The cattlemen in truth left a legacy of gentility and social exclusiveness that has persisted to the present. The cattlemen and the town business and professional community blended easily to create a stratified and élitist society in imitation of the social structure they had formerly known in the eastern cities and in Great Britain. The ebullient democratic spirit traditionally ascribed to frontier communities is noticable by its absence.

# PART II

# THE CATTLE COMPACT AND THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

# CHAPTER IV

## THE WESTERN STOCK GROWERS' ASSOCIATION AND THE AGRARIAN FRONTIER: 1896-1905

It was in the decade after 1896 that the cattlemen had finally to face the full impact of the westward movement of the farming frontier. Heretofore they had lived more in the fear of future settlement than with the actual event. The newcomers after the turn of the century, the dry-land farmers, were convinced of their own destiny to occupy the entire plains region and they were inclined to view the rancher and his herd as the symbol of an older order that would have to disperse in the face of "progress." The farmers were led into the southwest by a vanguard with a generation of experience on the dry western plains of the United States. There they had already forced the cattlemen to fall back and they were not prepared to accept the scepticism of "old hands" within the Department of the Interior, or the warnings of the Canadian rancher that the grasslands of the southwest were not fit for grain farming. The new Liberal government was similarly unconvinced and was prepared to assist the farmers' advance, and it was some years before it became apparent to many legislators that aridity could not be simply legislated away. In the interval the ranchers

faced the full political and economic thrust of commercial agriculture and by the end of the decade the struggle was essentially reduced to an economic contest between cattle and wheat. During the decade both groups contended that the southwest was best adapted to their particular economic interests, and by its end it was the voice of the farmer that was most clearly heard. Against the growing farm community and a government dedicated to rapid western settlement stood the cattlemen. The national and local power of the cattle compact ensured that the struggle for control of the semi-arid region would not be resolved for some years.

At the local level the stockmen directed their defense through the stock associations. To summarize what has already been discussed at some length, the earliest stock associations were established to meet the local requirements of a new industry, specifically to provide a set of rules to govern the ranchers' occupational relationships with one another. The first stockmens' association, the Pincher Creek Stock Association formed in the spring of 1882, grew naturally out of the earlier and less formal cooperative arrangements. From this beginning the cattlemen's organization expanded and adjusted over the next fifteen years in response, first to the growth of the industry and later to counter increasing external opposition to the ranchers' hegemony. In 1883 the first general stock association, the South-Western Stock Association, was organized. Over the next decade this

association was reorganized and renamed on several occasions; in 1886 it became the Canadian Northwest Territories Stock Association, in 1887 the Alberta Stock Growers Association, in 1894 the Southern Alberta Stock Growers Association, and finally in 1896 the Western Stock Growers' Association (W.S.G.A.), which has continued in existence to the present. The frequent reorganizations underline the difficulties that the cattlemen faced while trying to establish a lasting body representative of the interests of both the large and small stockmen. It points also to the fact that until the early 'nineties the need for a large general association was not readily apparent, especially to the smaller stockmen. The problems facing the ranchers were mainly local in nature and consequently could be solved through small informal meetings as the situation demanded. As external pressures began to mount after 1892, however, the necessity of maintaining a strong collective voice became more widely recognized.

The evolution of the stock associations before 1896 follows a gradual shift in emphasis from matters of a local and administrative basis to those of a more external and political nature. In the early period the cattlemen could rely upon well-placed individuals within their ranks to look after the industry's interests through their intimate connections within the eastern establishment. But after the Liberal victory in 1896 the success of such representation was less certain and the association was compelled increasingly to

function as a political organization.

The central role played by the W.S.G.A. in the cattle country during the two decades subsequent to its formation justifies a closer look at its initial composition and organizational structure. The forces prompting the cattlemen to establish a new general association and their attempts to do so have already been discussed; it will suffice to re-emphasize that perhaps the single most important motivating force behind the formation of the W.S.G.A. was the government's decision in 1892 to cancel the old closed leases after a four year period of grace. This is suggested by the fact that all those ranchers who submitted the articles of incorporation for ratification by the Territorial Assembly in the autumn of 1896 were large leaseholders.[1] The articles vested control of the association in a board of management consisting of a president, a first and second vice-president, and a committee of eleven selected from each of the stock districts into which the cattle country had been divided. The stock districts of Bow River, Sheep Creek, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat and Maple Creek were each allowed one member on the committee, while the foothill districts of High River,

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[1] North West Territories, Journal of the Legislative Assembly of the North West Territories, 3rd Leg., 2nd Sess., 1896, p. 201. The names listed are D. McEachran (part owner and Mgr. Walrond Ranche), A. R. Springett (Mgr. Oxley Ranche), F. S. Stimson (part owner and Mgr. North West Cattle Co.), Leslie [Stavely] Hill (major owner Oxley Ranche), as well as F. W. Godsal, E. H. Maunsell and D. W. Marsh who were large private operators.

Willow Creek and Pincher Creek were each permitted two members in recognition of the much more heavily concentrated ranch population in that area. In 1903 the board of management was increased to fifteen members, with each district except Sheep Creek being allowed two representatives. Each committee member was in turn required to be a resident of the district which he was elected to represent. Membership was restricted to "stock-growers" who were defined as "any person, association, partnership or corporation owning or controlling horses or cattle and engaged in the business of breeding, growing or raising the same for profit within any of the stock districts [defined in the ordinance]."[2] Persons seeking membership were required to submit their application, along with a $5.00 entrance fee, to the board of managers for consideration. This meant that although the definition of "stock-grower" was rather inclusive, the ranch establishment represented on the board of management which was always very conscious of the social and economic distinctions that separated rancher and farmer, could exercise a membership veto to ensure that the organization would not be subverted by the more numerous grain growers and remade into a farm organization. The incorporation ordinance also made provision for the association to finance its operations through an assessment of not more than three cents per head per year on all

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[2] Ibid., p. 205.

horses and cattle owned by each member. The W.S.G.A. was also empowered to pass "by-laws, rules and regulations . . . for all purposes bearing upon or relating to the well-being of the association, including the regulation of round-ups and the suspension, expulsion and retirement of members,"[3] and because this was an incorporated body, members were legally bound by such provisions. In return for the obligations assumed by its members, the association promised "to protect and advance the interests of the stock-growers in the North-West Territories."[4]

The articles of incorporation gained the assent of the Territorial Legislature on 30 October 1896 and were formally accepted by a large gathering of cattlemen in Calgary on 28 December. At this first meeting D. W. Marsh was elected president while W. F. Cochrane and F. W. Godsal were respectively chosen first and second vice-presidents. These men, along with the majority of those elected as district representatives, were big ranchers and company men. This ensured that the new association, like those before it, would act first as the guardian of the interests of the large stock grower and second as a warden for the ranching industry as a whole.[5] In fairness to the large cattlemen it should be

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[3] Ibid., p. 206.

[4] Ibid., p. 201.

[5] GAI, W.S.G.A. Papers, B1, F3, Minute Book, p. 3. District representatives elected: Bow River--R. W. Cowan,

understood that this group produced nearly all the beef exported from the region, and that when one speaks of ranching in the southwest at this time the reference is to an industry in which volume beef production was confined to about 200 to 250 ranches. Beyond the obvious strong vested interest of the larger ranchers in the W.S.G.A., it was at first a reasonably representative association that included a great many of the medium sized producers and a number of smaller ranchers who distinguished themselves, at least in the social sense, from those who later became known as "mixed farmers." For the big cattle raisers the incorporation of this new association was significant in that it enabled this dominant group to exercise legally a degree of control over the manner in which the industry was conducted locally, and more important, it allowed the cattle compact to act as official spokesmen for the entire stock raising industry.

The activities of the W.S.G.A. can be divided into two main categories, the first pertaining essentially to range management and the day to day operation of the industry, and the second relating mainly to political affairs at the federal level. At the first level the association fulfilled a varied and extremely useful function. Matters of a strictly local nature, the most important of which were the

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Sheep Creek--E. J. Swan, Lethbridge--T. Curry, Medicine Hat--J. Ellis, Maple Creek--W. H. Andrews, High River--F. S. Stimson and G. Emerson, Willow Creek--A. B. Macdonald and D. J. Grier, Pincher Creek--C. Kettles and R. Duthie.

spring and fall round-ups, were left to the district associations with the understanding that members of the General Association would "be given every possible advantage over non-members."[6] For those issues of operational concern to stockmen throughout the southwest, the W.S.G.A. assumed active leadership. One such concern was the depredations of the grey (timber) wolf. In the early 1870's wolves were so numerous in the southwest that hunters from Montana known as "wolfers" made annual forays into the region to collect the pelts. Through the 1880's, the 1890's and the first decade of the twentieth century wolves caused serious stock losses. The Territorial government traditionally gave the stock associations a grant to pay bounty on wolves, but funds were always insufficient and the ranchers were obliged to supplement the grant to make the bounty attractive. The seriousness of this problem in the middle 'nineties is suggested by the declaration of a W.S.G.A. policy committee at the organization's first annual meeting in 1897 that "the destruction of wolves is the most important question now before the Association."[7] It was decided to raise the bounty to ten dollars per head for grown wolves and two dollars for pups. But despite the hundreds of wolves killed each year by bounty hunters and by ranch parties with their imported hounds the

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[6] Ibid., p. 24, 9 April 1897.

[7] Ibid., p. 23, 9 April 1897.

menace did not seem to abate. In 1900 the bounty was raised to fifteen dollars per head for grown wolves and five dollars for pups[8] and in some areas individual ranchers supplemented the association bounties by as much as thirty dollars per head.[9] Faced with this continuing expense the association tried unsuccessfully to gain the assistance of the federal government in the form of a refund of one-quarter of the grazing lease rental to supplement their hard pressed bounty fund. Finally in 1903 the Territorial government accepted the plea of the W.S.G.A. that while the financial burden was growing excessive the wolf population did not seem to be declining, and agreed to meet the full cost of the bounty through refunds to the association.[10] From this date, with increasing settlement, the problem gradually diminished.[11] In 1907 the province of Alberta assumed full administrative responsibility for the program and implemented it on a province wide basis.[12]

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[8] Ibid., p. 97, 14 September 1900.

[9] North West Territories, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1901, p. 107.

[10] Ibid., 1903, p. 76.

[11] Wolf Bounty Claims:

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| 1899 | 454 | 1904 | 326 |
| 1900 | 391 | 1905 | 224 |
| 1901 | 374 | 1906 | 221 |
| 1902 | 365 | 1907 | 164 |
| 1903 | 330 | | |

Alberta, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1907, pp. 24-25. The yearly totals include dogs, bitches, and pups for which bounty was claimed and excludes large numbers of wolves killed and poisoned by the ranchers themselves.

[12] Ibid.

Of all the association's activities, one of the most beneficial to the entire stock raising industry in the southwest was its constant pressure on individuals and government to undertake greater preventive efforts in disease control. The large cattle exporters had always been fully aware that their continued entry to the British market was dependent on their ability to ship quality disease-free animals. Through their association they made yearly requests to the Territorial government to compel all breeding stock entering the southwest to be tuberculine tested.[13] Similar attention was directed towards blackleg control.[14] An extended effort was also made to acquaint the membership and general public with the need to prevent mange (scabies), the most serious stock disease to threaten the Canadian range.[15] This dreaded affliction seems to have made its first appearance amongst range cattle in the southwest in 1898. In order to instruct its own membership the association brought the Mounted Police Veterinary

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[13] W.S.G.A. Papers, B1, F3, Minute Book, p. 50, 14 April 1898; p. 85, 13 April 1900.

[14] Ibid., p. 117, 12 April 1901. Blackleg is a generally fatal disease striking young cattle and is characterized by high fever and crackling discolored swellings under the skin. It is usually contracted by toxins entering through minor wounds and abrasions.

[15] Mange is a contagious parasitic disease generally more prevalent amongst closely herded domestic animals. The eggs of the parasite implanted under the skin of the infected animal cause irritation which leads to constant rubbing. In the end the skin develops sores and sheds its hair, the animal becomes emaciated and unlikely to survive the winter.

Inspector and then their fellow rancher and Chief Veterinary Inspector of the Dominion Department of Agriculture, Dr. D. McEachran, to address their meetings.[16] On 9 June 1899 a special meeting of the board of management, plus Dr. McEachran, Police Commissioner Herchmer and W. F. Cochrane, decided to construct a "dipping" station on the N.W.M.P. property at Kipp which the police would supervise and to which members could bring their cattle. The federal government assisted the association by imposing a quarantine on the portion of Alberta south of the Canadian Pacific main line; it prohibited the removal of cattle from the region without a certificate from a veterinary showing that the cattle had been treated at a dipping station. This measure enforcing treatment of diseased cattle was well received by the large ranchers who also requested that action be taken by the Department of Agriculture to restrict the indiscriminate drifting of American cattle across the Canadian boundary.[17] Canadian cattlemen were convinced that the mange outbreak owed its origin to American "tramp cattle" from Montana where there existed an alarming prevalence of contagious diseases, especially among the Texas steers that had been brought from further south. The board of management also

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[16] W.S.G.A. Papers, B1, F3, Minute Book, p. 63, 19 April 1899; p. 73, 31 May 1899.

[17] North West Territories, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1899, p. 51.

instructed the round-up captains to herd all diseased cattle, regardless of ownership, to the nearest dipping vat.

This concerted action appeared to bring rapid results and in April 1901 the W.S.G.A. requested removal of the quarantine. The optimism proved unwarranted however and by 1904 compulsory dipping was again necessary. During this year 373,738 cattle were treated once and 228,451 head twice, but this represented only 64 per cent of the estimated 583,976 cattle in the quarantine area.[18] Many smaller ranchers, especially in areas where little or no mange was evident, were reluctant to cooperate. Others simply relaxed standards when the problem seemed to abate, with the result that mange remained a recurring curse on the southwestern plains until well after the First World War.

The constant concern of the W.S.G.A. for the health and general quality of western cattle reflects the preoccupation of the vast majority of the association's membership with export markets. This concern often separated members of the association from non-members who produced a few head of cattle each year for local consumption and who were generally opposed to the blanket measures requested by the W.S.G.A., viewing them as expensive and unnecessary. During the 1880's and 1890's the Canadian range had gained an important export advantage from its reputation as a disease free region.

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[18]Canada, Royal North West Mounted Police, Annual Report, 1904, Report of the Commissioner, p. 10.

After the turn of the century, with increasing settlement, this reputation became more difficult to defend.

Another problem to which the association directed almost continuous attention was the standard of service offered by the Canadian Pacific Railway--this much the ranchers had in common with other western settlers. Shipping rates were a long-standing source of contention over the entire period from 1880 to 1920. The essence of the problem was summed up succinctly by the Territorial Department of Agriculture in its annual report for 1898. The department pointed to the growing competition facing Canadian cattle in the British market from the United States, Australia and the Argentine Republic, and expressed particular concern regarding the latter country where the quality of breeding stock was being improved and where the government had proposed to subsidize transportation costs. The report explained that as this competition increased the Canadian cattle industry laboured under a growing disadvantage of heavy transportation rates. It was estimated that it cost six dollars less per head to ship cattle from the western United States to Liverpool than from Ontario, and that the difference from western Canada was porportionately great.[19] The W.S.G.A. continually pressed for reductions and was able from time to time to obtain concessions such as the reduced rates on all purebred

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[19]North West Territories, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1898, p. 41.

stock imported into the southwest, which the association negotiated with the railway in 1897.[20]

A second long-standing issue between the cattlemen and the railway concerned the question of compensation for cattle killed by trains. Railway officials, including Superintendent W. Whyte, were invited to the association's first annual meeting in 1897 to initiate discussions regarding this. Whyte promised that he would personally attend to the matter and that compensation would be paid, but he differed with the association as to the amount. The association wanted a fixed schedule of one-half value whereas the railway preferred to deal with each case separately on its own merits.[21] The definite schedule requested by the stockmen was finally accepted by the railway in 1899, though the values were judged by the cattlemen to be too low and it was not until 1901, after the association executive and several of the most prominent stockmen visited Whyte that the company agreed to meet the ranchers' demands.[22] According to the final agreement the railway consented to pay one-half the value of animals killed on the basis established in Table V. It seems that the threat made by the delegation at the second meeting to put the issue in the hands of two of the most

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[20] W.S.G.A. Papers, B1, F3, Minute Book, p. 12, 8 April 1897.

[21] Ibid., pp. 11-12, 8 April 1897.

[22] Ibid., p. 96, 14 September 1900; p. 98, 9 January 1901.

TABLE V

RAILWAY CATTLE COMPENSATION SCHEDULE[23]

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|---|---|
| Calves | $12.50 |
| Yearlings: Steers and Heifers | 17.50 |
| 2-year old Heifers | 25.00 |
| 2-year old Steers | 25.00 |
| Cows | 25.00 |
| 3-year old Steers | 32.50 |
| 4-year old Steers | 40.00 |
| Bulls | 40.00 |

influential western liberals, Frank Oliver and W. Scott, had a telling effect on the company, whose relations with the Liberal party were already strained.

Noting that the W.S.G.A. had negotiated a successful settlement, the Department of Agriculture concluded that since the agreement applied to the whole range country it could be presumed that the provisions applied to all stockmen irrespective of whether they were members of the association or not. In this regard the settlement remained unclear and in any case it was apparent to most ranchers that they were more likely to achieve satisfaction if their claims were made through the association than as individuals. For this and similar reasons many of the smaller stockmen were quick to realize the advantages of association membership.

There were also many other aspects of the cattlemen's

[23] North West Territories, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1901, p. 68.

relationship with the railroad upon which the association kept watch. Prairie fires set by sparks from passing trains were an especially serious problem with which the earlier stockmen's organizations had contended in the 'eighties and 'nineties. After 1896 the W.S.G.A. was charged with the responsibility of making certain that the railway's plowed fire guards were properly maintained.[24] As late as 1904 extensive range fires ignited by railway locomotives were still a serious problem.[25] The cattlemen's association also paid close attention to the condition of Canadian Pacific stock loading yards, urging from time to time that new yards be constructed, old ones expanded and others like the "dangerous mudhole" at Moose Jaw cleaned up.[26] The slow rate of travel and the often poor condition of stock cars, both detrimental to cattle, were other areas where the W.S.G.A. sought improvement.

One of the most important functions of a cattlemen's organization, at least as it was originally conceived in the days of the open range, was to protect the rancher from cattle theft. Rewards of up to $1000 were offered for information leading to conviction of thieves who had stolen cattle from any member rancher, and the association was

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[24]W.S.G.A. Papers, B1, F3, Minute Book, p. 12, 8 April 1897.

[25]Canada, Royal North West Mounted Police, Annual Report, 1904, Report of the Commissioner, p. 9.

[26]W.S.G.A. Papers, B1, F3, Minute Book, p. 120, 25 October 1901.

prepared to undertake prosecution on a member's behalf.[27] Association files list numerous legal proceedings in which the W.S.G.A. was involved.[28] As settlement increased after the turn of the century, stock-stealing cases became more numerous, leading the association in 1903 to hire P. J. Nolan, Calgary's most prominent criminal lawyer, to conduct all such cases initiated by the association.[29] Nolan was later succeeded as the cattlemen's solicitor by R. B. Bennett which meant that the association enjoyed the best legal talent available in the Territories during this period. The ranchers were rewarded in 1904 with a great number of successful prosecutions. In Calgary there were nine convictions with terms ranging from six months to seven years[30] and in Fort Macleod twenty cattle thieves received sentences ranging from one to ten years. The Superintendent of Police at Fort Macleod, P. C. H. Primrose, expressed satisfaction that such sentences "surely ought to act as a deterrent to crime in this district."[31] The success of the association in this regard

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[27] Ibid., p. 142, 29 September 1903.

[28] See for example: Ibid., pp. 52-53, 15 April 1898; p. 100, 9 January 1901; p. 118, 25 October 1901; p. 130, 8 April 1903; p. 141, 25 June 1903.

[29] Ibid., p. 142, 29 September 1903.

[30] Canada, Royal North West Mounted Police, Annual Report, 1904, pp. 36, 45.

[31] Ibid., p. 49. Report of Superintendent, P. C. H. Primrose, Fort Macleod.

presented another reason for the medium or smaller operator, who did not generally have access to such impressive legal counsel, to retain or acquire membership.

Despite its success in court, the main emphasis of the association's protective endeavours was none the less directed towards preventive measures rather than prosecution after the fact. Of the W.S.G.A.'s many contributions to the development of the Canadian cattle industry perhaps the most important was its long campaign to persuade the Territorial and federal governments to implement a proper system of stock inspection.

Any practical system of stock inspection is first dependent upon some system of marking by which the ownership of each animal can be determined. Range cattlemen had long agreed that the age-old practice of burning a mark on the animal's hide was the simplest method and had the great advantage of being highly visible. Given the rangemen's universal agreement as to the superiority of the brand system it remained for someone to act as recorder and distributor of suitable markings. This function was first assumed in the 1870's by the police at Fort Macleod, and subsequently by the cattlemen's associations. With the rapid increase in the number of stock growers during the 1890's this became, apart from the growing administrative expense, an increasingly complicated and time consuming task requiring the full-time attention of the association's secretary. At the same

time the brand system could not function efficiently until it was binding upon stockmen over the entire region rather than only those belonging to or consenting to the association's administration. In 1898 the W.S.G.A. was able to solve both these problems by persuading the government of the Territories to assume responsibility for brand registry and to pass an ordinance requiring all users of brands to register their marks with the Territorial Department of Agriculture.[32] In consultation with the executive committee of the W.S.G.A. department officials revised and updated the approximately 4,000 brands registered in Fort Macleod and transferred the files to Regina.[33] While anxious to relinguish their administrative control the cattlemen were insistent that their secretary remain an official brand recorder.[34] From the stockmen's point of view it was critically important that brands be distributed by a trusted individual with intimate knowledge of the cattle industry in order to prevent, among other things, the old practice of unscrupulous ranchers registering brands very similar to one owned by their larger neighbours, so that with the deft stroke of a "running iron"

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[32]North West Territories, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1898, pp. 71-74.

[33]W.S.G.A. Papers, B1, F3, Minute Book, p. 17, 8 April 1897.

[34]Ibid., p. 35, 19 August 1897.

their own herds might be artificially increased at their neighbour's expense.[35]

Even after the association relinquished control, it was largely through the interest and initiative of this organization that functional brand laws were enacted and brand books up-dated, printed and distributed. In 1899 for example, when the Territorial Assembly decided to revise the brand ordinance, it did so on the basis of agreement negotiated with the cattlemen's association.[36] In only one aspect of brand legislation did the W.S.G.A. have difficulty securing the legislation required by their industry. Despite repeated requests by the association and the full support of the Commissioner of the North West Mounted Police, the cattlemen were unable to persuade the Territorial government until 1900 to amend the brand ordinance so that the presence of a recorded brand could be accepted as prima facie evidence of of ownership.[37]

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[35]The term "running iron" refers to the straight rod of iron used by the cattle thief to alter the brand on the cattle he had stolen. The iron was heated in a camp fire till red-hot and then used to deface the original brand.

[36]W.S.G.A. Papers, B1, F3, Minute Book, p. 61, 19 April 1899.

[37]North West Territories, Ordinances of the North-West Territories of Canada, 1905. (Edmonton: Government Printer, 1907), Ch. 76, 1900, c. 22, s. 5. W.S.G.A. Papers, B1, F3, Minute Book, p. 49, 14 April 1898. Canada, North West Mounted Police, Annual Report, 1896, Report of the Commissioner, p. 12, " . . . an amendment is required to the Criminal Code that a brand on an animal is prima facie evidence of ownership in order to ensure conviction."

Beyond bringing order to the brand system, which was the prerequisite for any viable means of stock inspection, the W.S.G.A. campaigned to have the government establish the necessary supporting structure to ensure that the basic problems of disease control and stock theft could be dealt with more effectively. When the association initiated its campaign in 1896 the limited legislation that did exist in this area was much too rudimentary to accommodate the vastly expanded export industry that the large cattlemen had developed. The main point of concern was the absence of regulations regarding the loading and shipping of stock. Cattle were generally accepted at railway stockyards from whatever source on good faith and without a bill of sale or other proof of ownership. The laxity of the system greatly eased the disposal of stolen stock and was therefore an open encouragement to cattle rustling. A similar problem existed with regard to the large shipments of the big ranches. Some ranchers made little effort to sort out those cattle belonging to others that had become mixed with their own large herds. The Mounted Police were entirely aware of the problems and the Commissioner recommended in his 1896 report that "the interests of the ranchers require the appointment of stock inspectors who should be detailed to inspect all cattle when being loaded, and see that only those properly sold are shipped, and no cattle should be loaded after dark."[38]

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[38] Ibid., 1906, Report of the Commissioner, p. 11.

In response to repeated requests from the police and from the stockmen, the North West Council did eventually appoint "hide inspectors" whose duties were to inspect and mark all hides before beef could be sold. The association was not impressed by the qualifications of some of the initial appointees and quickly persuaded the government to make certain cancellations in favour of those acceptable to the W.S.G.A.[39] Inspectors of the cattlemen's choice were paid an additional sum and were required to submit monthly reports to the board of management.[40]

The system of stock inspection that gradually evolved was one of joint administration by the government of the North West Territories and the W.S.G.A., with the initiative for formulation of required legislation being left to the association. This manifests the dominant role of the W.S.G.A. in determining the manner in which the entire stock industry was administered. Perhaps the most important legislation in this regard initiated by the stockmen was that making it compulsory for "all stock to be inspected by a Hide Inspector before they [could be] shipped or driven out of the country."[41] When this provision became law in July 1899, the railway immediately notified its agents not to issue contracts

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[39] W.S.G.A. Papers, B1, F3, Minute Book, pp. 20, 22, 9 April 1897.

[40] Ibid., p. 37, 11 October 1897.

[41] Ibid., p. 37, 11 October 1897.

for the shipping of livestock without the production of the statutory stock inspection certificate, thereby rendering it much more difficult to ship stolen or stray cattle out of the country.[42] Despite such legislation, irregularities were still frequent enough to lead the association in 1901 to engage a well-paid travelling stock detective to guard the interests of members at the Calgary and Winnipeg stockyards or wherever special problems arose.[43]

The W.S.G.A.'s inspection system was financed through a government grant supplemented by a levy on each member of a few cents per head for every animal shipped. The charge after 1902 was five cents for every animal shipped to another point within the Territory and twenty-five cents for cattle shipped outside.[44] From 1903 the association was empowered to collect twenty-five cents on all cattle shipped from the southwest with the proceeds placed in a fund jointly controlled by the Territorial government and the W.S.G.A.[45] In this manner the association gradually acquired pre-eminent administrative control of cattle exports and though the association was responsible for the inspection of all stock,

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[42] North West Territories, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1899, p. 60.

[43] W.S.G.A. Papers, B1, F3, Minute Book, p. 116, 12 April 1901. The individual hired was J. C. Patterson.

[44] Ibid., p. 33, 25 October 1902.

[45] Ibid., p. 148, 3 May 1904.

it was none the less apparent that the interests of members would receive the closest attention. Consequently, for any rancher who proposed to export cattle, even in small numbers, the advantage to be gained through membership was obvious. None the less, while W.S.G.A.'s primary and quite natural concern for its own membership cannot be denied, the association must be given full credit for bringing a degree of administrative order to the western cattle export trade that had hitherto been lacking.

There was really only one area where the cattlemen and their association were unable to secure desired legislation. The maverick issue which had traditionally plagued earlier stockmen's organizations was taken up at the first annual meeting of the W.S.G.A., where it was resolved to petition the North West government to vest ownership of all mavericks in the association so as to give range custom the full legal authority so far denied.[46] The traditional objection of the small stockmen is epitomized in the urgent counter appeal of one such individual outside the association who warned of the "endless trouble and gross injustice" of such a measure, with the explanation that:

> Settlers with small bunches of cattle and rangers who look after their cattle closely, do not belong to this Association and consequently, any calf missed by them or temporarily separated from its cow, accidentally or otherwise, will be scooped up by this Association,

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[46] Ibid., p. 19, 9 April 1897.

> many members of which are noted for a keen eye for mavericks. In the spring and fall round-ups they drive their herd of range cattle thro' a bunch of gentle stock, picking up everything as they go along and if one does not look out sharply his calves are likely to become mavericks, and if he does not belong to this Association and this proposal becomes law, are hopelessly lost to him.[47]

Though repeated requests for legal authority to do so were refused, the association continued, as had been the custom for nearly twenty years, to sell mavericks by auction with the proceeds going to the organization's general revenue, and to direct stockmen's activities on the range as it saw fit. As one regional police officer observed "there is no greater autocrat on the continent than the captain of a round-up" and round-up parties under his command did not usually go to much trouble to establish ownership of non-members' cattle.[48] Opposition to the practice grew as settlement increased and eventually in 1903 a round-up captain of the Medicine Hat Stock Growers Association was brought to trial on a charge of theft.[49] On this occasion the cattlemen could not ignore the judge's verdict of guilty as they had done in 1892 when a similar decision was handed down by the presiding magistrate. Moreover by this time the problem was well on the

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[47]PAC, Sifton Papers, MG 27, II, D15, Vol. 29, A. E. Cox to F. Oliver, 10 May 1897, enclosed in F. Oliver to C. Sifton, 20 May 1897.

[48]Canada, Royal North West Mounted Police, Annual Report, 1904, pp. 17-19.

[49]Ibid.

way to solving itself as each year the open range was further restricted and the general round-up gradually became a thing of the past. In this sense the 1903 decision symbolizes the end of an era.

While activities relating to the administration and supervision of the stock growing industry occupied much of the association's energies, pressing political matters at the federal level required close attention. Many cattlemen feared the worst from the new Liberal government, particularly from the new member for Alberta, Frank Oliver, and all waited anxiously for government policy statements regarding stock watering reserves, leases, and western settlement. Even more immediately concerned than the cattlemen were two key officials within the Department of the Interior, who in the minds of many had long been associated with the ranchers' hegemony in the southwest. The major force directing the agitation for the removal of the Deputy Minister, A. M. Burgess and the Superintendent of Mines, William Pearce, was of course the editor of the Edmonton Bulletin, Frank Oliver. He had vigorously opposed federal land policy in the southwest since the early 1880's but with a singular lack of success, and in his frustration his campaign gradually acquired all the unhappy qualities of a bitter personal feud. With the Liberals in power at last, Oliver was determined to rid the department of the two officials he considered the main obstacles to open settlement and western development. In a

scathing editorial shortly after the election, Oliver reported the rumour that the Deputy Minister was soon to be suspended, and announced that such an event would be greeted with enthusiasm throughout the west. Burgess' main fault, he alleged, was that:

> he saw the Northwest through the narrow spectacles of one who considered himself essentially an official, a servant and a bailiff of the government--and of those friends of the government, the land sharks and speculators and monopolists of every grade from the C.P.R. down.

He charged further that to Burgess "the settler was an unpleasant incident whom unavoidable circumstances required should be tolerated, [and] who required to be constantly watched, as a menace to the interests of the government and its friends."[50] Appeals for Burgess' removal also came from within the cattle country itself where certain of the smaller stockmen held the opinion that the Deputy Minister was responsible for holding the district " . . . under the control of a few foreign cattle companies, and [for] harassing settlers."[51] The agitation was not without result, for early in 1897 Burgess was demoted to the position of Commissioner of Dominion Lands and J. S. Smart, a close political friend of the new Minister, and fellow citizen of Brandon, assumed

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[50]Pearce Papers, 22- -15, Clipping enclosed in W. Pearce to A. M. Burgess, 17 August 1896.

[51]Sifton Papers, MG 27, II, D15, Vol. 15, J. R. Craig to Hon. W. Mulock, Post Master General, 17 February 1897.

the deputy ministership.[52]

The second official facing Oliver's censure was William Pearce. In anticipation of Oliver's campaign to restaff the upper echelons of the Department of the Interior, Pearce immediately after the election began a carefully conducted defence of his well known policy against settlement in the semi-arid region. His prompt request to meet with his new Minister, Clifford Sifton, in order to discuss land policy included the earnest and rather unpolitic admonition that conditions in the dry southwest were "not at all similar to the conditions existing in the Province of Manitoba [Sifton's home province] and the remaining parts of the Territories."[53] This was the beginning of a series of letters, reports and pamphlets sent by Pearce to the Minister regarding what the Superintendent deemed to be the special characteristics of the grazing region. At the same time Oliver was pressing Sifton for Pearce's removal. The new Liberal M.P. urged that the land department be completely reorganized, " . . . commencing at the top."

> The officer with whom we are most concerned in this part of the country is Mr. Pearce, nominally superintendent of mines, actually agent general, secret service man and

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[52]J. S. Smart came to Manitoba in 1880 from Ontario. He was elected mayor of Brandon in 1885 and again in 1895. Between 1888 and 1892 he served as Minister of Public Works and Provincial Secretary in the Liberal Greenway government. Smart's term as Deputy Minister of the Interior lasted until his resignation in 1904.

[53]Pearce Papers, 22- -126, W. Pearce to C. Sifton, 23 November 1893.

> go between for the Government and its friends who are opposed to the settlers of the country. I may say that as long as Mr. Pearce retains his present position the settlers of this country will have no confidence in even the good intentions of the Department.[54]

Pearce's position within the department remained tenuous through 1897. In February a friend disclosed to him Sifton's comment that though he considered the superintendent "a valuable government servant" he had been "so deluged with complaints" that he feared a change would have to be made.[55] It seems that the new administration at first hoped that by ignoring Pearce they might persuade him to resign. Pearce was left alone in his Calgary office without secretarial staff and in November he was compelled to hire on his own account a stenographer and a typewriter in order to complete his annual report.[56]

The Superintendent of Mines was not to be forced out so easily and he continued to defend himself vigorously. Pearce explained at length to Sifton that as the federal official responsible for the disagreeable task of adjudicating conflicting land claims he had naturally made enemies of many who believed that they had been unjustly treated, and that perhaps his refusal of Oliver's land claim in Edmonton in 1884

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[54]Sifton Papers, MG 27, II, D15, Vol. 29, F. Oliver to C. Sifton, 4 January 1897.

[55]Pearce Papers, 22- -116, J. S. Dennis to W. Pearce, 18 February 1897.

[56]Ibid., 22- -15, W. Pearce to A. M. Burgess, 13 November 1897.

was a factor in the latter's animosity. He argued further that his "sympathy for the struggling settler or any legitimate enterprise" was second to none, though he did admit that when it came "to those who attempted to obtain what should not be granted, or in other words, a straight steal, my indignation gets the better of me and I frequently express myself more forcibly than diplomatic."[57] Pearce also expressed his confidence that if the evidence was reviewed regarding each charge made against him, he would not be found to have acted in a partisan or unjust manner and he requested that an official inquiry be made. He insisted that he had been a loyal and honest servant of the government since 1872 and, that to ensure the public trust, he had never cast a vote for any federal, territorial or municipal candidate or attended a political meeting since the date of his entry into the public service. Such direct appeals and strong support within the department eventually persuaded Sifton to retain Pearce's services despite Oliver's persistent opposition.[58] Moreover, Oliver had been somewhat overzealous in his attack upon Pearce and at one point had proceeded to press legal

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[57]Sifton Papers MG 27, II, D15, Vol. 30, W. Pearce to C. Sifton, 8 March 1897.

[58]Ibid., F. Oliver to C. Sifton, 25 January 1897, quoting Sifton's letter of 13 January 1897. Pearce Papers, 22- -126, J. S. Dennis to Pearce, 18 February 1897. See also E. A. Mitchner, "William Pearce and Federal Government Activity in Western Canada 1882-1904" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Alberta, 1971), p. 298.

charges on behalf of an allegedly wronged settler, only to find in the end that the plaintiff had falsified his circumstances. Annoyed by this fiasco as well as by Oliver's persistent interference in matters of party patronage in the west, Sifton requested Oliver to submit an apology.[59] Though none was forthcoming, the Alberta M.P. was compelled to wait for a more auspicious moment to renew his attack. Pearce himself never regained the power he had formerly enjoyed, and was no longer the most important official voice in the formulation of western policy.

In retrospect there seems little doubt that Pearce's sincerity and knowledge of the southwest more than compensated for his lack of tact and diplomacy. What appeared as partisanship to the pro-settlement group was in reality an unwavering conviction that full and open settlement could not be morally or economically justified in all parts of the prairies, and the drought-driven refugees of later years are witness to the validity of his assessment. Unfortunately, officials, politicians, newly-arrived homesteaders and would-be settlers living outside the southwest never really believed or accepted the cautions of western officials and long term residents.

Aware of the uncertainty of his position and conscious that compromise might ease his situation, Pearce none the less chose to defend to the letter the water reserve

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[59]Mitchner, p. 296.

system which Oliver and others repeatedly cited as evidence of his and the previous government's determination to exclude settlement in the south. In the spring of 1897 Oliver forwarded to Sifton a letter from one of his southern constituents urging the government to ignore the recent motion of the W.S.G.A. calling for an expansion of existing reserves.[60] The writer maintained that the Association was naturally anxious to preserve the system " . . . that has served so well in the purpose of preventing settlement in Southern Alberta," but the " . . . much cherished 'range business'" could survive well enough without such assistance. He observed that members of the association by virtue of their early arrival had all availed themselves of the privilege of selecting the best watered locations for ranches and as such the association's request seemed to suggest that the established ranchers wanted to prevent the small settler doing what they had done themselves. If the W.S.G.A. was successful in inducing the government to continue the policy he warned that "there will continue to be a lack of settlement and development in southern Alberta."[61] Oliver's correspondent specifically singled out Pearce as the main obstacle

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[60]Sifton Papers, MG 27, II, D15, Vol. 29, D. O. Mott to F. Oliver, 28 April 1897, enclosed in F. Oliver to C. Sifton, 6 May 1897. See also Ibid., F. Oliver to C. Sifton, 4 January 1897 and W.S.G.A. Papers, B1, F3, Minute Book, p. 2, 28 December 1896.

[61]Sifton Papers, MG 27, II, D15, Vol. 29, D. O. Mott to F. Oliver, 28 April 1897.

to open settlement and suggested that the superintendent, who had allegedly denied his claim for a nearby water reserve and suggested a windpump instead, "be granted a long leave of absence with a recommendation to go to Holland where he could study the windmill system to his heart's content."[62] The cure recommended for the "water reserve evil" was that no reserves should be made in a township without the consent of at least two-thirds of the resident land holders. This, it was maintained, would prevent any association or company from withholding such lands from settlement on the pretext that they were required for public use. The foregoing complaints summed up the sentiments of many small stockmen and farmers newly arrived in the southwest and gained almost universal sympathy outside the region. Consequently, when Oliver expressed his hope in the summer of 1897 that the policy formerly in vogue, which he explained was "to wait until a settler takes up a spring and then fire him off and reserve it," be discontinued, and that all existing reserves be inspected, he received close if not entirely sympathetic hearing.[63]

Pearce in turn spent the summer of 1897 and 1898 attempting to convince Sifton of the necessity of retaining the water reserve system. In June the superintendent urged

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[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid., F. Oliver to C. Sifton, 18 August 1897.

that additional lands recommended for reservation be approved by Order-in-Council before squatting became a serious problem.[64] His concern had been aroused when he learned that a settler had squatted on a key location on the old Walrond lease, reserved pending approval of the department, and that officials in Ottawa under pressure from Oliver were about to allow the entry to stand on the grounds that the reservation had not yet received official approval.[65] Despite the superintendent's charge that the squatter had knowingly located on an intended reserve that controlled an entire creek valley in which several thousand cattle normally grazed, and the testimony of the W.S.G.A. that not only was this "one of the most important springs on the whole range," but that the individual concerned was currently before the Crown on a charge of cattle-theft, the request for cancellation was denied.[66] Though the new Minister, for obvious political reasons, was prepared to let the outcome of this case be determined according to the wishes of his fellow Liberal who had chosen to make the matter one of personal concern, he none the less came to accept the general principle of the

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[64] RG15, B2a, Vol. 160, 141376, W. Pearce to C. Sifton, 26 June 1897.

[65] Ibid., F. Oliver to J. Smart, 16 June 1897; Department to W. Pearce, 19 June 1897.

[66] Ibid., W. Pearce to Department, 26 June 1897; G. W. Riley to J. Smart, 6 July 1897; R. G. Matthews, Secretary W.S.G.A. to F. Oliver, 29 July 1897; F. Oliver to C. Sifton, 6 August 1897; J. Smart to F. Oliver, 21 August 1897.

water reserve system as presented and defended by William Pearce. On 21 September 1897 a large number of new reserves were set aside by Order-in-Council[67] and in November Sifton met with a delegation of the W.S.G.A. in Calgary to assure the ranchers that it was not the government's policy to open the reserves for settlement.[68]

Even with Sifton's verbal commitment to retain the reserve system, Pearce and the cattlemen were called upon repeatedly to defend their creation. In the spring of 1898, for example, A. M. Nanton, managing director of the Alberta Railway and Coal Company, who had just returned from a meeting with the London bondholders of the Calgary and Edmonton Railway Company complained to Sifton that his company was not being "fairly treated in the matter of stock water and irrigation reserves. . . ."[69] He explained that the company "would never have thought of taking thousands of acres of the dry lands had it not understood that it would also receive with it the water fronts. . . ."[70] Nanton's request that the reserves be cancelled underlines both the ranchers' hold on the country and the degree to which water was the

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[67] Ibid., Minister of the Interior to Governor General-in-Council, 13 September 1897.

[68] Ibid., A. B. Macdonald to W. Pearce, 25 July 1898; D. W. Marsh, President, W.S.G.A. to C. Sifton, 18 November 1897; D. W. Marsh to W. Pearce, 12 July 1898.

[69] Sifton Papers, MG 27, II, D15, Vol. 49, A. M. Nanton to C. Sifton, 2 March 1898.

[70] Ibid.

key to their control. This, and the growing number of individual requests that certain reserves be withdrawn, were skilfully countered by the tireless efforts of Pearce and the W.S.G.A. who continued for several more years to hold the Minister and his department to their point of view. The Superintendent of Mines insisted that uncertainty regarding government policy was the cause of many of the individual requests for reserve cancellation as those who became alarmed that the system or a particular reserve in their vicinity was likely to be done away with, applied for entry to protect their interests.[71] In the autumn of 1898 Pearce forwarded to Ottawa a current list of applications for certain reserves with detailed reasons why each should be refused.[72]

In this manner the system was defended and maintained until after the turn of the century. In the interval however pressure mounted apace with increasing immigration and even though the scheme had much merit in a dry region known to be afflicted with even dryer cycles, the water reserve programme became an ever increasing political liability almost impossible to defend outside the region among a public uninterested in the annual precipitation statistics that had been accumulated for almost two decades. The department's southwestern policy was particularly undermined by the

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[71] RG15, B2a, Vol. 160, 141376, W. Pearce to Department, 1 June 1898.

[72] Ibid., W. Pearce to Department, 7 September 1898.

pronouncements of certain Territorial officials. The Commissioner of Agriculture, G. H. V. Bulyea, in his 1898 Annual Report charged that the government's policy of discouraging settlement in the arid portion of the prairies while vacant lands remained elsewhere displayed " . . . but a very narrow view of the situation." He went on to cite how successfully settlement had been undertaken in the arid American west.[73] Coupled with this was a growing inclination on the part of many of the newer departmental officials in Ottawa to view the southwest as an integral part of the western prairie to be administered in the same manner as the other districts, whereas their predecessors had tended to accept the premise that the grazing country should be considered as a special region. The "special region" philosophy and its concomitant water reserve system was identified mainly with one man, William Pearce, and it was upon him that opposition to the policy had naturally focused since 1886. Despite the logic of his analysis, his position was undermined by the often tactless and arbitrary manner in which he dealt with settlers and others who differed with his view of the southwest. Moreover department officials and elected representatives had learned through experience over the years that Pearce was completely uncompromising in his attitude. Consequently when the government decided that its southwestern policy would

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[73]North West Territories, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1898, pp. 18-20.

have to be reassessed, it thought first of the Superintendent of Mines. In deference to Pearce's long-standing and generally competent service, the Department of the Interior first attempted to get him out of the way by redefining the function of his office, namely by relating the duties more closely to those inferred by its title. Sifton proposed to move the office of the Superintendent of Mines to Ottawa where Pearce could superintend the growing mining activity in the Canadian Shield. Pearce's refusal to leave Calgary and his subsequent demotion to Inspector of Surveys marks the end of an era in southwestern land policy.[74]

The department's shift in attitude is clearly illustrated in the Deputy Minister's response to a letter from a recently-arrived American settler a few months after Pearce's departure. This would-be homesteader had complained in his letter that he had been motivated to come to the territory through pamphlets distributed by the department, only to find that "the Stockmen had all the creeks and springs reserved . . ." making it impossible to find a place to settle.[75] He further alleged that the land office in Calgary

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[74]Sifton Papers, MG 27, II, D15, Vol. 108, W. Pearce to C. Sifton, 31 January 1901; W. Pearce to C. Sifton, 1 June 1901. Pearce remained as Inspector of Surveys until 1 April 1904 when he joined the Canadian Pacific Railway to act as an adviser for that company's extensive irrigation and settlement project in Southern Alberta. He remained with the railway as a development officer until retirement in 1926.

[75]RG15, B1a, Vol. 260, 578835, L. E. Lish to C. Sifton, 5 July 1900.

was known by settlers to be in league with the cattlemen, that many Americans had already returned to the States and that he had written to intending immigrants in his home State of Nebraska to remain there until the water reserves were cancelled. In a subsequent internal memorandum the Deputy Minister agreed that there was substance in the charges,[76] and personally informed the complainant that it had "been decided to send an officer of the Department this summer to make a thorough investigation of the various reserves with a view of re-adjusting them in the interests of the settlers."[77]

Aware of the mounting pressure to cancel the reserves, cattlemen viewed the department's investigation with much apprehension. While the study was underway the W.S.G.A. reminded the government that stockmen considered the reserves of critical importance and urged that the current influx of squatters be removed.[78] The association argued that the outcry against the reservations was mainly from new arrivals who wanted these desirable locations for homesteads, and that many had squatted in anticipation of government withdrawal and with the expectation that they would gain the land as a free homestead. While the association insisted

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[76] Ibid., Memorandum J. Smart to Ryley, 20 July 1900.

[77] Ibid., J. Smart to L. E. Lish, 25 July 1900.

[78] W.S.G.A. Papers, B1, F3, Minute Book, pp. 109-112, 11 April 1901.

that cancellation was ill-advised, it requested that if the government was determined to proceed the lands be disposed of by public auction as was the practice with school lands, rather than allowing them to be simply open to free entry. Stockmen held that it was only just that those who had previously come to settle in the vicinity should have a chance to obtain lands that were preferred but heretofore denied.

The department's investigation was completed in the summer of 1901 and the conclusions outlined in a confidential memorandum to the Minister. The memorandum stated that much of the land withdrawn was no longer required for water reserves and should therefore be sold. In cases where settlers had established squatters' residence before the land was reserved by Order-in-Council free homestead entry was recommended. In all other cases it was suggested that the withdrawn lands be opened to public competition at an upset price of $5.00 per acre. In order to prevent domination of a valley by a single individual the report also recommended that no one be allowed to purchase more than one-quarter section, and where land was divided by a river or stream ownership of both sides be refused.[79]

The new policy also reflected the growing political strength of Frank Oliver whose opinion regarding the sale of the water reserves was accordingly solicited. Having

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[79]RG15, B2a, Vol. 161, 141376, Memorandum: J. S. Smart and E. F. Stephenson to C. Sifton, 14 August 1901.

campaigned for cancellation for over a decade, Oliver was pleased with the proposed sales, but objected to the $5.00 upset price as being too high. Oliver feared that this price would discriminate in favour of the wealthy stockmen and in effect maintain the system. He recommended an upset price of $3.00 per acre and stressed that special care should be taken to see that the land sales were carefully advertised so as to forestall "collusion between interested parties to prevent the public generally from getting notice of the facts."[80] After further thought he became convinced that the proposed auction method would have to be abandoned altogether if the settlers' welfare was to be protected from the region's vested interests and thus persuaded the department to undertake sales by sealed tender. The gradual sale of reserves in this manner through the spring of 1902 and during 1903 caused general dissatisfaction in the ranching country among both settlers and stockmen who found that this approach provided no means of determining how high to bid for a much desired adjoining property. In 1904 the department finally yielded to the warning of the W.S.G.A. that the entire ranching industry faced extinction unless certain considerations were immediately forthcoming, and agreed to the ranchers' second request that reserves be sold by public

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[80] Ibid., F. Oliver to Dominion Land Commissioner, 26 March 1902 and 8 April 1902.

auction.[81] In June the first big disposal of Crown water reserves commenced at special auctions throughout the grazing country. At Fort Macleod, High River and Calgary for example 234 parcels were sold.[82] This modification eased the concern which had grown following Pearce's demotion. If the ranchers were forced to accept reduction of their prized water reserves, public auction at least permitted them to use their economic superiority to advantage. The amendment proved however to be a short-lived victory, for the following year Clifford Sifton resigned from the Laurier cabinet and the appointment of Frank Oliver as his successor caused general despair among the cattlemen.

Closely related to the stockmen's preoccupation with the water reserve issue during this period was the matter of grazing leases. At first, before 1900, concern regarding the latter was definitely secondary as the cattlemen placed their confidence in the water reserve system which they had negotiated with the government in 1892. Lease acreage rapidly declined after 1896 as the ranchers endeavoured to purchase what choice lands they could and to assume de facto control of adjoining properties through the reserve system. As pressure to eliminate the reserves mounted after the turn

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[81] W.S.G.A. Papers, B1, F3, Minute Book, pp. 144-46, 18 December 1903. RG15, B2a, Vol. 161, 141376, W. W. Stuart, Inspector of Ranches to J. G. Turriff, Commissioner of Dominion Lands, 13 January 1904.

[82] RG15, B2a, Vol. 161, 141376, Sales Report.

of the century, cattlemen were compelled to shift their attention once again to the tenuous security provided by leases. The renewed interest in this direction marks the decline of the cattlemen's reliance upon collective action in favour of a more individualistic approach to security such as that provided by a lease.

In the interval before 1900, however, the practice of taking leases fell into general disuse. When the old "closed" leases were cancelled in 1896 many ranchers declined to renew their leases in the new form. Given the one-tenth purchase allowance and reserved springs and stream fronts there seemed little reason to be burdened with a yearly rental for lands where the water was already controlled. In this regard the former leaseholders simply elected to follow the practice of free grazing as many of the smaller stockmen had always done. It was not long however before the government realized the extent to which cattlemen were grazing their herds freely on public lands. The Department of the Interior, between 1896 and 1900, consequently sought to devise a new system that would ensure that the government was properly remunerated. The responsibility for finding a new formula at first devolved upon William Pearce who had actually begun to assess the problem during the summer of 1895. The solution proposed was that a <u>per capita</u> charge be levied on all stock grazing outside of land leased or owned by the rancher. Pearce admitted that such a regulation

would "raise an awful howl" but argued that there was no policy more equitable.[83] The Superintendent warned also that certain portions of the country were in danger of being "eaten out" unless immediate action was taken and thus recommended that the per capita charge be coupled with the provision that a licence be required to graze stock so that the number of ranchers grazing cattle in an area could be controlled. Canadian officials were aware that though the American government made no assessment for grazing on federal lands, most States in the ranching country did impose a tax based on a percentage of the average value of cattle, horses and sheep. Pearce's subsequent detailed investigations of these systems however did not bring forth satisfactory answers to the obvious administrative difficulties inherent in such a policy and the whole problem remained unsolved.[84]

At the same time Ottawa was reluctant to return to the former emphasis on the lease system. Not only was a lease structure that did not provide for uninterrupted tenure for at least ten years of little interest to the cattlemen, such a policy had been consistently opposed by the advocates of open settlement on the grounds that it gave control of the region to the big operators. Faced with this dilemma the

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[83] Pearce Papers, 14- -H, W. Pearce to A. M. Burgess, 16 January 1895. The High River referred to here is today known as the High Wood River.

[84] Ibid. See the extensive correspondence in this file.

government was unable to decide upon any policy till well after the turn of the century. The absence of regulations further exacerbated the tension between rancher and settler and for the first time portions of the ranching country became over-grazed. The resultant situation soon confirmed Pearce's initial prophetic warning that: "It is only when there are no regulations governing the matter that the argument is: 'If I do not take advantage of this somebody else will.'"[85]

In the ensuing struggle for the control of the foothill region both sides used all tactics short of open violence and each group made repeated appeals to the government to protect their interests against the other. Shortly after the 1896 election settlers in the High River and Sheep Creek districts pressed the new Liberal government to act on its pro-settlement platform. In a petition to Frank Oliver sixty-six settlers joined Robert Findlay to protest that the cattlemen were driving them from their lands. The memorial stated that each spring the cattle companies and large individual owners living south of High River drove their herds, which were estimated to be in excess of 12,000 head, northwards from their accustomed winter range and across the High River where they were held from returning by line riders stationed along the river. The petitioners alleged

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[85] Ibid., W. Pearce to R. A. Ruttan, Dominion Land Agent, Edmonton, 28 November 1896.

that while there was sufficient grazing land south of the river the northern region was so overgrazed that starvation threatened their stock, and that this was all part of a deliberate plan to "discourage new settlers from coming in and [was] calculated to drive present settlers out."[86] The settlers explained that they were actively engaged in improving the country through the cultivation of land and the construction of irrigation ditches but were continually harassed by large bands of range cattle that destroyed their fences and caused their tame cattle to run off. The farmers' cattle were sometimes unbranded and were thus often lost for good, as such animals were sold by the stock association after the general round-up with the proceeds going to the association. The supplicants concluded with the hope that the stock association which had been "a ruling power in this country in the past. . . ." would be a lesser force in the future and requested that government act to force the cattlemen to keep their range cattle south of High River lest settlers be forced to move away from the region.

Uncertain as to how this complex problem might be solved the government allowed the matter to drift. In November one of the settlers complained to Oliver that they had received no word from the government, that the stockmen mocked them with the query: "what has become of the

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[86]RG15, B2a, Vol. 171, 145330, pt. 3, Petition to F. Oliver, February 1897.

'Findlay Bill'," and that those who had signed the petition were being abused.[87] He charged that the cattlemen and their association were doing "all in their power to prevent settlement" and reminded Oliver of where his political support resided: " . . . at the last election you will remember how much these very men helped us--F. Stimson [Manager of the North West Cattle Company] in particular . . . said he would fire every man he had that did not vote right."[88] Oliver responded by bringing the matter before the Department of the Interior with the personal endorsement that he " . . . fully believed that the complaint of the settlers is well founded and that the ranchmen do herd their cattle in the vicinity of the settlers' farms for the express purpose of injuring those settlers by eating out the grass. . . ."[89] Though he announced that the problem required the quickest possible adjustment he was unable to suggest a solution, and in September 1898 the department informed Oliver that the only action the government could take, until the entire question of ranching in the southwest could be fully investigated, was to advise settlers to lease lands near their homesteads and thus secure the right to charge trespassers.[90]

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[87] Ibid., R. A. Wallace to F. Oliver 30 November 1897.

[88] Ibid.

[89] Ibid.

[90] Ibid., Secretary, Department of the Interior to F. Oliver, 13 September 1898.

While ranchers and settlers waited for the government to establish some means of regulating the use of the range country the situation continued to deteriorate. Early in 1899 Sifton was informed by a close political friend, J. H. Ross, Commissioner of Public Works for the Northwest Territories, that:

> . . . in the Pincher Creek district, which was at one time looked upon as one of the best grazing areas in the Territories, the range has become so eaten out owing to want of any regulations regarding the grazing of cattle at large, that some of the Ranchers there have had to move their cattle away to other and less crowded portions of Alberta. This same condition is being rapidly approached in other districts, notably in the vicinity of High River and some parts of the Maple Creek district, and the public domain in certain districts is being practically rendered worthless owing to lack of regulations to restrain those who are grazing their cattle thereon free of any charge.[91]

Ross warned also that large stockmen in Montana were making preparations to put large bands of cattle on the Canadian side of the boundary where they could run their cattle without payment of any tax. Like others long resident on the dry southern plains he was convinced that much of the area could never be farmed and was thus more sympathetic to the cattle interests. His personal influence with the Minister was enough to balance that of Oliver and other advocates of unrestricted settlement. Unfortunately however the balance of logic and political expediency was so evenly divided that

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[91]Sifton Papers, MG 27, II, D15, Vol. 70, J. H. Ross to C. Sifton, 22 February 1899.

the government continued to do nothing, and Ross' suggestions that all ranchers intending to graze stock on public lands be required to obtain grazing permits from the Minister and that the government undertake the drilling of deep wells so as to increase the grazing area on the open plains were not acted upon.

The little incentive for cattlemen to take leases was further undermined in 1899 by an act of the Territorial legislature which made lands leased from the federal government assessable and liable to taxation by municipalities for local improvements. Leaseholders were quick to protest to Ottawa. As one rancher grumbled, the present rental was as much as a limited five year lease was worth and given the additional cost of fencing an added municipal assessment would make the cost of grass more than the possible return.[92] The department immediately sought an opinion from the Deputy Minister of Justice on the constitutionality of the Territorial government's action, noting that such a measure would ". . . certainly have the effect of lessening the number of leases of Dominion Lands for grazing purposes."[93] The reply that the Territorial government did have such jurisdiction seemed to complicate further what was already a confused

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[92]RG15, B2a, Vol. 171, 145330, pt. 3, J. Kemmis to the Minister of the Interior, 11 April 1899.

[93]Ibid., J. A. Smart to E. L. Newcombe, Deputy Minister of Justice, 28 April 1899.

situation. The state of flux continued for the next five years. As settlement pressure threatened the water reserve system the cattlemen expressed renewed interest in leases. At the same time the department began to have doubts that any kind of a lease system was politically tenable in view of the rapid increase in settlement.

Petitions in 1901 from the W.S.G.A. and from ranchers of southeastern Alberta and Assiniboia for greater security of tenure were ignored.[94] Finally in the late spring of 1901 the Deputy Minister of the Interior, J. S. Smart, departed for the grazing country with a special assistant in order to assess matters at first hand. Smart and his assistant were particularly impressed by the initial success of many of the small stockmen and squatters. "The gardens seen at the homes of the squatters in the valley of the Milk River" they reported "could not be surpassed anywhere. Corn, tomatoes and melons were noticed amongst the other things grown, which we were informed, grew to perfection. Any grain we saw was of excellent quality and was ready for harvesting."[95] The memorandum prepared for the Minister on their return was consequently inclined towards the settlers and small stockmen.

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[94] Ibid., W.S.G.A. to Minister of the Interior, 22 April 1901; J. M. Riley to J. G. Turriff, Commissioner of Dominion Lands, 1 May 1901, Petition to the Minister of the Interior from the residents and ranchers to the Districts of Assiniboia and Alberta. W.S.G.A. Papers, B1, F3, Minute Book, p. 105, 11 April 1901.

[95] RG15, B2a, Vol. 171, 145330, pt. 3, Memorandum for Hon. Clifford Sifton, Re. Grazing Lands, 14 August 1901.

They admitted that while there were extensive tracts of country in the dry belt that could be utilized only for pasture, they could report from their personal observation that much of the "so-termed grazing land is admirably adapted for the growing of grain and root crops when it is brought under irrigation. . . ."[96] Until such time as the boundaries of these two classes of land could be accurately defined, the memorandum recommended that permanent regulations should not be considered. Smart also suggested that the lease system be discontinued or at least curtailed on the grounds that it allowed a few large operators to control the region's limited water supply, and more important, would subject the government to endless difficulties as growing numbers of settlers squatted on the leaseholds. As a temporary solution the Deputy Minister urged that all grazing lands be open to the public on the payment of a fee of so much a head.

Unfortunately the report did not bring an end to the government's indecision. Others within the department, particularly J. G. Turriff, the Commissioner of Dominion Lands, who happened to be from the dry country of Assiniboia, did not concur with Smart's evaluation of the situation in the southwest or with the proposed recommendations.[97]

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[96] Ibid.

[97] Ibid., See Turriff's pencilled comments on the Sifton Memorandum Re. Grazing Lands, 27 August 1901. Turriff had been a resident of the West since 1878 and had served on

Confusion and uncertainty, which by this date had become almost a fact of life in the cattle country, continued for the subsequent two years. The opinion current in some government circles seems to have been that if left alone the matter would be solved in a short time through rapidly increasing settlement, and by not taking a stand the government would offend no one. Yet along with this expedient attitude was another factor of political gamesmanship that pulled in the other direction. As the demand for leases continued it was inevitable that certain of the applicants were counted as influential friends of the government. By the end of 1902 the phenomenon of the large grazing lease had returned to the Canadian West, though the concentration was now on the plains of southern Alberta and western Assiniboia rather than in the foothill country of the Rockies. The new leaseholders differed from the lessee establishment of the previous decade in that with few exceptions they were westerners from the United States and Canada, and the latter were often Manitobans, particularly from Brandon which was in Sifton's constituency. The Minister's Brandon friend, James D. McGregor, and the well-known Assiniboia Liberal, James H. Ross, for example obtained a lease of 46,114 acres,

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the North West Council and Territorial Assembly from 1884 to 1891. He was appointed Commissioner of Dominion Lands in 1898 and retained his position until 1904 when he was elected to the House of Commons as the Liberal member for Assiniboia East. He remained in the House till his appointment to the Senate in 1918.

and a group headed by the prominent New Mexican rancher, H. W. Cresswell, were able to acquire leases totalling 196,960 acres.[98] Sifton had actually granted the first few big leases in 1899 and each year a few more were given to meritorious candidates. Moreover, though it was not generally known at the time, a select few had been given "closed" (not permitting settlement) leases by special Order-in-Council. Such attractive leases had not been granted since the generous awards made by the Conservative government to its friends in the early 1880's.[99]

Though the leased acreage in the southwest by 1903, as shown in Table VI, began to approach the level of the previous decade, it did not come close to meeting the demand.

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[98] Ibid., "List of Ranches." J. H. Ross, a rancher from Moose Jaw was elected to the North-West Council in 1883 and continued to sit as a Liberal in the North West Assembly from 1888 to 1901 when he was appointed Commissioner of the Yukon Territory by Sifton. He was later elected to represent the Yukon in the House of Commons and was called to the Senate in 1904. Sifton's fellow Brandonite, J. D. McGregor, was a prominent Liberal worker in Sifton's constituency and had also been a Yukon appointee. See GAI, The Southern Alberta Land Company, Grand Forks Cattle Company Division.

Such avenues were also open to other Liberals with good connections. Before proceeding west to commence his ranching enterprise, J. Riddle of Dannville, Quebec was able to secure the good offices of Sir Wilfrid Laurier himself. See PAC, Laurier Papers, Microfilm, reel 790, pp. 61676-77, John Riddle to Sir Wilfrid Laurier, 20 January 1902; Sir Wilfrid Laurier to John Riddle, 21 January 1902.

[99] RG15, B2a, Vol. 172, 145330, pt. 4, Memorandum, J. W. Riley to F. Oliver; Ibid., list entitled "Closed Leases."

TABLE VI

GRAZING LEASES 1897-1905[100]

| Year | No. of Leases in Force | Acres | Size of Largest Lease |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1897 | 375 | 248,219.89 | 7,500 |
| 1898 | 448 | 333,469.68 | 7,500 |
| 1899 | 567 | 510,226.68 | 69,120 |
| 1900 | 715 | 605,794.75 | 69,120 |
| 1901 | 908 | 1,272,849.66 | 69,120 |
| 1902 | 978 | 2,147,567.69 | 69,120 |
| 1903 | 889 | 2,292,504.60 | 69,120* |
| 1904 | 745 | 2,328,113.00 | |
| 1905 | 748 | 2,773,453.99 | |

*After 1903 individual holdings are no longer listed.

In August 1903 Sifton attempted to stem the flow of lease applications by ordering the department to dismiss all applications currently being considered. Once the door had been opened however it proved impossible to reclose. The W.S.G.A. warned the government that settlement was being encouraged on lands not suitable for farming and unless some privileges in the way of obtaining extra land or more satisfactory leases could be granted the larger ranches would be forced out of business with heavy financial loss. The association recommended that right of homestead entry be withdrawn from lease lands until in each case the suitability for agriculture was determined by federal inspection.[101] Other

[100] Canada, Department of the Interior, Annual Reports, 1897-1905, Reports of the Timber, Mineral, and Grazing Lands Branch.

[101] Ibid., Resolutions from W.S.G.A., 23 December 1903.

ranchers forwarded their protests individually to Sifton. One totally frustrated pioneer rancher complained that he had expanded his ranch from a 160 acre homestead and a few head of cattle to a section and a quarter and 200 animals, and was now being forced out of business because he could not buy or lease any of the government land in his vicinity. With undisguised bitterness over not being allowed to expand he informed Sifton:

> . . . I must sell and go to Argentina where I can continue in the business for which I am best fitted. Farming I do not intend to try as this country is not fitted for it. There are years in which hot winds dry up all vegetation and bring nothing but vexation and debts to the inexperienced that try to farm on the strength of two or three wet seasons in succession.[102]

Despite Sifton's refusal to approve additional leases the department was deluged through 1903 and 1904 with applications that ranged from requests by small stockmen who desired an adjoining section to very large requisitioned from cattle companies such as the giant Scottish owned Matador Land and Cattle Company of Alamositas, Texas.[103] George Lane, the new owner of the big North West Cattle Company, even managed to persuade the cattlemen's old antagonist Frank Oliver to recommend to the Minister on his behalf that ranchers with

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W.S.G.A. Papers, B1, F3, Minute Book, pp. 144-146, 18 December 1903.

[102] RG15, B2a, Vol. 171, 145330, pt. 3, E. Peachy to C. Sifton, 4 December 1903.

[103] Ibid., Inspectors Report, 3 November 1903.

cattle currently on the range be allowed to lease twenty acres of land for each head of stock.[104] While Oliver understood that the land desired by Lane and his friends was in the westernmost foothill country where the high elevation precluded farming, perhaps the exigencies of the impending federal election partly account for Oliver's uncharacteristic action, for the discreet support of the powerful was not without its reward. The big ranchers' anxiety to obtain lands deep in the foothills was occasioned by the thick settlement that had occurred along the railway between Calgary and Fort Macleod. As this strip of land was put to the plow and fenced the big herds were cut off from the plains. Formerly cattle owned in the foothills drifted out onto the plains for the summer and the grass in the hills was thus saved for the winter months. Now, confined to the eastern edge of the foothills, the big cattlemen were faced with the necessity of drastically reducing their herds unless additional lands could be secured further to the west. Lane even went so far as to suggest to Ottawa that the small stockmen be permitted to choose their lands first so as to " . . . prevent the old cry of 'The big man squeezing out the small man.'"[105] He cannot however have been unmindful of

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[104] Ibid., F. Oliver to C. Sifton, 4 June 1904.

[105] Ibid., G. Lane to J. W. Greenway, Commissioner of Dominion Lands, 1 June 1904.

the fact that an allowance of twenty acres per head would still give the lion's share to the large operators.

In the frustration of being unable to procure the lands required to range their cattle, many cattlemen resorted to fencing desired properties illegally and holding them through the presence of their large herds and hired cow-hands. By 1903 the prevalence of this practice was such as to cause alarm among some Department of Interior Officials in the west. It was learned for example that Crown land along the entire length of the north side of the South Saskatchewan River from Medicine Hat to the forks of the Bow River was enclosed by a continuation of illegal fences. Advantage was most frequently taken of a bend in the river where a single line of fence could enclose a large area. In one such case a recently arrived rancher from Mexico, Lord Beresford, took advantage of such a bend in the Red Deer River and was able to enclose nearly four townships and control about thirty-five miles of river front.[106] Such fencing could result in serious loss for neighbouring ranchers, as did the Beresford fence during the winter of 1903-1904. A series of bad storms in the latter part of February and March drove some ten to twelve thousand head of cattle from points further east down the river in a westerly direction until they struck the Beresford fence which held them on the high windswept

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[106] Ibid., R. H. Campbell to Rowatt, 13 August 1904.

bench lands where they perished by the hundreds. An inspector who traversed the fence in May reported dead cattle, twelve or fifteen to a pile, at short intervals all along the fence.[107] In reporting the situation the department's man in the west pointed out to his superiors in Ottawa that since the Grazing Regulations had been withdrawn there was no lawful way, except for the few who had obtained leases before the cut-off, to obtain control of grazing lands and in consequence extra-legal means would flourish. The great demand for grazing land was confirmed by the backlog of applications for some 3,172,100 acres that had accumulated by the spring of 1904.[108]

Confronted with such growing complications and ever-growing demands, the Minister was finally compelled to establish a definite administrative policy for the grazing country. To assist Sifton in his deliberations the Department of the Interior's Timber and Grazing Branch forwarded to the Minister a detailed report on the grazing question prepared by one of their officials the previous autumn.[109] The department had been without an impartial and knowledgeable assessment of grazing regulations since the decline of William Pearce's influence in the middle 1890's. The author

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[107] Ibid.

[108] Ibid., J. W. Riley to J. S. Smart, 25 March, 1904.

[109] Ibid., 12 December, 1904.

of this review, C. J. Campbell was, like Pearce convinced that without irrigation much of the southwest was unsuitable for agriculture, and the question was therefore to devise regulations that would permit the most equitable and efficient use of the grazing lands. Campbell outlined the evolution of grazing regulations in Canada, the workings of the lease system in the various colonies in Australia from which the original Canadian system had been borrowed, as well as the free range experience in the United States, and concluded that the lease system was vastly superior. Evidence was presented in the form of statements from reputable American sources. The comments of Professor R. H. Forbes, of the Arizona Agricultural Experimental Station were quoted.

> A striking instance of this process of ruin [the free range system] is offered by the San Simon Valley. This once beautiful district has been despoiled and hopelessly ruined within the short space of some fifteen years. . . . The ruinous methods which seem inevitable upon a public range, which, being everybody's property, is nobody's care, have so destroyed its value, and have so changed the original condition of the country that in many cases, in spite of the present high prices of cattle, the ranges now carry but a tithe of what they once did. In the San Simon Valley alone it is judged that within the past decade the number of cattle has fallen off from 75 to 90 per cent. This one district, at least 2500 square miles in extent, would at the extremely low rate of four animals to the square mile per year yield an annual revenue of $150,000 in a region where now it would take hard riding and a sharp eye to gather a single train load.[110]

It was alleged that nearly all of those practically and professionally acquainted with the problem in the United

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[110] Ibid., Grazing Regulations, 6 November 1903.

States favoured a system of leasing but that popular opinion was still opposed. A bill to provide for a system of leasing grazing lands had been introduced into Congress in 1902, but strong opposition developed on the ground that the object of the bill was to establish the large landholders firmly in their position and prevent homesteading, and the legislation was consequently defeated. It was in fact a similar Canadian attachment to the myth that the nation's progress could be measured by the expansion of plowed acres and the number of homesteads taken each year, with little or no thought to climate or soil type, that caused many unfortunate settlers to learn at excessive cost that the valid but unpopular arguments of informed men like William Pearce should not have been ignored.

Campbell insisted that there was still a place for large ranches and recommended that they be assisted to continue through provisions for increased security of tenure. Sifton's decision, formalized by an Order-in-Council of 30 December 1904, provided for the continuation of the grazing lease system along the lines he suggested. The basic provisions repeated those enacted in the past. Grazing leases of up to 100,000 acres were made available for periods not exceeding twenty-one years at an annual rental of two cents per acre. The lessee was obligated to stock the tract with one head of cattle for every twenty acres within three years and afterwards not to exceed this maximum. In return

the leaseholder was permitted to purchase up to 10 per cent of the leased area for a home ranch. From the cattlemen's point of view the most important provisions were those relating to the right of homestead entry, and in this regard the government made an important concession. The terms decreed that the whole or any part of the lands leased were open to homestead and pre-emption entry, unless otherwise provided. This key qualification permitted the Minister of the Interior on receipt of an application for a lease for grazing purposes of lands claimed to be unfit for agricultural purposes to have such lands inspected and, if agricultural unsuitability was confirmed, to withdraw such lands from homestead entry or sale for the duration of the lease.[111] Approval to proceed with the numerous applications for closed leases and to purchase under the 10 per cent option was given by the Minister in February 1905.[112]

After almost a decade of indecision and confusion the cattlemen had finally convinced the Minister of the Interior that their region was unlike the rest of the prairie, that agricultural settlement was inadvisable in large areas of the southwest, and that special legislation was required to give some sense of permanency to the cattle

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[111] Ibid., C. Sifton to His Excellency the Governor General, 30 December 1904.

[112] Ibid., Memorandum, W. W. Cory to C. Sifton, 27 February 1905.

export industry. Through the spring of 1905 ranchers applied for, and a few received, the closed leases that had been largely absent from the grazing country since 1896, but their triumph was short-lived. On 28 February 1905 Clifford Sifton resigned from the Laurier government in protest against the initial separate school clause in the Autonomy Bills that created the new provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan. As noted earlier the new Minister was none other than the cattlemen's oldest bête noir, Frank Oliver. Within two months of assuming office Oliver informed his staff that a review of all legislation relating to the grazing industry would be undertaken.[113] For an industry which had been plagued for a decade with reviews instead of policy the future looked bleak indeed.

The absence of a working lease system during this decade also compounded the special problem faced by the cattlemen in the border country south of Lethbridge and Medicine Hat. The government's reluctance to grant leases meant that the vast dry lands immediately north of the American border remained free grazing country in the American fashion, and cattlemen from Montana continued to range their stock on the Canadian side as they had done for many years in the past. Stockmen gained two advantages through keeping cattle on either side of the boundary. As a Canadian Customs Inspector

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[113] Ibid., Memorandum, J. W. Riley to F. Oliver, 15 June 1905.

observed in 1891 " . . . this drifting [of cattle] North and South leaves open an avenue for fraud on the country whose market at the time offers the best selling point. . . ."[114] Since market prices were generally higher in the United States this remained for the most part a potential advantage, while the second attraction, a lush undergrazed range, became of greater interest with each passing year. In 1893 Police Superintendent Herchmer drew attention to the difficulty of enforcing customs and quarantine regulations because some companies and individuals had identical brands registered on both sides of the boundary.[115] The large Benton and St. Louis Cattle Company belonging to the Conrad and Baker families of Fort Benton, for example, owned some 15,000 head of cattle in Montana and 7,800-8,000 head in Alberta, all of which were branded with the same "O" mark, making it impossible to determine which cattle were Canadian and had a legitimate right to graze north of the border. In Montana the growing competition between sheep and cattle ranchers hastened the deterioration of the southern range and the natural tendency of cattle to drift northward to better pasturage and more abundant water was hardly discouraged by American cattlemen so that this migration reached serious proportions by the middle 'nineties. During the summer of

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[114] PAC, Royal Canadian Mounted Police Records, Controllers Office Official Correspondence, RG18, A1, Vol. 54, 507, G. H. Young to F. White, 30 July 1891.

[115] Ibid., Vol. 85, 540, L. W. Herchmer to F. White, 28 July 1893.

1895 bands of American cattle were found grazing up to fifty miles inside Canadian territory. The police vainly drove them back to the American side only to see them return the next day.[116] Confronted with this impossible situation the Mounted Police made the first of many requests for a 250 mile fence along the boundary. Their Controller pointed out that under the existing state of affairs not only was strict enforcement of Canadian laws and regulations physically difficult, but also that Canadian cattlemen would not support application of the law for fear of reprisals on the part of the American ranchers whose cattle were seized on Canadian territory.[117] The Canadian stockmen were very sensitive to the problem; they did not wish to be crowded out of their own range by thousands of emigrant cattle from Montana, yet they were aware that small bands of their own cattle drifted southward. This was particularly true during the winter and spring when cattle on the range turned their backs to, and drifted with, the frequent storms that blew eastward from the mountains. For this reason they also opposed the idea of a boundary fence which would prevent southward movement and cause the cattle to bunch up and perish during such storms. They preferred that the movement of American herds be controlled by frequent and wide ranging police patrols and that, for all but large and persistent offenders, the

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[116] Ibid., Vol. 261, 823, Memorandum, F. White to Minister of the Interior, 30 November 1895.

[117] Ibid.

cattle simply be driven back without the infliction of a heavy fine or customs levy. Extensive police records over the subsequent decade bear mute testimony to the magnitude of the task.

In April 1896 police patrols reported about 10,000 American cattle south of the Cypress Hills. Further west in the Milk River Ridge country the police hired Indians to assist them drive some 15,000 head back across the American boundary.[118] According to police intelligence Montana stockmen were importing thousands of head from New Mexico, Arizona, Utah and Idaho and deliberately placing them along the northern boundary.[119] For several years Mounted Police stationed in the extreme south spent much of their time acting as cowboys herding American cattle back across the border. It was impossible however to do anything with the thousands of cattle owned by American ranchers who operated legitimate ranches in both countries and who branded all their cattle with the same brand. The big Conrad and Baker ranch reluctantly agreed under pressure to begin branding Canadian calves "30" so that they might be distinguished from the American "O". This caused their manager in Canada,

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[118] Ibid., Vol. 117, 87, L. W. Herchmer to F. White, 15 April 1896; F. White to Deputy Minister of Agriculture, 14 October 1896.

[119] Ibid., Extract from report of Inspector W. S. Morris, 6 May 1896.

John Harris, to complain that:

> the cattle of Canadian owners also stray into Montana but I have not heard a Montana stockman raise a howl about it--on the contrary they have taken the men who come after [strays] into their Round-Up and have helped them take [their cattle] back.[120]

This feeling manifests not only the recognition that the pasture was superior on the Canadian side, but also the sentiment that by virtue of their earlier arrival American ranchers had the right at least to share the border grazing lands. To old-timers like Harris who had been in the region since the days of the Fort Benton fur trade and had used the range for some time before the Canadians moved out onto the plains from the foothill country, the border had never been accepted as a concrete reality, and in the late 'nineties when settlement began to turn the border into an actual line of division they found it difficult to accept.

But the emigrant cattle north of the border did not all belong to cattlemen long established in the region, for many of the herds belonged to newcomers who were alive to the advantages to be gained by purchasing cheap range stock from states further south, fattening them for a year on Canadian grass and then driving them south to be marketed in Chicago. The respective customs men were of course avoided on both border crossings. To ensure their right to operate on the Canadian side a growing number of American ranchers

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[120] Ibid., Vol. 122, 370, H. Harris to W. G. Conrad, 18 May 1896.

after 1900 began to secure leaseholds just north of the boundary and then register their Montana brands in the North West Territories as well. While the operations of many of these newcomers were legitimate, others like that of the Spencer brothers aroused the suspicion of the police soon after they expanded from Montana into Alberta in 1897.[121] The efforts of the Mounted Police to monitor the activities of this company over the subsequent five years well illustrates both the magnitude of the problem as well as difficulty of controlling cattle smuggling operations in the border country. Suspicions as to this company's intent seemed confirmed in 1899 when the Spencer brothers of Sunnyside, Montana and A. E. Philip of Brandon, Manitoba obtained choice leases of five and four and one-half townships respectively giving them control of both sides of the Milk River for forty-two miles westward from the point where it entered the United States.[122] The absence of any other significant water source between the river and the border meant that these leaseholders also gained de facto control of the entire area, which alarmed not only the police who had noted the company's common American and Canadian brand, but also the American stockmen who suddenly found that they had lost control of a

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[121] Ibid., Vol. 140, Superintendent P. C. H. Primrose to F. White, 11 October 1897.

[122] Ibid., Vol. 214, 497, Inspector H. S. Casey to Commissioner A. B. Perry, 2 April 1901; Vol. 242, 25 pt. 1, J. V. Begin to A. B. Perry, 9 April 1903.

region which they had hitherto considered to be theirs. The Montana stock association consequently refused to gather Spencer cattle during the spring and fall round-ups, the police increased their surveillance, and cattlemen over the entire range country on both sides of the border watched to see the outcome of a remarkable bid for control not witnessed since the days of the great grazing leases in the 1880's.[123] Unknown to other ranchers at the time the Spencer Brothers had not only managed to obtain a choice location but they had also managed to persuade Sifton to grant them, by special Order-in-Council the first "closed" lease (not open to settlement) to be awarded since 1886.[124]

The hand of the police was ultimately forced by the Customs Department who sent a special agent to the region with authority to requisition police assistance to impound American cattle. Seizures resulting in 20 per cent customs levies began during 1902 with the department's most ambitious undertaking commencing in April. A police detachment led by Superintendent R. B. Deane of Lethbridge, plus a round-up party of fifteen cowboys under George Lane, accompanied by the special customs officer, were secretly assembled to

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[123] Ibid., Vol. 243, 25 pt. 2, A. B. Perry to F. White, 22 March 1902.

[124] RG15, B2a, Vol. 172, 145330, pt. 4, Memorandum, J. W. Riley to F. Oliver, 15 June 1905; List entitled "Closed Leases." According to the provisions of the published lease regulations, "closed" leases were not available.

round up all Spencer cattle that could be located in the Milk River country in order to collect the 2,000 to 3,000 head of stock believed by the police, the customs department and the stock associations to have been smuggled illegally into Canada. Between May 14 and June 19 the party gathered some 1,400 head, 587 of which were determined to have been entered without customs payment and were held until the company made payment of $10,000.[125] Most interesting of all was the outcome of the Customs Department's first round-up. Despite the weighty evidence collected, department officials in Ottawa reassessed the matter and returned $4,000 to the offending party. For his part in directing the operation the officer commanding "K" Division, Burton Deane, one of the most popular officers in the force, was transferred to Maple Creek after fourteen years in Lethbridge. Deane's cynical assertion that the transfer was prompted by the influence that Spencer's associates were able to bring to bear on the Minister of the Interior is perhaps not without foundation.[126] The fact that Spencer obtained such a lease in the first instance is quite remarkable and suggests well-connected friends. Whether or not Sifton's former law

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[125] R. Burton Deane, Mounted Police Life in Canada (London: Cassell and Company, Ltd., 1916), pp. 154-181. See also RG18, A1, Vol. 241, 862; Vol. 243, 25, pt. 2. The $10,000 charge represented only one-half of what the actual customs levy would have been.

[126] Deane, pp. 93, 178-180.

partner in Brandon, A. E. Philip, who was Spencer's colleague, legal counsel, and neighboring leaseholder was able to exert such influence, Deane's transfer does seem somewhat irregular given the circumstances. In the opinion of Deane's commanding officer, Commissioner A. B. Perry, "Supt. Deane acted only in the best interests of the Government, and in my opinion showed no favoritism to any stock holder."[127] On learning of his impending departure both the town of Lethbridge and the W.S.G.A. presented Deane with testimonials of appreciation for services rendered in their interest over the past decade.[128] In the end the smuggling charges against Spencer Brothers were confirmed despite appeals to the Exchequer Court and finally to the Supreme Court of Canada.[129]

The W.S.G.A. adopted a very cautious position regarding the continuing border problem. They were agreed that Canadian range should be reserved for Canadian stockmen and they were also very anxious to prevent the spread of mange among Canadian herds. Thus in 1900 they requested "immediate action to prevent the large number of American cattle from grazing on the Canadian side of the Boundary Line."[130] At a

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[127] RG18, A1, Vol. 243, 25, pt. 2, A. B. Perry to F. White, 28 October 1902. See also Deane's full report on the matter, Ibid., Vol. 241, 862, A. B. Perry to F. White, 9 December 1902.

[128] Ibid., Vol. 240, 755, W.S.G.A. to R. B. Deane, 10 October 1902. Deane, pp. 95-96.

[129] Deane, p. 180.

[130] W.S.G.A. Papers, B1, F3, Minute Book, p. 83, 12 April 1900.

later meeting attended by Superintendent Deane the Association lent full though unofficial support to the proposed round-up of Spencer cattle and one of the Association's leading members, George Lane, selected the accompanying fifteen cowboys in the round-up party. At the same time Canadian cattlemen were very desirous to maintain the good will of the Montana Stock Growers Association and ensure that legitimate straying be countenanced. Consequently when the W.S.G.A. learned in October 1902 that a special officer of the Customs Department had arrested an American round-up party and impounded their cattle, the association informed the government that:

> while fully realizing the importance of upholding the provisions of the Customs tariff, we would respectfully suggest that the officials engaged in these duties be warned to use the greatest caution in discriminating between bona fide round-up parties and others, thereby avoiding the friction that must necessarily result by interfering with the natural workings of the cattle industry.[131]

The association emphasized that such action would inevitably lead to retaliation by the American authorities, and that if this occurred Canadian stockmen were at a disadvantage because, where Montana cattle might stray north, the Canadian movement southwards was a completely involuntary response to the region's prevailing westerly storms.

Canadian cattlemen were much more at ease with the discretion exercised by Mounted Police in such matters. Given

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[131] Ibid., p. 128, 25 October 1902.

their long experience in the grazing country the police were also unhappy with the Customs Department's direction and handling of the problem. Referring to the special agent of the Customs Department, Commissioner Perry strenuously complained that

> this Gentleman makes a hurried visit to the western country, and is satisfied that he fully understands the condition in that country. The whole tone of the correspondence is to the effect that we have been neglecting our duties, and that now the Customs Department are going to take it out of our hands and straighten the matter out. It is to this I decidedly object.[132]

Perry insisted that "to ride airily hither and thither, gather up American cattle, drive them across the line, and then proceed to another point and repeat operations" at the behest of the Customs agent was not a simple task, that to be effective the round-up party had to be composed of cowboys trained to the work and experts in brands. The Commissioner felt not only was it wrong to engage police as cowboys but it was also a mistake to place a detachment of police to act directly under an officer of another department.[133] While the Department of the Interior and the Customs debated procedural matters the latter issued a circular notifying American ranchers that any cattle found on Canadian territory after 1 June 1903 would be seized, customs duties imposed and penalties assessed. The reaction that the W.S.G.A.

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[132] RG18, A1, Vol. 243, 25, pt. 2, A. B. Perry to F. White, 10 March 1903.

[133] Ibid.

earlier predicted would follow such a universal and legalistic approach was not long forthcoming. In a confidential letter to his commanding officer at Fort Macleod, Inspector W. H. Irvine confided that he had just returned from Montana where he had overheard stockmen say that:

> if the Canadians seized and sold U.S. stock which drifted or strayed across the line, they would not go to the trouble of seizing Canadian stock drifting into their country, and having it sold, but would either shoot the animals down or run them over a bank, and that the Canadians would be much the heavier losers, if a law of that kind went into effect. . . .[134]

In the end the three cornered debate between the police in the west and the Customs and Interior officials in Ottawa did not resolve the differences regarding policy and method, and the plan of firm enforcement was abandoned. The police meanwhile established a definite border patrol consisting of a number of cowboys hired as line riders under the supervision of officers of the force to turn American cattle back. The Customs Department for their part called the police from time to time to assist with small random seizures. Such measures were insufficient and reports of American herds of several dozen to several thousand head persisted to 1905 despite the employment by the Mounted Police of some fifty line riders by this date.[135] To the traditionally cautious

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[134] Ibid., W. H. Irvine to P. C. H. Primrose, 21 April 1903.

[135] Ibid., Vol. 284, 10, F. White to W. W. Cory, Deputy Minister of the Interior, 31 March 1905.

complaints of the Canadian cattlemen were now added the voices of newly arrived settlers who charged that southern cattle were running their small herds off and destroying their hay stacks.[136] Finally the Department of the Interior decided in 1905 that the only means of terminating this persistent annoyance was to stop the movement of cattle completely in either direction by the construction of a boundary fence.[137]

This tension in the border country was basically a result of increased competition for a declining range. From the south came Montana stockmen retreating from the sheepmen and a proliferation of smaller stock growers. From the foothills region to the northwest came Canadian cattlemen driven by incoming settlers who proposed to raise a few head of cattle and grow winter wheat in the valleys. Also into this dry plains region came the first few dry-land farmers from the United States. Inducing this movement to the dry southern plains was the increasing pace of settlement. In fact all of the important issues facing the cattlemen after the turn of the century were intimately related to the settlers' increasing numbers.

The magnitude of the homesteaders' rush into the southwest after 1900 was unprecedented. That the full

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[136] Ibid., Vol. 242, 25, pt. 1, Inspector A. W. Duffus to Superintendent J. V. Begin, Petition to W. Scott M.P., 13 March 1905.

[137] Ibid., Vol. 242, 25, pt. 1, W. W. Corry to F. White, 30 March 1905.

thrust of settlement into the foothill region was about to begin was suggested in the remarks of the Dominion Land Agent at Lethbridge in the 1898 annual report of the Department of the Interior that a number of homestead entries had been made in the heart of the ranching country near Pincher Creek and that cultivation had demonstrated these lands would yield abundant cereal crops.[138] The following year about 100 new homesteads were taken in the Pincher Creek vicinity.[139] This pattern was duplicated along the entire eastern edge of the foothills from the American boundary to Calgary. During the 1900-1901 season an estimated 4,000 immigrants settled along the railway line running southwards from Calgary.[140] Around Pincher Creek where the inflow was most concentrated very few large range herds remained after 1900.[141]

The pace of colonization continued to increase through 1901-1902 when an estimated 12,600 settlers arrived in Calgary and 1,495 homesteads were granted in that area.[142]

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[138] Canada, Department of the Interior, Annual Report, 1898, Report of the Dominion Land Commissioner, pp. 15-16.

[139] Ibid., 1899, Report of the Commissioner of Immigration, p. 156.

[140] Ibid., 1900-1901, p. 109; 1899, pp. 160-161.

[141] Ibid., 1900, p. 146.

[142] Ibid., 1901-1902, Report of the Commissioner of Dominion Lands, p. 19.

Immigrant arrivals and homestead entries in the Calgary vicinity increased each year to 1905 and the town's population doubled to 10,000 within the short space of four years.[143] From this date the rate of settlement in the vicinity of Calgary began a decline which the local land agent attributed to the fact that nearly all the available land along the Calgary and Edmonton railway was homesteaded, thus forcing would-be settlers arriving after 1905 to go up to forty miles from the railway to obtain entry.[144] During 1904 the last gaps were filled in the band of settlement that stretched from Calgary southward to Fort Macleod along the old cattle trail that marked the division between the western foothills and open eastern range. In the neighbourhood of the ranching community of High River 300 homestead entries were granted, a little further south at Nanton, 400 new arrivals were situated and six new school districts opened, and at Claresholm about 500 new homesteads were established.[145] Still further south near the once vast holdings of the Oxley ranch, where two years before there was not a settler within forty miles, the little town of Staveley had blossomed forth from the prairie replete with two general stores, a hardware store, two meat markets, two hotels,

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[143] Ibid., 1903-1904, p. 15.

[144] Ibid., 1904-1905, p. 14.

[145] Ibid., pp. 108-109.

three livery stables, three blacksmith shops, a lumber yard, two elevators, a school house, a church and the dwellings of several hundred inhabitants.[146] This one hundred mile barrier of fields and fences pushed the ranchers deeper into the foothills and cut them off from their accustomed summer range on the plains thus forcing a fundamental alteration in the ranching practice of the two previous decades.

Immigration into the grazing lands south of Medicine Hat and in the Lethbridge vicinity was equally rapid. Nowhere was the growth more marked than near the Mormon communities of Stirling, Cardston, Taber and Spring Coulee. As these settlements straddled the main route northwards for thousands of immigrants from the western American states, the visible success of the Mormon pioneers was sufficient to influence the majority of those entering from the United States to remain in the south. Such settlers locating in the Lethbridge region numbered 2,456 for the year ending 31 March 1902, 2,313 in 1903, 1,778 in 1904 and 1,329 in 1905.[147] With arriving immigrants numbered in the thousands each year Crown lands swiftly diminished. In the Lethbridge area alone land sales exceeded 300,000 acres in 1905. Similarly, by the same date, all lands within a fifteen to twenty mile

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[146] Ibid.

[147] Ibid., 1901-1902, Report of the Commissioner of Immigration, pp. 115-116; 1903-1904, pp. 77-81; 1904-1905, pp. 108-109; 1905-1906, p. 94.

radius of nearby Pincher Creek was homesteaded, causing the immigration agent there to predict that within a few years the cattle industry would largely disappear. Acreage sown to grain increased by 30 to 50 per cent annually in the environs of nearly every community in the south so that as early as 1903 southern Alberta was already being described by government officials as a "mixed farming country."[148] The colonists that had wrought this fundamental shift in the region's economic base were almost entirely American which meant also that the social and cultural structure of the south was equally affected.[149]

Even the last stronghold of cattlemen, the dry plains about Medicine Hat, seemed destined to fall before the farmers' onslaught. With the undisguised optimism engendered by five years of unparalleled western settlement the Commissioner of Immigration reported in 1905 that 244 new homesteads had been granted during the year in the Medicine Hat district and that an "abundance of moisture has continued the desirable change of making what was considered a grazing district admirably suited for farming operations."[150]

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[148] Ibid., 1903-1904, p. 81.

[149] Of the 2,456 newcomers registered at Cardston, Macleod, Maple Creek and Wood Mountain during 1902 for example, 1,839 were American, 119 returned Canadians, 138 English and 66 Scotch. Canada, Department of the Interior Annual Report, 1901-1902, Report of the Commissioner of Immigration, p. 81.

[150] Ibid., 1904-1905, p. 108.

The Commissioner's judgment of the farmers' advance into the Medicine Hat region as a "desirable change" is significant in that it is representative of the confident attitude that had gained dominance, that progressive farming methods rendered the entire prairie region habitable and for the sake of the nation's moral and economic well being such settlement should be pushed into all areas with all haste. "Too optimistic an estimate can scarcely be made of the agricultural wealth of western Canada. . . ." the Deputy Minister of the Interior assured the nation in 1905 and he counselled that since the

> opening to the plough of these western lands has been one of the most potent factors in the ever increasing prosperity of the country during the last decade, [this] should be considered as the strongest possible ground for prosecuting with increased vigour the land and immigration policy to which the satisfactory results now reported are chiefly attributed.[151]

The great outburst of national feeling engendered by the vision of countless thousands turning the western sod and building towns and cities on the plains completely smothered the discordant voices of the few doubters.

This tremendous growth of western settlement happened to coincide fortuitously with almost a decade of above average precipitation. While the two settlements at either end of the hypotenuse of the ranching triangle, Calgary and Medicine Hat, very seldom enjoyed more than ten inches annual

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[151] Ibid., 1905-1906, Report of the Deputy Minister, p. IX.

precipitation between 1885 and 1895, the average never dropped below fifteen inches from 1896 to 1903.[152] With such encouragement settlers and government officials who should have known better were not inclined to listen to those who had lived in the region during the previous dry decade. The voice of caution, coming as it did mainly from the cattlemen, was dismissed as simply the anti-settlement propaganda of a reactionary vested interest. The warnings of William Pearce in his annual reports for 1899 and 1900 that the normal dry conditions would in due course return were similarly ignored.[153] In 1902 Pearce forwarded a special confidential appeal to the Minister of the Interior regarding what he considered to be the very questionable activities of immigration agents in the southwest. Commenting on a recent trip from Calgary to Fort Macleod he explained that he had noticed considerable settlement on tracts of land that he had earlier reported, in his capacity of Superintendent of Mines, as unsuitable for agriculture unless combined with irrigation, and predicted that a large number of these homesteaders would be forced to move elsewhere as soon as there was a return to average seasons. Pearce suggested that the honesty and

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[152] Alberta, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1922, Precipitation Averages 1885-1922, p. 107.

[153] Canada, Department of the Interior, Annual Report, 1899, Report of the Superintendent of Mines, p. 27; 1900, p. xxvi.

reliability of many immigration agents was compromised by the temptation to secure a commission, and he singled out the agents at Omaha, Nebraska and Duluth, Minnesota for particular blame. Some agents, Pearce charged, had even gone so far as to assure prospective homesteaders that the climate was changing and that plenty of moisture was assured in the future.[154] But his appeals were to no avail and each year settlers pushed into more marginal areas, in the end to experience disaster and heartbreak.

Against the farmers' advance the cattlemen put up determined opposition. Motivation for this spirited defence, the political side of which has already been discussed, came from the cattle industry's unprecedented economic buoyancy. The opening of the Crowsnest Railway in 1897 provided access to a sizable market in the south Kootenay mining towns for cattle that were not of sufficient size or quality to warrant export to England. Prices obtained for choice four year old steers reached $40 to $45 in 1897 and remained at this price or better until 1905.[155] Reports from all parts of the cattle country in 1898 described the ranching industry as in a flourishing condition and during the following year the demand for beef exceeded the ready

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[154]Pearce Papers, 22- -126, W. Pearce to C. Sifton, 1 September 1902.

[155]Canada, Department of Interior, Annual Report, 1897. Report of the Superintendent of Mines, p. 30.

supply, with some 30,000 head being purchased by buyers in the Calgary region alone.[156] The assertion of the Superintendent of Police at Calgary that there " . . . has never been a time in the history of the cattle industry in Alberta when the prospects were brighter or more promising" was confirmed by the comments of ranchers the next year who declared that the season had been the best in the history of ranching.[157] As the ranching industry from the very beginning was predicated upon the mass production of beef for export, the condition of this market provides a reasonably good index of the economic health of the cattle business. From 1899 to 1904, as shown in Table VII, beef exports from the ranching country maintained a steady and profitable volume. Over the period the price of choice four year old export steers ranged from 3-1/2 to 4-1/2 cents a pound live weight, or from $45 to $55 a head.[158] In the period before the First Great War the breeding and sale of horses also contributed substantially to the income of many ranchers. The raising of horses required more specialized attention but

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[156] Ibid., 1898, Report of the Superintendent of Immigration, pp. 254, 264; 1899, p. 160.

[157] Canada, North West Mounted Police, Annual Report, 1899, p. 84. Canada, Department of the Interior, Annual Report, 1900. Report of the Commissioner of Dominion Lands, p. 13.

[158] North West Territories, Department of Agriculture, Annual Reports, 1900-1904. The Chicago market during this period generally averaged two cents per pound more, but because Canadian buyers assumed shipping costs the difference was cancelled.

TABLE VII

STOCK SHIPMENTS 1899-1904[159]

| Districts | Year | Exports East Cattle | East Horses | West Cattle | West Horses | Total Cattle | Total Horses |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| West Assiniboia* | 1899 | 10,929 | 453 | 170 | 10 | 11,099 | 463 |
| | 1900 | 10,942 | 127 | 172 | 6 | 11,114 | 133 |
| | 1901 | 9,322 | 527 | 227 | 8 | 9,549 | 535 |
| | 1902 | 17,158 | 868 | 280 | 15 | 17,438 | 883 |
| | 1903 | 6,168 | 1,458 | 3 | 25 | 6,171 | 1,488 |
| | 1904 | 9,640 | 1,247 | 58 | 29 | 9,698 | 1,276 |
| South Alberta* | 1899 | 13,095 | 1,251 | 5,906 | 202 | 19,001 | 1,453 |
| | 1900 | 18,549 | 1,865 | 5,875 | 131 | 24,424 | 1,996 |
| | 1901 | 13,631 | 3,518 | 6,627 | 297 | 20,258 | 3,815 |
| | 1902 | 21,557 | 3,270 | 7,505 | 418 | 29,062 | 3,688 |
| | 1903 | 16,937 | 3,148 | 6,447 | 353 | 23,384 | 3,501 |
| | 1904 | 25,631 | 1,446 | 8,093 | 402 | 33,727 | 1,848 |
| The Territories | 1899 | 35,330 | 1,730 | 6,141 | 213 | 41,471 | 1,943 |
| | 1900 | 48,114 | 2,010 | 7,015 | 137 | 55,129 | 2,147 |
| | 1901 | 31,573 | 4,139 | 8,190 | 313 | 32,763 | 4,452 |
| | 1902 | 50,490 | 4,416 | 9,568 | 444 | 60,058 | 4,860 |
| | 1903 | 31,462 | 4,658 | 7,373 | 453 | 38,835 | 5,111 |
| | 1904 | 40,238 | 2,823 | 9,150 | 453 | 49,388 | 3,276 |

Shipping Points Included in Each District:

*West Assiniboia: Moose Jaw, Regina, Swift Current, Maple Creek, Medicine Hat, Dundurn

*South Alberta: Okotoks, Coutts, Morley, Cochrane, Morley, Macleod, Gleichen, Pincher Creek, Lethbridge, High River and Cayley, Calgary

[159] Ibid., Annual Report, 1901, pp. 82-83; 1904, p. 45. These statistics, the first reasonably accurate ones available, show the ranch country's domination of the western

the return per animal was two to five times as great which led some stockmen to concentrate their activities entirely in this area.

Given the industry's economic success the cattlemen were not inclined to be pushed out of business and were prepared, in addition to taking political action, to make necessary economic adjustments. Consequently, during the period 1896 to 1905 there was a fundamental shift in the basis of the western cattle industry. The change began in 1896 as cattlemen began to alter the capital basis of the industry from cattle to land after the old closed leases were cancelled. It was already apparent that the only real security was derived from outright ownership and consequently cattlemen began to purchase home ranch sites and key properties along streams and rivers, which, with the water reserve system, they hoped would allow them to control the surrounding grazing lands. By 1900 however a new frontier figure had entered the region and greatly complicated the system. The arrival in force of the dry-land farmer extended the competition of former years between rancher and farmer for the same habitat from the creek and river bottoms on to the plains beyond. Assisted by a government that was prepared to mark

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cattle export industry. From two-thirds to three-quarters of the total cattle exports from the Territories each year came from the two grazing districts of West Assiniboia and South Alberta. The latter district which comprised mainly the foothill region accounted for almost one-half the yearly exports.

out 160 acre parcels in parts of the country where in dry years it took twenty to forty acres to furnish enough grass for a single steer, and a confidence born of improved farming techniques and a series of wet summers, the drylander was determined to occupy the entire region. The settlers' rapid purchase of public land after 1900 hastened the stockgrowers' retreat behind the defences of privately owned pastures. The situation was summed up concisely by the Superintendent of Police in Calgary in his 1902 report. "The days of the big rancher are numbered" he wrote, "and unless he purchases enough land out-right to run his large herds on, he will have to seek pasturage elsewhere."[160] But the problem was that this was the cattlemen's last frontier, there were no new lands further north or west to which they might go. This left only that part of the existing region hitherto used mainly for summer pasture. Moreover the stockman moving out onto the eastern plains south of the Bow River and the lower reaches of the Red Deer River or south of Medicine Hat, faced not only a more severe winter climate but also growing competition for use of the open range from retreating Montana stockmen, and in the river valleys and more sheltered regions from the now ubiquitous farmer. For most there was little alternative but to remain where they were, and attempt

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[160]Canada, Royal North West Mounted Police, Annual Report, 1902. Report of the Commissioner, p. 37.

to buy and lease the land required. But even this alternative was tentative for few could afford to buy outright the large acreages needed and leases which were difficult to obtain did not preclude homesteading within the boundaries of the leaseholds in any case. Repeated attempts to persuade the government to alter land laws to suit the demands of the range industry were frustrated and eventually led to overgrazing, illegal fencing and harassment of settlers.

The growing emphasis on direct and individual land control brought renewed interest in the lease system. When the old lease system was terminated in 1896 most cattlemen were prepared to place their trust in the vast system of water reserves that had been created during the preceding decade. Control of the region's water promised control of the grazing land around. But by 1900 the system was threatened from two sides. On the one hand, with water and pasture open to all, cattlemen were responsible for dangerous overgrazing in some areas, and on the other hand a growing influx of settlers who were often prepared to homestead seemingly less attractive lands in the vicinity of water reserves often destroyed the value of such reserves by their proximity. Thus after the turn of the century there were growing demands from the stockmen for a return to the lease system with the emphasis on security of tenure for the duration of the lease.

The shift from public grazing to leased acreages and direct ownership precipitated a number of important short and long term changes in the economic and political structure of the cattle industry. It brought a certain and swift end to the old range system that had been in decline for a decade. With reduced acreages ranchers herded their cattle closely, cattle were still ranged if possible during the summer but forage crops were planted to provide for winter feed and some stockmen even went to the extent of providing limited winter shelter. While many ranchers had decided long before that it was undesirable simply to turn cattle loose to fend for themselves, it now became a physical impossibility in many areas. Though the large companies out on the plains and in the vicinity of Medicine Hat were able to continue this practice for some years, the big cattle companies in the foothills were forced to move, sell out or adapt. For those operators who chose the latter alternative it usually meant restricting the size of the operation and herd size to that which could be accommodated on land directly controlled by the company. This process of adaptation was accompanied by a gradual decline in the influence and power of the big companies, particularly those with headquarters in the East or in Great Britain. The relative decline of the managers in turn occasioned the rise of new men in the ranchers' fraternity. These new men were inevitably stockraisers of long residence in the ranching country,

often having arrived just before or during the early company period. Many had started out as managers or foremen of the big companies and later branched out on their own or in partnership. By 1900 many of these individuals had acquired holdings and herds of respectable size ranking not too far behind some of the old companies. The influence and importance of such stockmen came naturally to the fore during the trying decade after 1905.

The changes occurring within the cattle kingdom between 1896 and 1905 are mirrored clearly in the stockmen's association. The W.S.G.A., founded at the beginning of this decade, was really the child of earlier organizations structured to meet the demands of a cattle industry based on the open range. During this period the association's main concern, apart from settlement and stock theft, shifted gradually from such matters as round-up organization, adjudication of ownership, branding regulations, prairie fire prevention, herd and bull control, and wolf bounties, all of which were of significance during the range period, to subjects like disease control and quarantine regulations, compulsory stock inspection, railway shipping procedures and facilities, and market information. This shift in emphasis in fact reflects the growing maturity of a basic export industry. Whether as a body providing for internal administrative control or as a political lobby seeking desired legislation, the W.S.G.A. was perhaps the major contributor in the development

of a viable cattle export industry in the west. Though the association's administrative and economic function enabled the W.S.G.A. to remain a strong regional body, its political influence had begun to wane by 1905. This turn of events was the natural result of the rapid settlement after the turn of the century which rendered the cattlemen a minority group within the region. The W.S.G.A. could no longer pretend to speak for the population in the southwest; the new federal government, not having the same close links as its predecessor with the cattle compact, was less inclined to listen. Moreover the new men of the ranching community who had begun to replace the eastern ranch company directors as spokesmen did not yet possess the advantage of national or economic stature. Though the new leaders of the stock association were in some ways more acceptable within the ranch country, which made for a more cohesive organization at the local level, they found it difficult to exert decisive collective influence upon the government. The issue of most critical concern to stockmen as they faced the advancing tide of settlement was the question of a lease system and in this regard, despite the persistent efforts of the association and individual ranchers, the government remained unmoved. For a decade Ottawa refused to commit itself to an official policy regarding the cattle industry in the southwest. While federal officials seemed to hope that the problem would solve itself as they persisted with their interminable

reviews, the future of the western ranching industry remained quite uncertain, and settlement changed forever the face of the grazing country.

## CHAPTER V

## THE STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL: THE DARK YEARS 1905-1911

After 1905 the rancher was compelled, however unwillingly, to accept general settlement of the southwest as an accomplished fact. Western colonization had in fact proceeded at such a pace over the preceding five years as to warrant the creation of two new prairie provinces. The cattlemen had traditionally maintained a circumspect attitude towards provincial autonomy as it was fitfully debated in the press and Territorial Assembly. They understood that whatever autonomy might mean to the rest of the population, it would thrust them into a minority position in a province dominated by the farm community. Coupled with their fear that this dominance might be translated into legislation on such matters as herd and pound laws, branding regulations, stock inspection and school and municipal taxation, as well as other issues where rancher and farmer did not see eye to eye, was their specific apprehension that the grant of autonomy might also include federal surrender of Crown lands to the new western provinces. Stockmen generally preferred the control of western lands to remain in a more distant quarter. They were used to dealing directly with Ottawa and had the advantage of solid connections within the

metropolitan business and political community. While their influence had diminished since 1896 and while Frank Oliver's antagonism remained a growing threat, friends were still to be found within the Department of the Interior and in addition to longstanding Conservative supporters in Parliament were a growing number of prominent Liberals who had obtained leases in the border country, and hence a vested interest in ranching. It was apparent moreover that the federal government was not likely to be controlled by western farmers. Consequently as the inevitability of provincehood became apparent the cattlemen sympathized with the endeavors of their Calgary business friends to promote an east-west boundary that would create northern and southern provinces rather than eastern and western jurisdictions.[1] Calgarians saw in this plan the opportunity to become the predominant community, if not the capital of the region. To the ranchers a division which included Alberta and Assiniboia promised to maintain the geographic unity of the ranching country. Stockmen on the plains of western Assiniboia and in the foothills of Alberta were used to political cooperation through their common membership in the W.S.G.A. The formation of a southern province which excluded the northern agricultural population and retained the entire ranch community within its bounds would ensure a much more acceptable power balance.

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[1]See for example Herald, 29 June 1891 and Tribune (Calgary), 6 February 1891.

At the ninth annual meeting of the W.S.G.A. at Medicine Hat in May 1905, the cattlemen officially announced their opposition to the north-south boundary. Led by ranchers from West Assiniboia the stock growers adopted the resolution that " . . . it would be advisable from a stockman's point of view to extend the eastern boundary of Alberta to the 107th parallel of west longitude, as far north as the northern boundary of Assiniboia."[2]

In the end this minority opinion regarding provincial boundaries did not prevail and the stockmen were confronted with eastern and western provinces, in both of which they were a minority economic group, particularly in Saskatchewan. The new provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan however were not given control of Crown lands and the ranchers were permitted to adjust to these new political entities at a somewhat more gradual pace than would otherwise have been the case. With the question of land policy their paramount concern, ranchers turned to their traditional preoccupation, the Department of the Interior.

The longstanding antagonism of the new minister, Frank Oliver, made stockmen even more sensitive and uncertain about the future of their industry than they had been

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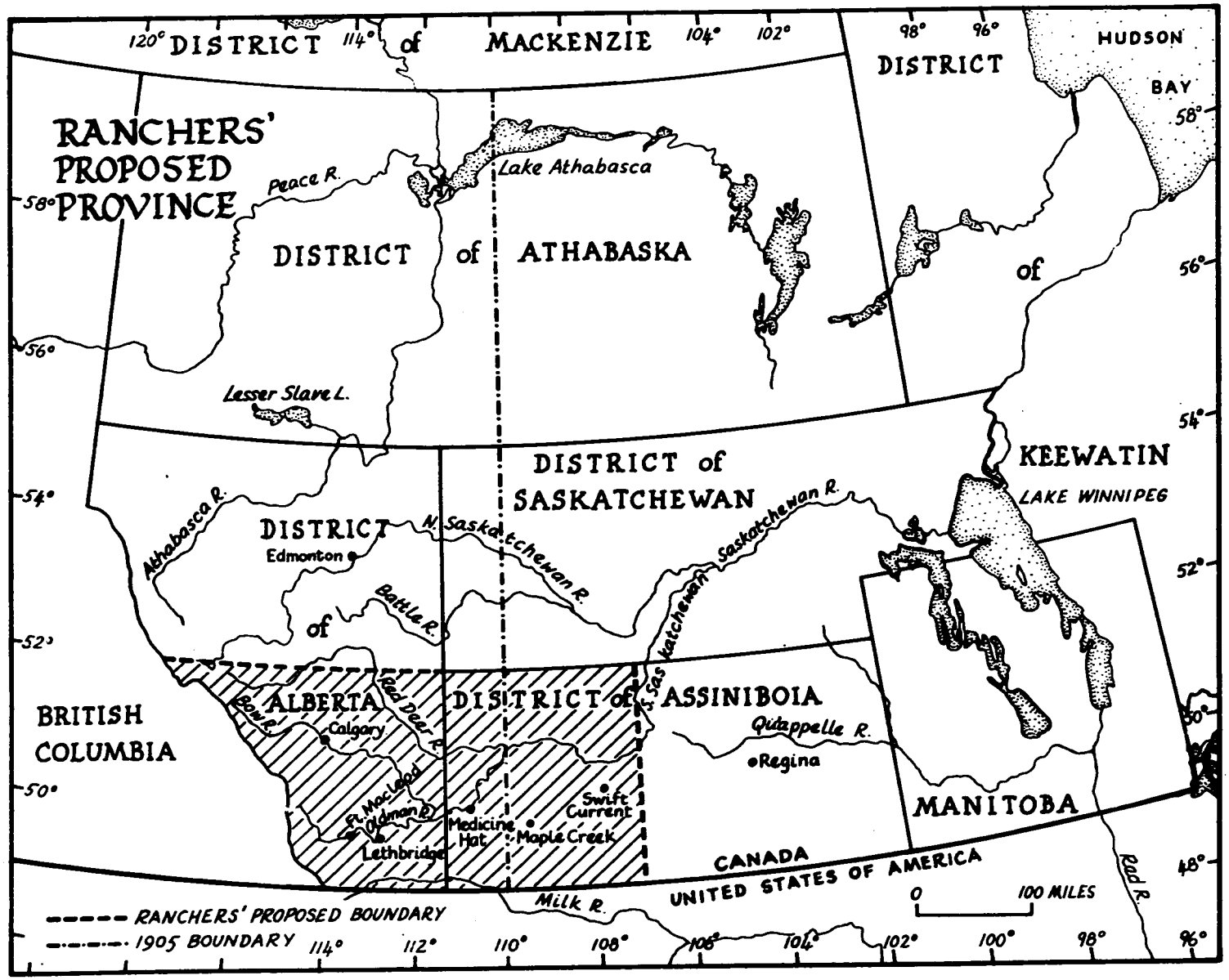
[2]W.S.G.A. Papers, B1, F3, Minute Book, p. 161, 11 May 1905. Cattlemen's opposition also reported in, North West Territories, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1904, Appendix A., Territorial Cattle Breeders Association, p. 138.


RANCHERS' PROPOSED PROVINCE
DISTRICT of MACKENZIE
DISTRICT of ATHABASKA
DISTRICT of SASKATCHEWAN
DISTRICT of ASSINIBOIA
DISTRICT of KEEWATIN
DISTRICT of
ALBERTA
BRITISH COLUMBIA
MANITOBA
HUDSON BAY
LAKE WINNIPEG
Lake Athabasca
Peace R.
Lesser Slave L.
Athabasca R.
N. Saskatchewan R.
Saskatchewan R.
Battle R.
Red Deer R.
Bow R.
Oldman R.
Qu'appelle R.
Red R.
Milk R.
Edmonton
Calgary
Lethbridge
Medicine Hat
Maple Creek
Swift Current
Regina
Ft. MacLeod
CANADA
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
0 100 MILES
RANCHERS' PROPOSED BOUNDARY
1905 BOUNDARY
120° 114° 104° 102° 98° 96°
58° 56° 54° 52° 50° 48°
114° 112° 110° 108° 106° 104° 102° 100° 98° 96°

during the first half of the decade. Oliver spoke for those who were inclined to view the west entirely in terms of what had come to be popularly known as the "mixed farm", which, it was alleged, would supply both the needs of the nation as well as export requirements for grain and cattle, and at the same time create a populous and independent citizenry that would comprise the matrix of a growing and progressive nation. Many Canadians of the period showed a tendency to dismiss the ranchers and the semi-arid region as forming only a small part of the western picture. In other quarters the stereotype of the monopolistic cattle baron prevailed. The picture here was one of a landed and reactionary establishment stand in the way of settlement and "progress." The real problem was that few people really understood the workings of the beef export industry and even fewer appreciated the region's climatic or physiographic characteristics. The tradition of small farm homes for poor men lived on amongst politicians who did not trouble themselves to learn that all prairie lands were not identical to the farm country of Ontario, of Manitoba or of the Qu'Appelle Valley. Yet distance from the southwest was not the sole agent of error for there were within the region itself thousands of newly arrived settlers who expressed their confidence that modern agriculture could surmount climatic deficiencies. This confidence was such that it would not be destroyed until several periods of drought had been experienced. The aridity

experienced in some parts of southern Alberta was so severe in 1907 that the settlers who were attempting to farm near Coutts on the American border had to be supplied with hay, oats and even chicken-feed. Yet as one government official observed " . . . the great bulk of the new settlement [during 1907] is going on non-irrigable lands. . . . There appears to be a growing belief" he remarked "that 'dry farming' may make irrigation unnecessary altogether, and through widespread cultivation, not only retain but attract precipitation."[3]

The ranchers, who had faced Oliver's pro-settlement arguments for over two decades, anticipated the worst and the actions of the new Minister soon proved that their apprehensions were well founded. Within two months of taking office Oliver instructed his staff to make the necessary arrangements for the withdrawal and sale of water reserve lands.[4] Department officials began by withdrawing all shelter reserves or driftways that had been set aside in the foothill country and which usually adjoined water reserves. It was decided that these lands would be made available for sale in the same manner as regular Crown lands.[5] As far as

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[3]Canada, Department of the Interior, Annual Report, 1906-1907, Report of the Commissioner of Immigration, p. 97.

[4]RG15, B2a, Vol. 161, 141376, F. Oliver to G. W. Ryley, 6 June 1905.

[5]Ibid., Memorandum, W. W. Cory, Deputy Minister, 21 October 1905.

the stock water reserves were concerned Oliver was determined to get rid of most of those in settled areas and by December 1905, approximately 200 parcels totalling over 100,000 acres, of what had formerly been considered key strategic locations, were selected for disposal.[6] When the Minister was informed that an inspection of each property would delay the sale nearly a year, he directed that the sale proceed without inspection, with the advertised provision that any parcel listed might be withdrawn from sale. The reason for this proviso, as an interesting internal department memorandum explained, was to protect " . . . the rights and improvements of any person who has placed improvements thereon."[7] This represented a complete reversal of Departmental land policy in the grazing country. For twenty-five years the government had refused to recognise squatters' rights on closed leases or water reserves. The numerous squatter evictions and repeated public warnings are testimony to the Conservative government's determination in this regard. Though closed leases no longer existed when the Liberals came to power in 1896, Clifford Sifton had maintained the policy and refused to countenance squatting on stock watering reserves during his administration. While Oliver had been

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[6] Ibid., Department to W. W. Stuart, Inspector of Ranches, 5 December 1905.

[7] Ibid., Memorandum, W. W. Cory to R. H. Campbell, 9 January 1906.

unable to convince Sifton, his attitude towards the reserve system and to squatters was none the less made very plain whenever the opportunity permitted. In a letter to the Minister during the government's first year in office Oliver wrote: "I hope there is no likelihood of the policy formerly in vogue being continued, namely, to wait until a settler takes up a spring and then fire him off and reserve it."[8] In Oliver's mind such squatters were legitimate settlers who had been persecuted unfairly by wealthy ranchers opposed to settlement. At the same time he was not unmindful of the fact that most of the big cattlemen were stalwart supporters of the Conservative party. Once in office Oliver was determined to assist those squatters who had sought his assistance over the preceding decade and, in cases where illegal improvements had been made on water reserves by squatters, Oliver insisted that they be given the opportunity to purchase the property at a private sale where they would not be outbid by those with more capital.[9]

At the first auctions held during June 1906 at Calgary, High River, Pincher Creek, Macleod, Lethbridge and Medicine Hat, over 25,000 acres were sold.[10] During 1907

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[8]PAC, Sifton Papers, Microfilm C465, F. Oliver to C. Sifton, 18 August 1897.

[9]RG15, B2a, Vol. 161, 141376, Circular to Dominion Land Agents, 12 December 1905.

[10]Ibid., Vol. 162, 141376, W. W. Stuart to R. H. Campbell, 27 July 1906. Parcels remaining unsold were held available to the first applicant at $3.00 per acre.

and 1908 the remaining reserves were inspected and those located in what was still mainly ranching country were retained while the others were listed for withdrawal. A second sale in June 1910 disposed of 60 parcels, and at a third auction the following year an additional 10,000 acres were transferred from public to private ownership.[11] The sales caused little dissent amongst the ranch community. Cattlemen had decided that the only reliable security was that provided by actual ownership and as long as the sales of water reserves were by auction they did have the opportunity to purchase those that were essential to their operations. Second to outright ownership the stockmen were prepared to put their trust in closed leases, and it was over this issue that they clashed most sharply with Oliver.

In early 1905 the stockmen had finally gained from Sifton what they had been after for five years. The new lease regulations that were given Royal Assent on February 15 provided for the issue of both open and closed leases. The open lease provided for the withdrawal of lands for homestead entry and sale, whereas the closed leases did not. Neither form of lease provided for complete cancellation upon giving two years notice as had been the case with all previous leases. The only qualification was that before a closed lease could be granted the Minister had to be

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[11] Ibid., Vol. 163, 141376, Sales, June 1911.

satisfied that lands included in the lease were not fit for agricultural purposes.[12] The ranchers' satisfaction was however short-lived; Sifton resigned later the same month and Oliver took office in April. In the interval only six closed leases were granted under the new regulations. The fortunate six included the Milk River Cattle Company (60,000 acres), the Glengarry Ranche Company (13,794 acres), George Lane (43,736 acres), Messrs. Brown, Bedingfield et. al. (55,747 acres) and the Grand Forks Cattle Company (two leases of 47,218 and 47,615 acres respectively).[13] The fact that the two major shareholders of the latter company, J. H. Ross and J. D. McGregor, were important western Liberals and close political friends of the ex-Minister might explain the

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[12] RG15, B2a, Vol. 172, 145330, pt. 4, Memorandum to F. Oliver, 15 June 1905.

[13] Ibid., The two major shareholders of the Grand Forkes Cattle Co., J. H. Ross and J. D. McGregor were stalwart Sifton Liberals. The former, a Moose Jaw rancher, was elected to the North West Council in 1883 and was a member of the North West Assembly from 1888 to 1901. In the latter year he was appointed Commissioner of the Yukon Territory and was called to the Senate in 1904. McGregor was from Sifton's hometown of Brandon and had also been a Yukon appointee. The political background of the new leaseholders did not go undetected by the Conservatives and these examples were used widely to substantiate the charges of graft and corruption levied against the Liberals by the Conservatives in the 1908 election campaign. See for example: PAC, Pamphlet Library, n.a. "Facts for the People: Pages from the Record of the Laurier Administration, from 1906 to 1908," pp. 11-13; Herbert B. Ames, M.P. "Western Heritage and how it is being Squandered by the Laurier Government," 1908, pp. 18-21; n.a. "A Session's Disclosures, Second Series: Some Transactions of the Laurier Administration Exposed in the Session of 1907," pp. 58-71.

government's largesse in this instance. Oliver's amended regulations which followed in July prevented others from obtaining such prized closed and irrevocable leases. Under the new provisions leases of up to 60 acres for every head of cattle owned, to a maximum of 100,000 acres, could be granted for up to 21 years, but the Minister could, for any reason, cancel the lease on giving the lessee two years notice. The new leases were not open to withdrawal for homestead entry, but lands were not to be granted without confirmation from the Inspector of Ranches that they were unfit for agricultural purposes.[14] The official regulations were further tightened by the explicit instructions given by Oliver to his staff. In keeping with his view of the squatter as the virtuous underdog the Minister ordered that if there were any homesteaders or squatters within the tract applied for who owned stock, 60 acres per head was to be reserved for them around their holdings. If stock was not owned a reserve of 640 acres adjoining the settler's 160 acres was to be held.[15] The Inspector of Ranches was informed that

> In inspecting and reporting upon applications for grazing leases you will hereafter not recognize climatic conditions as deciding whether or not the land is suitable for agricultural purposes. Only land that is too

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[14] Ibid., F. Oliver to His Excellency, The Governor General-in-Council, 27 July 1905.

[15] Ibid., F. Oliver to G. W. Ryley, 5 August 1905.

> gravelly, stony, sandy, or of too rough a surface for agriculture, is to be classed as not fit for that purpose, and as being suitable to be covered by grazing leases.[16]

It is obvious that Oliver did not intend any significant expansion of leased acreage and during his administration the area under lease remained relatively constant, as is shown in Table VIII. The intrinsic merit of the lease system made no impression on Oliver and it was only because of the political pressure that the big ranchers were able to exert, that a token system, which at any point in time never offered cattlemen more than two years security, was maintained. Unlike any previous Minister, Oliver undertook direct personal supervision of the department's Timber and Grazing Branch, so that decisions at practially all levels were made by the Minister.

TABLE VIII

LEASES 1906-1911[17]

| Year | No. of Leases | Acres | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Man. | Sask. | Alta. | B.C. Railway Belt | Total |
| 1906 | 787 | 6,688 | 899,765 | 1,651,397 | 444,655 | 3,002,505 |
| 1907 | 939 | 12,642 | 632,493 | 2,132,218 | 481,418 | 3,259,271 |
| 1908 | 990 | 6,174 | 605,159 | 2,088,736 | 491,532 | 3,601,700 |
| 1909 | 971 | 4,814 | 570,551 | 1,737,874 | 456,825 | 2,770,064 |
| 1910 | 1,166 | 1,105 | 848,283 | 2,023,169 | 420,982 | 3,293,539 |
| 1911 | 1,424 | 945 | 1,145,966 | 2,001,234 | 406,152 | 3,554,297 |

[16] Ibid., F. Oliver to W. W. Stuart, 9 February 1906.

[17] Canada, Department of Interior, Annual Reports, 1906-1912, Report on Timber, Grazing and Irrigation. Oliver preferred to assign small leases of several sections to

Apart from the difficulty of convincing the department that the land applied for was totally unfit for agricultural purposes, once the lease was obtained the rancher never knew whether or not he would still have the lease two years hence. For this reason the main thrust of the stockmen's political activities for the next five years were directed towards improving the terms of leasehold tenure. To this end the W.S.G.A. sent repeated memorials to Ottawa urging that the two years clause be withdrawn and that irrevocable tenure of at least ten years be granted.[18] It was pointed out that the cattle export industry was in serious difficulty and that with only two years security cattlemen could not justify the expense of properly fencing the tract, of constructing adequate shelter, or of building a herd of costly breeding stock. While the association received courteous replies from Oliver or the Deputy Minister that the matter would be given "careful consideration," the

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mixed farmers or small stock raisers which partly accounts for the growing number of leaseholders during this period.

Land comprising the British Columbia railway belt consisted of those lands surrendered "in trust" to the federal government by British Columbia to be used as part of the C.P.R. land grant. In the end the railway confined its land selection mainly to the prairie provinces and most of the land in the railway belt was returned eventually to British Columbia.

[18] RG15, B2a, Vol. 172, 145330, pt. 4, W.S.G.A. to F. Oliver, 22 May 1909; Memorandum B. York to F. Oliver, 1 June 1909; B. York to Fetherston, 14 September 1910; Department to W.S.G.A., 22 September 1910; W.S.G.A. Papers B1, F3, Minute Book, p. 189, 14 May 1908, p. 200, 1 May 1910.

true attitude of the department is reflected in the memorandum that accompanied one of the stockgrowers' petitions to Oliver's desk, wherein the official in charge of the Timber and Grazing section surmised: "As I presume you have no intention of meeting the request of the Association I would suggest that an acknowledgement be sent to the Secretary and that no further action be taken."[19]

Oliver's position in this regard remained fixed despite increasing support for the ranchers' position even among important Liberals. In April 1910 the Calgary Albertan, the leading Liberal paper in the south, warned that the ranching industry was in a critical state and that unless changes were made in the lease regulations it would soon disappear. The Albertan insisted that there were large areas unfit for agriculture but suitable for cattle raising and pointedly remarked that "this is no reflection upon the country and is a fact."[20] The editor caught the essence of the problem when he observed that the authorities seemed to have assumed that the stockmen were restricting the settler and that " . . . the rancher in some way [was] keeping back the progress of the country." The Albertan argued that this was not the case, that it was senseless to destroy so important an industry, and that longer term irrevocable leases should

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[19]RG15, B2a, Vol. 172, 145330, pt. 4, Memorandum, B. York to F. Oliver, 1 June 1909.

[20]Albertan (Calgary), 28 May 1910.

be granted so that ranching could be conducted in a business-like manner. It took four to five years to stock a ranch properly and as long as the two year cancellation clause hung over their heads most cattlemen could not contemplate improvements to the property or the herd. The government was also pressed for amendment by the Calgary Board of Trade where the ranchers' influence was very strong.[21] Through the support of the Calgary Board a resolution in favour of improving lease tenure was adopted at the annual convention of the Western Board of Trade. Support was also forthcoming from parts of the recently settled foothill country where many farmers had already begun to transfer their interest to stock raising.[22] But the Minister continued adamant. In his view there were very few sections of the country where agriculture could not be practiced and for this reason he was not prepared to see extensive areas withdrawn from settlement through a long term irrevocable lease.

> ". . . the Government is faced with the fact," he informed one group "that during the past ten years vast areas of the country which had been considered unsuited for grain growing and permanently devoted to grazing, have actually been brought under profitable cultivation. Judged by the records of the past, it is a most difficult matter to decide where possible cultivation ends and where permanent grazing rights should begin."23

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[21] RG15, B2a, Vol. 172, 145330, pt. 4, Clipping, Prince Albert Times, 20 May 1910.

[22] Ibid., Resolution, High River Branch No. 157 of the United Farmers of Alberta, 5 October 1910.

[23] Ibid., F. Oliver to D. E. Riley, 12 December 1910.

Oliver was determined not to err on the side of the latter.

Another aspect of federal policy that was initially of deep interest to the ranching community concerned the role of the Royal North West Mounted Police now that the region was no longer a federal Territory. Though the question did not rank in importance with the lease question or land matters and did not occupy the ranchers' attention for the entire period, the close and long-standing relationship between the policeman and the rancher in the southwest made this issue one of sentiment as well as economics. It appeared for a time in 1905 that responsibility for law enforcement would be turned over to the governments of Saskatchewan and Alberta and the jurisdiction of the Mounted Police confined to the remaining northern territories. The ranchers were certain that they would not receive the same consideration and extensive protection from the new provincial government as they had from the federal police for the past quarter of a century. In December 1905 the W.S.G.A. forwarded to Ottawa a memorial outlining the vital necessity of the continued presence of the R.N.W.M.P. in the south.

> We desire to point out that without the protection of this body of men, the ranching industry would suffer in many ways. Amongst the many now settling in the North West are some of the worst criminals that the country has known, as the records of the courts for the past two or three years will show. Another phase of the matter is this: that the small farmers will persist in burning around their places and the fires frequently get out of control and burn large tracts of country, which is most ruinous to the stock growing industry, and

> it is only through the vigilance of the Police that we can carry on our business. We realize more and more that without the Police the stock industry would be in a very critical condition. We therefore strongly urge upon your Government the necessity there is for the continuance, and if possible the increase of the R.N.W.M.P.[24]

The stockmen's interest was further advanced a short time later through a personal visit to Ottawa by George Lane, a leading member of the association and one of the region's largest ranchers. After his interview with the Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier, and Fred White, the Controller of the R.N.W.M.P., Lane informed his fellow rancher A. E. Cross, who was also a prominent Calgary businessman:

> Now I am satisfied if the ranchmen and businessmen do not take this matter up, there will be changes; in fact I am told this. The Controller will be in Calgary in a short time and be sure and get a few of the good solid men together to meet him.[25]

Lane's comment that White was on his way to Edmonton to meet provincial officials and that " . . . if the local government should take this out of the hands of the North-West Mounted Police, you know what that will mean," was well understood. While Cross solicited the support of his fellow businessmen, the campaign in Ottawa was continued by M. S. McCarthy, the newly elected Conservative M.P. for Calgary, and the wealthy meat packer and rancher, Pat Burns. At meetings with the Controller, the Minister of Justice and Sir Wilfrid the

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[24] W.S.G.A. Papers, B1, F3, Minute Book, p. 163, 7 December 1905.

[25] GAI, Cross Papers, B58, F463, G. Lane to A. E. Cross, 5 February 1906.

cattlemen gained the "emphatic" assurance that it was

> . . . not the intention of the government to withdraw the force from the Southern or central parts of Alberta, and that the government [would] keep up and continue to maintain the first line at the boundary, and second line along the main line of the C.P.R. . . .[26]

While conceding this, the Ministers were not prepared to abandon their plan to press the provincial administration to take responsibility for regular police duties in the northern region, despite the caution tendered by the spokesman of the ranchers that such a concession might be " . . . the thin end of the wedge, and the force would be abolished by reason of the fact that the greater power in the provinces is located where there is perhaps none too good feeling towards the police."[27] In the end the provinces' reluctance to face the expense of establishing their own police force resulted in the continued presence of the R.N.W.M.P. over the entire region. Had the provincial governments been less economical it seems that the cattlemen might have persuaded Ottawa to make their region an exception. The ranchers' success in this regard manifests the growing prominence of the new men, Lane, Cross and Burns, who, along with A. J. Maclean, the man who had initiated the police campaign within the W.S.G.A., were already known in Calgary and the cattle country as "The Big Four."

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[26] Ibid., B58, F464, M. S. McCarthy to A. E. Cross, 19 March 1906.

[27] Ibid.

As the police issue suggests the ranchers' relations with the new provincial government were cautious at best. The cattlemen who had voted mainly Conservative in Alberta's first election and who had helped elect one of the two successful Conservative candidates, were confronted with a Liberal government whose support rested securely in the farming country from Calgary northward and in the capital city of Edmonton. The new administration was basically a farmers' government and the larger cattlemen apprehensively awaited expected legislation regarding herd and pound laws that confined stock to enclosed pastures, fencing and road allowances, and especially school and improvement district taxation. While waiting to determine the government's direction and expecting the worst, the cattlemen were dealt a staggering blow from another quarter.

The winter of 1906-07 was the worst ever experienced in the ranching country. This seemingly unending winter began with a heavy snow storm the third week in November and the weather became progressively more vicious, so that by December 8 temperatures had descended to -28, -35, -30 and -25 degrees at Calgary, Gleichen, Macleod and Medicine Hat respectively.[28] Apart from a short break near Christmas temperatures remained frigid. January was even more severe. At Gleichen about fifty miles east of Calgary, where many

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[28]Alberta, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1906, pp. 92-93; 1907, pp. 48-49, 54.

of the large foothill ranchers had taken leases to counter declining acreages in the west, the average temperature for the month was -15 degrees with the minimum reaching -51 degrees. Temperatures elsewhere in the ranch country were only fractionally better as the indispensable chinook failed to make its accustomed appearance. During February there was some moderation after the middle of the month but not before all centres in the south had recorded temperatures of -40 degrees or lower. In March temperatures continued to improve gradually but not enough to melt the heavy snowfall; thus the ranchers, their supplies of feed exhausted, were unable to turn their cattle out to graze, and the starving animals that had managed to survive the desperate winter continued to perish.

The plight of the stockmen is presented vividly in a series of letters exchanged during the winter between A. E. Cross and C. L. Douglass. During the summer of 1906 Cross had made an arrangement to bring excess "A7" stock from his ranch in the foothills to a lease held by Douglass along the Red Deer River northeast of Bassano. The first hint of difficulty came about the middle of December when Douglass informed Cross that the winter to this point had been by far the worst he had experienced in the country and that the cattle were difficult to drive from the sheltered river valley to feed on the benchland above.[29] By early

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[29]Cross Papers, B59, F467, C. L. Douglass to A. E. Cross, 16 December 1906.

January the feeling of impending tragedy mounted. After passing by train along the Canadian Pacific Railway between Bassano and Brooks, Cross reported about 1,000 head of starving and dying cattle along the tracks and inquired of Douglass if any "A7" cattle were that far south.[30] In his next letter of January 20 Douglass explained that for the previous ten days the temperature had stayed between -30 and -50 degrees yet he and the men, even the cook, had been compelled to ride every day to feed the 300 or so head they had gathered close to the ranch and to drive others out to feed. He confided that enough feed existed for another month, that the cattle were still strong and added optimistically " . . . it can't last forever."[31] In the next report, a week later, the optimism had vanished and the tone was one of despair; it seemed that this most vicious of winters would indeed last forever. Douglass informed Cross that they were doing their best to keep strays from drifting to the south but it was becoming more difficult for man or beast to endure. "The hardest part," Douglass wrote,

> is hauling [feed], I have got two teams going every day two loads each, and there is hardly a day passes without a blizzard or wind to fill up the trails. One can hardly imagine the drifts, stacks are buried in snow and a crust on the level ground, all the flats have been belly deep to a horse since November, so that

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[30] Ibid., A. E. Cross to C. L. Douglass, 5 January 1907.

[31] Ibid., B59, F471, C. L. Douglass to A. E. Cross, 20 January 1907.

> the cattle are and have been living on brush. It has been [so] cold with winds when one breaks trails and puts them out on the banks to patches of sage or grass the poor brutes fight you right back to shelter. I am astonished sometimes how well some of them look yet.[32]

By this point stored feed was getting very low and attempts were made to plow the snow and expose the grass underneath but as Douglass reported, " . . . one can drive them to death now before they will stay out" on the range to feed. Douglass had ridden every day of the month collecting yearlings, taking as long as three days to move those along the river back to the ranch, until they were feeding all that could be managed. From this point, as he informed Cross, there was no use looking for the weak and the dying. Cross agreed that there was no use feeding those that were going to die anyway and suggested that " . . . it would be advisable to knock them on the head, so as not to waste any hay . . ."[33] The long awaited chinook finally came in the middle of February but the deep snow that remained well into March aggravated the losses already incurred.

Elsewhere on the plains the situation was much the same. In temperatures of -20 to -50 degrees cowboys rode daily trying to drive cattle to feed and to hold them on their home ranges. Despite such adverse conditions cattlemen

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[32] Ibid., B59, F470, C. L. Douglas to A. E. Cross, 27 January 1907.

[33] Ibid., B59, F471, A. E. Cross to C. L. Douglass, 1 February 1907.

spared no effort, even life itself, to save their herds. The desperate struggle for survival in the Cypress Hills country southeast of Medicine Hat was recorded by one rancher:

> Every morning the cattle would leave their shelter and head out on the wind swept ridges where they could find some grazing. They would stay until the wind became unbearable and then they would file back to shelter. Their trails became hard and frozen and they were all footsore. Many of them would bed down at night and turn their heads around on their sides, trying to keep what warmth they could in their poor freezing bodies. In the morning we would ride and find them in this position yet. They would be floundering around trying to get up, their necks so cold they were unable to straighten them out. We would have to dismount, take hold of the animal's head and help straighten out its neck. Then, after a few moments, the animal would flop around and eventually manage to come to a stand on sore, half frozen feet.[34]

Cattle in the sheltered foothill country did not fare as badly. Though the manager of Cross' home ranch reported in January that the weather was worse than that experienced during the long-remembered winter of 1886-87, losses were relatively small.[35] The decimation suffered on the plains east of the Calgary-Macleod trail seemed to confirm what most foothill ranchers had always feared about the open prairie and the plans of many to sell smaller western holdings to move to less crowded lands in the east, as many had done in the preceding half decade, were reappraised.

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[34] P. S. Long, Seventy Years a Cowboy (Saskatoon: Freeman Publishing Co. Ltd., 1965), p. 58.

[35] Cross Papers, B59, F468, A. McCallum to A. E. Cross, 19 January 1907; B59, F472, A. McCallum to A. E. Cross, 6 February 1907.

In March stockmen began to assess their losses and to look for the scattered remnants of herds that had drifted miles from their home ranches. Northern cattle moved south in the thousands where, if they did not perish along fence lines, they collected in the sheltered valleys of southern rivers.[36] When the final reckoning had been made many of the big ranches had losses in the thousands. It was alleged for example that the Two Bar Ranch of Gordon, Ironside and Fares Ltd. near Gleichen lost 11,000 head from a total herd of 13,000.[37] The big cattle companies in the southeast, the Texas owned Turkey Track Ranch, the Bloom Cattle Company, the Matador Land and Cattle Company, and the "76" Ranch all suffered equally. "It is a terrible thing," wrote one embittered rancher who gathered only five head on the spring round-up,

> to see one's 'bunch', practically representing one's worldly wealth on four legs, diminishing day by day, and to stand by powerless to stem the ebb. To come upon four year old steers so thin and poor that they are unable to stand. To see a cow's horns protruding from some snow bank and dig down to find your brand on her ribs. . . .[38]

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[36] Ibid., B59, F471, C. L. Douglass to A. E. Cross 22 March 1907. Through the winter various ranchers reported bands of cattle going southwards. See for example, Ibid., B59, F472, C. McKinnon to A. E. Cross, 31 January 1907.

[37] GAI, J. Martin, "Notes on R. A. 'Dick' Allen, Gordon Ironside and Fares Ltd., Two Bar Ranch."

[38] R. Stock, Confessions of a Tenderfoot (New York: Henry Holt, 1913), p. 60.

While it is impossible to estimate total losses in the ranch country, individual ranchers suffered losses ranging from 5 to 90 per cent. Perhaps the best measure of the havoc visited upon the ranching community during the winter of 1906-07 is the number of ranch sales during the summer and autumn of 1907.[39]

In some quarters however the disaster went unlamented. In his section of the Department of Agriculture's 1908 Annual Report the Recorder of Brands was sure there should be no cause for alarm.

> At first sight so many men going out of the cattle business might appear to mean a serious loss to the southern part of the province, but it must be borne in mind that the advent of winter wheat, grown for the past few years, has virtually displaced the rancher in a number of districts, and the transition from a ranching to a farming district was thus made easy.[40]

From the rancher's point of view the transition imposed by a winter of such destruction would never be remembered as "easy". Even the C.P.R. was not quite so callous, and in recognition of the magnitude of ranchers' losses cancelled the unpaid rentals due from those who held leases of railway lands in the irrigation block.

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[39] Alberta, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1907, Report of the Deputy Minister, pp. 6-7. "The unusually severe winter caused the death of thousands of cattle and, it is feared, put out of business many of the small ranchers." See also Alberta, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1908, Appendix B, pp. 229-230. The Alberta Cattle Breeder's Association noted that many cattlemen had decided to sell-out and urged those considering such a move to reconsider, assuring that better days lay ahead.

[40] Ibid., 1908, Report of the Recorder of Brands, p.132.

While the big cattlemen seemed threatened with extinction the government and farmers in the south were alike convinced that they had discovered a crop that, with their dry-land farming techniques, would bring assured prosperity. The crop, as the brand recorder observed, was winter wheat. Its initial success was used by the new provincial government in a campaign to encourage further settlement in the south. Cattlemen thus faced the continued pressure of colonization in the few remaining unsettled areas into which they had been pushed. The main focus of this last agrarian advance was the Medicine Hat region. Indicative of the fundamental change occurring in this area was the tone of an article that appeared in the Medicine Hat News in May 1906, entitled "Bad For Ranchers" and sub-titled "But Their Loss is the Country's Gain and They Must Retreat."

> Reports received here from the country lying south of the C.P.R., Swift Current, Saskatchewan and Alberta, show that the ranchers there are gradually being driven out by the increasing line of settlement. Germans coming in from the north are fast filling up the country, closing the water holes, and gridironing the district with barbed wire fences. These conditions are rendering things desperate. Many are going northward, and there starting ranching again undisturbed by the newcomers. This whole district, which includes Walsh and other former prosperous ranching country, comprises some 6,000 square miles, and has long been regarded by Canadian farmers as unusually good for ranching on account of its drinking places. The German-Americans are, however, demonstrating that it is as good wheat land as any in the provinces, and it is fast filling up.[41]

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[41] Medicine Hat News, 10 May 1906, quoting a Regina source of 8 May.

In another section sub-titled "Americans Purchased Almost 10,000 Acres at Medicine Hat this Week" the paper reported that a party from Ohio, Indiana, Minnesota and Nebraska had purchased fifteen sections and applied for a large number of homesteads within a ten mile radius of the town. It was noted that the Americans planned to go into "extensive wheat raising" and it was predicted that Medicine Hat would at last " . . . get its share of the great incoming tide of immigration."[42] The town's rival paper, the Medicine Hat Times, added enthusiastically the following year that the area had been judged particularly suitable for winter wheat by farmers who were arriving by the hundred and that Medicine Hat was in fact "the Coming District." The area had always been known as the centre of the ranching industry, the paper editorialized, and

> naturally, the rancher had striven to retain it. It took years for the outsider to discover that the vast prairies over which roamed thousands of cattle, and had never felt the plow, were only waiting for the touch of the farmer to blossom forth into great tracts of wheat fields.[43]

Ironically, or perhaps fittingly, the American cattlemen who had retreated into the region during the previous decade had been followed by the people who had driven them from their previous homes. In this part of the Canadian west the competitors for control of the grazing lands were basically part

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[42] Ibid.

[43] Medicine Hat Times, 20 August 1907.

of the same group that had commenced the struggle a generation earlier along a line extending from Texas to Montana. Thus it is on the Canadian range that the American ranchers and farmers enacted the last chapter in the struggle for control of the North American semi-arid region. As one of the large ranchers from Texas bitterly lamented in Medicine Hat in 1907, the farmers who had driven him northward from Old Mexico and eventually across the Canadian border, were, with the winter of 1906-07, about to force him out for good.[44]

In the heart of the old ranching country in Pincher Creek the talk was the same--of farming and winter wheat. The editor of the Pincher Creek Echo proclaimed that not only did the honour of first growing this popular cereal belong to his town, but the Pincher Creek country was also the best place in the province to grow such wheat, as was confirmed by that community's capture of the top awards for winter wheat at the recent Chicago Worlds Fair.[45] The victory of "wheat ranching," as the Echo phrased it, over cattle ranching seemed confirmed during the summer of 1907 with the announcement that the directors of the Walrond Ranch had decided to terminate their ranching operations after twenty-five years as the dominant power in the Porcupine Hills north of the town. The cattle herd was sold for approximately $250,000, and the 38,000 deeded acres were retained to be sold as

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[44]Long, p. 70.

[45]Pincher Creek Echo, 23 August 1907.

market conditions warranted.[46] The sale of the Walrond, along with disposal of the 66,000 acre Cochrane Ranch for six dollars an acre to the Mormon Church the year before seemed in the minds of most southerners to mark the end of an era. Larger ranches remained, but these two, the oldest and most prominent of the big company ranches that had established their herds as the buffalo departed, had become by 1905, like the police, an intimate part of the region's historical experience. When people thought of ranching in either negative or positive terms they thought particularly of these and several others of the original ranches. Thus the demise of these two old companies had a definite psychological impact and many accepted this as a sign that the day of the rancher had definitely passed, though others with more insight realized that it was really the day of the old cattle kingdom that had ended.

As with the towns of Medicine Hat and Pincher Creek, the vision in the mind of the provincial government that bespoke progress and development was that of the wheat field rather than the cowboy on the open range. The Alberta Department of Agriculture even went so far as to give this vision substance in the form of a three dimensional display erected at the Dominion Exhibition at Calgary and the Canadian National Exhibition at Toronto in 1908. In the

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[46] Ibid., 21 June 1907.

department's words:

> the main feature of [the exhibit] is a field of standing grain with a cowboy in the distance. The title of the scene is 'Another trail cut off.' The idea was to represent the rapid development of the province from a ranching country to that of a grain-growing one. The cowboy is following a familiar trail which again appears in the foreground on the other side of the wheat field but is suddenly stopped by a wire fence and a field of grain.[47]

In addition to advertising in leading American magazines and newspapers throughout the United States, the government promoted agricultural settlement in the south by sponsoring "Dry Farming Meetings" in southern communities. In 1908 a Professor H. W. Campbell of Lincoln, Nebraska was brought to Medicine Hat, Cardston, Lethbridge, Pincher Creek and Gleichen to instruct farmers how best to grow cereal crops in the dry region.[48] In subsequent years delegates from the south were sent each year to the annual "Dry Farming Congress" in various American centres.[49] The dramatic increase in wheat acreage in five seasons, as shown in Table IX, is testimony to the region's popularity and the government's success in encouraging cereal agriculture during this period, and incidentally, to the pressure on the declining range.

This rapid agrarian advance after the turn of the century forced those ranchers who wished to remain in business to retreat to deeded holdings, or move into more

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[47] Alberta, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1908, 'Immigration and Colonization', pp. 58-59.

[48] Ibid., p. 137.

[49] Ibid., 1909, p. 69; 1910, p. 95.

TABLE IX

WHEAT ACREAGE 1906-1910[50]

| Crop District | Year | Winter Wheat Agreage | Spring Wheat Acreage |
|---|---|---|---|
| Medicine Hat | 1906 | 6 | 6,820 |
| | 1910 | 1,829 | 12,098 |
| Lethbridge | 1906 | 7,758 | 9,225 |
| | 1910 | 4,580 | 29,603 |
| Cardston | 1906 | 7,438 | 2,855 |
| | 1910 | 32,189 | 11,044 |
| Macleod | 1906 | 762 | 2,194 |
| | 1910 | 5,580 | 10,874 |
| Pincher Creek | 1906 | 9,704 | 3,599 |
| | 1910 | 15,942 | 559 |
| Claresholm | 1906 | 11,593 | 20,230 |
| | 1910 | 7,054 | 58,134 |
| Nanton | 1906 | 4,038 | 3,072 |
| | 1910 | 4,819 | 22,444 |
| High River | 1906 | 2,738 | 1,157 |
| | 1910 | 12,840 | 10,013 |
| Okotoks | 1906 | 565 | 1,213 |
| | 1910 | 3,336 | 4,961 |
| Gleichen | 1906 | 588 | 484 |
| | 1910 | 8,682 | 21,804 |

marginal areas. While much ill-feeling toward the farmer remained throughout the southwest, it was in the latter, on the periphery of farm settlement, where the traditional acrimony between rancher and farmer remained strongest. On the defensive and without the support of William Pearce and his water reserves or an acceptable lease system, some cattlemen resorted to other tactics to hold the advancing line of farm settlement. The usual weapon was the rancher's cattle.

[50] Ibid., 1910, pp. 45, 52-53.

Cowboys would graze a large herd immediately outside a settler's fence. When the herd finally moved elsewhere the ground was left, as one farmer described it, " . . . about as bare as an asphalt pavement,"[51] thus denying the settler the use of nearby grazing land. At worst, the presence of the cattlemen's great herds could be even more damaging, for with encouragement and sometimes by accident range cattle could destroy fences, trample crops and eat the farmer's stored feed supply. The method was old and its effectiveness is attested by the numerous pleas for protection in Department of Interior files.[52] Others appealed, usually anonymously, in the columns of the public press. One such entreaty posed the rhetorical question, "Will the ranchers succeed in their attempt to starve out the settlers?", and then answered, "It is this question alone that is causing a number of settlers along the Milk River to desert their homes, and a larger number contemplating [sic] the same movement."[53] The writer argued that as long as the locality was overrun by thousands of cattle settlers had no chance. "To see the great numbers

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[51] Lethbridge Herald, 27 August 1910.

[52] RG15, B2a, Vol. 126, 544923, A. A. Thompson to The Department of the Interior, 11 December 1907; Vol. 131, 552704, F. Settle to F. Oliver, 23 May 1908; G. J. Elliott to The Department of the Interior, 19 May 1908.

[53] Lethbridge Herald, 22 August 1910.

of horses, cattle, and sheep," he wrote, "reminds one of the olden times and the buffalo instead of a country settled up [since] 1908." He charged that ranchers deliberately drove cattle on to the settlers' premises at night and related how men had stayed up every night for a month guarding a green patch of oats or a garden only to succumb in the end to exhaustion and be eaten out when their vigilance ended. Though the ranchers did not trouble themselves to keep their cattle away it was probably the severe drought of 1910 as much as the cattlemen that forced certain of these deluded settlers from the region.

Farmers were able to retaliate in some measure through herd or pound ordinances. Such ordinances allowed farmers to petition the provincial government to have their township declared a pound district and thus prevent the running of animals at large. Provisions of the ordinance permitted damages to be assessed when a legal fence was broken through. Range animals found grazing in the township were impounded and the owner fined and charged a fee by the pound keeper for quartering the animal. If after public advertisement the owner was not found the animal was sold and the proceeds deposited in the public treasury.[54] Petitions to apply the

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[54]Alberta, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1910, pp. 82-83; Alberta, Ordinances of the North-West Territories of Canada, 1905, (Edmonton: Government Printer, 1907), Chapters 77, 79, 81.

ordinance came not from fully settled areas where cattle were kept on private fenced properties, or from areas that were mainly open range, but from regions where the rancher and the farmer were in competition. Thus whatever the government's response, one of the groups bitterly objected. Cattlemen complained that when such a district was established, all stock running at large, singly or in bunches that unknowingly crossed the township's imaginary boundary line " . . . immediately become legal prey, and during slack times it is considered in many districts quite justifiable to assist them in crossing."[55] It was also alleged that pound keepers often advertised the brands of impounded animals incorrectly so that the animal was sold before the rancher realized it was missing. In fighting the establishment of such districts stockmen argued that the creation of one such closed township rendered the eight adjoining townships unsafe for normal grazing purposes because cattle inevitably strayed over its unfenced boundaries of such a district. In localities where farmers and ranchers were numerically balanced, where the pressure for the creation of such districts was most acute, the government was plagued with heated petitions from either side.[56]

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[55] Gleichen Call, 22 July 1910.

[56] See for example PAS, Motherwell Papers, M12m F74.

By far the most serious of the issues between cattlemen and the provincial government at this juncture was the question of school and municipal taxation. Like the pound and herd law problem, this grew directly out of general agricultural settlement. The new farm population was anxious to undertake numerous local improvements, particularly the building of the roads and bridges which they, unlike the stockmen, deemed essential. Not only was the rancher reluctant to help pay for roads he did not want, but he also found the local improvement tax when added to the school tax and the lease rental to amount to more per acre than he felt could be justified by his per acre return. Ranchers interpreted the provincial government's intention to tax leased lands as a calculated plot to exterminate their industry. In 1908 the federal Inspector of Ranches reported that many ranchers were relinquishing their holdings. This he attributed partly to two causes, the winter losses of 1906-07 and the dread of a tax on leased lands.[57] The ranchers' attitude is clearly revealed in a letter from A. E. Cross to his partner relating his decision to cancel their eastern lease. "I find this lease will be subject to local improvement taxes of 1-1/4 cents per acre, and school tax of 1-1/4 cents per acre, so I do not think I should be warranted in keeping it

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[57]Canada, Department of the Interior, Annual Report, 1907-08, Report of the Inspector of Ranches, p. 74.

on subject to such heavy taxes."[58] Cross suggested that they consider running their cattle without a lease as he assumed many others would be or were already doing.

Cross' decision, with that of many of his fellow ranchers, was based on the premise that at the end of the season he would greatly reduce his herd size. In the view of most ranchers the future did not warrant expansion, and for some it did not even warrant continuation. While settlers were crowding them out, both the federal and the provincial governments seemed anxious to hasten their departure. Of equal importance was the less favourable market faced by the cattle industry. During the previous decade returns were sufficient to encourage cattlemen to initiate a vigorous defence of their enterprise. Now the incentive had declined and some stockmen began to shift the economic basis of their endeavour in hope of cashing in on what the press popularly described as "the wheat bonanza."

The beef market decline actually began in the 1906 season and like all the ranchers' problems it was in part related to settlement. As many of the big company ranches began to reduce their herds or sell them in their entirety like the Cochrane Ranche Company in 1906 on account of insufficient range, a beef surplus and declining prices resulted.[59]

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[58]Cross Papers, B59, F471, A. E. Cross to C. L. Douglass, 4 May 1907.

[59]Canada, Department of the Interior, Annual Report, 1905-06, Report of the Commissioner of Dominion Lands, p. 14.

Unfortunately much of the stock sold in the fall of 1906 had to be turned back on the range because of a shortage of railway cars for shipping, which in turn added to the winter losses of 1906-07. These direct losses incurred through exposure were only part of the disaster and the longer term effects were equally serious. The calf crop was much reduced, many that survived were deformed, and the weakened and thin state of all young stock in the spring meant that they did not make the growth they otherwise would have done. Still, as the following table shows, exports in fact increased. These figures are however deceptive, for included in the export shipments over the subsequent three years were thousands of head of breeding stock that would have been retained under more favourable circumstances.[60] Consequently the output from western ranches tended to remain constant while farm shipments, though a small percentage of the total, gradually increased. As it became apparent that range production was being maintained through the sale of female and breeding stock and that farm production was not going to be able to fill the gap, either in terms of quality or quantity, it was predicted in some quarters that within a few years there would be no cattle for export. In 1909 the Deputy Minister of Agriculture took issue with this widespread view and insisted that a much more optimistic outlook was justified.

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[60]Alberta, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1907, Report of the Deputy Minister, p. 6.

He insisted that central and northern Alberta were admirably adapted to mixed farming and in a few years would be sending as many cattle to market as were formerly sent from the older ranching districts. It would, he admitted in his 1909 annual report, take several years to make the adjustment from ranching to mixed farming, but once this transition period had passed, he predicted the number of animals available for export would steadily increase.[61] The relatively static export level which caused this concern is shown in Table X,

The following statistics, however, should be taken as only a general measure of western stock production, for by the Department of Agriculture's own admission the figures are often widely misleading. The dramatic increase in shipments during 1910, for example, is to be explained by the severe drought which occurred in the south that year and forced ranchers to send large numbers of stocker or feeder cattle to more favourable locations both within and outside the province to be finished.[62] As the local shipments column includes sales to local meat packers as well as the type of shipments just mentioned, the most meaningful comparisons can be drawn from the total exports column. It should also be noted that these statistics do not include exports from that part of the range country east of the Alberta boundary.

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[61] Ibid., 1909, pp. 22-23.

[62] Ibid., 1910, pp. 26-28.

TABLE X.

CATTLE SHIPMENTS 1905-1911[63]

| Year | Exports East | Exports West | Total Exports | Local Shipments | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1905 | 45,266 | 8,838 | 54,104 | 11,401 | 65,505 |
| 1906 | 73,889 | 8,941 | 82,830 | 8,398 | 91,228 |
| 1907 | 79,807 | 13,924 | 93,731 | 9,162 | 102,893 |
| 1908 | 73,888 | 16,453 | 90,341 | 15,076 | 105,417 |
| 1909 | 79,329 | 23,684 | 103,013 | 38,806 | 141,724 |
| 1910 | 85,388 | 37,895 | 123,283 | 60,986 | 184,269 |
| 1911 | 25,862 | 31,188 | 57,050 | 93,253 | 150,303 |

Prices continued moderate to low from 1907 to 1910. While prices were often a little higher in the spring and early summer, 1908 and 1909 returns were 3 to 4-1/2 cents per pound live weight for export steers (40 to 50 dollars per head), 2-3/4 to 3-1/2 cents for butcher steers and 2-1/2 cents for export cows.[64] In 1911, beef prices began to improve as fewer cattle were offered. The reduced exports of 1911 suggested also that the transition period, envisaged by the Deputy Minister of Agriculture in 1909 might be somewhat longer than he had anticipated.

The industry's disappointing price performance from 1905 to 1911, and the consequent decline in the ranchers'

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[63] Ibid., 1905-1911. Section entitled "Stock Inspection". Statistics from Saskatchewan were gathered and compiled according to a different system and are therefore not suitable for comparative purposes.

[64] Ibid., 1908, pp. 152-153; 1909, p. 144.

incentive to remain in business, had much to do with the cattlemen's longstanding disadvantage in the market place. Stockmen were burdened not only with high freight rates to eastern markets, but were also at a disadvantage because the large cattle buyers in the west were too few for satisfactory competition. The 30 per cent customs levy on imported cattle denied Canadian cattlemen the alternative of the generally higher Chicago market. Complaints by ranchers grew more pronounced after 1900. In 1902 William Pearce transmitted their grievance in this regard to the Minister of the Interior, Clifford Sifton. "It would appear", he wrote, "that we are at the mercy of a combination of dealers and the result is that there is a feeling throughout the country that not sufficient is received for beef."[65] A number of cattlemen attempted the following year to establish a sellers' combination against the buyers, agreeing not to sell their cattle to any buyer below a set minimum.[66] Small ranchers, however, did not possess the capital resources to withhold

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[65]PAC, Sifton Papers, MG27, II, D15, W. Pearce to C. Sifton, 10 January 1902.

[66]Cross Papers, B58, F451, Memorandum of Agreement, 19 June 1903. Parties to the combination were A. H. Eckford, E. Hills, H. Smith, P. Muirhead, A. E. Cross, W. R. Hull, and W. E. Cochrane. Minimum prices were: 4 years old and upwards, 4 cents per pound from July 15 to October 15, 3-1/4 cents per pound after October 15; the buyer was allowed to take any three year old steers he wanted at these prices; all dry cows four years old and upwards, 3-1/2 cents per pound from July 15 to October 15 and 3-1/4 cents per pound after October 15.

their cattle from market for a season and the very large stock growers who marketed several thousand head were less inclined to make an issue of 1/2 to 3/4 of a cent. This tended to isolate the medium sized producers who initiated the combination and hence prevented the plan from becoming effective. Charges against the buyers continued to increase nonetheless, and in 1906 the Alberta government announced that a "Beef Commission" would investigate " . . . the general belief of the farmers and ranchers that prices were unduly depressed through a combine of buyers."[67]

Between June 10 and July 20, 1907 the commission conducted hearings at every important cattle shipping point in the province. At the sessions scores of stockmen denounced their inferior position relative to the buyers. It was alleged that the firms of Pat Burns of Calgary and Gordon, Ironside and Fares of Winnipeg had divided the market between them, the Winnipeg firm buying for the export market and Burns confining himself to the slaughter market. Export cattle purchased by Burns were always sold to Gordon and Ironside. Ranchers unanimously insisted that competition was not noticeable amongst buyers. As a rule only one buyer would come around to an area and at shipment centres where two or three agents were present they would never compete with one another. If the rancher was not prepared

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[67]Alberta, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1906, p. 69.

to take the price offered by one, no other purchaser stepped forward; he either accepted or took his cattle home. Bigger stockmen were not at quite the same disadvantage. With larger herds they could ship their export cattle by the trainload direct to Winnipeg, Montreal or on to Liverpool. They remained none the less subject to the price set by Burns for slaughter cattle. Buyers were also accused of often failing to honour previous contracts if the market price happened to drop.

Equally strong charges were made against the railways whose negligence the ranchers claimed cost them thousands of dollars. Cattle were often loaded onto box cars rather than cattle cars, animals were sometimes left days without food or water, and travel times, especially for small shipments, were often incredibly slow. Stockmen complained of trips taking as long as 90 hours to go from Lethbridge to Winnipeg when the normal running time was less than half this. As a result cattle arrived at Winnipeg or Montreal reduced in weight and often badly bruised, with considerable loss to the shipper. Ranchers often arrived at loading points with their herds on a date previously arranged with the railway only to be compelled to wait as much as ten days before the promised cars arrived. In the interval the stockman who had been planning his shipment all season often missed the most favourable market. Though the large stockmen were equally bitter in their indictments of the railway, they generally

received better service than the small stockman or farmer as they were able to ship entire train loads and thus usually gained through service and booking preference.[68]

For its part the C.P.R. was not especially sympathetic. The company's livestock agent pointed out to the commission that the season for shipping cattle was very short, lasting from about July 10 to mid-October. This meant that everyone wanted to use the limited number of cars at once. He admitted that the normal run from Calgary to Winnipeg took 42 hours, but it had on occasion taken 90 hours and "small shippers had to take their chance," and he did not see why the company should assist in the watering, feeding and unloading the cattle.[69] The buyers' rebuttal naturally focused on two individuals, Pat Burns in Calgary and J. T. Gordon in Winnipeg. In what the paper described as an "emotional" and sometimes "excited" defence Burns testified under oath that a cattle combine had never existed. Burns explained that he fixed his price by his own judgement. He claimed that the price he paid was the highest in the west and that during the previous winter he had overpaid $150,000. "There are three concerns which the people of this western

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[68]The ranchers' allegations are reported at length in the following: Medicine Hat News, 13 June 1907; 1 August 1907; 31 October 1907. Lethbridge Herald, 13 June 1907; 20 20 June 1907. High River Times, 27 June 1907. Calgary Herald, 22 June 1907; 24 June 1907; 25 June 1907.

[69]Calgary Herald, 24 June 1907.

country have made up their minds to knock for some reason or other," Burns charged, "these three concerns are the C.P.R., Gordon and Ironside and Pat Burns. Men like Gordon and Ironside have been the making of the west. Through adversity they have persevered and have done the country priceless good by the fact of their existence."[70] Burns went on to say that he never experienced any trouble with C.P.R. shipping and in fact took a rousing stand diametrically opposed to all of the stockgrowers' allegations. In his view the cattle industry was in fine condition.

> I have never had an understanding with no outfit in America, I care for nobody. I stand on my own bottom. There is nothing the matter with the cattle business. It is all right. Men can get from $40 upwards for a four year-old steer, and I have very seldom seen one sold for less. Is not this a free country? I have fed 10,000 to 17,000 cattle during the past winter, and I find shipping very profitable. I have never squeezed anybody. Opposition, I love opposition. The more the merrier.[71]

Burns further informed the commissioners that he paid the biggest wages in the country and cautioned that " . . . without Pat Burns the western country would starve in ten days." When one of the commissioners asked whether he did not think that someone would take his place if he went out of business he answered defiantly, "they could not do it." Gordon's appearance before the Commission in Winnipeg was equally unrestrained and all charges of collusion with Burns and the

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[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid.

C.P.R. were categorically denied. It seems that Gordon's rebuttal even roused certain of the assembled to invite him to step outside to settle the matter in Marquis of Queensbury fashion.[72]

The Commission's findings were presented in the Department of Agriculture's 1907 Annual Report. From the stock growers' point of view the conclusions were generally disappointing. The commission reported that although the producers furnished much circumstantial evidence of an agreement amongst buyers alloting districts in which other buyers would not compete, as well as repeated assertions that buyers set prices, " . . . on no occasion have we been able to elicit information which would substantiate the charges."[73] With respect to the known agreement between Burns and Ironside regarding export and slaughter cattle, the commissioners explained:

> . . . we would like to mention that although Burns and Co. are very extensive buyers of all classes of cattle in this province, of late they have done no exporting, their export cattle being turned over principally to Gordon and Ironside of Winnipeg. We know that Mr. Gordon has selected Mr. Burns' cattle at the shipping point, taking the exports to Winnipeg, while Mr. Burns took the remainder or butcher's stuff to Calgary. Some of the producers objected to this method, claiming that it was proof that there was an agreement between the two companies. We have to say that we are of the opinion that it is a method which has proved of direct benefit to the

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[72] Medicine Hat Times, 27 August 1907.

[73] Alberta, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1907, "The Beef Commission", p. 43.

> stock raisers of the province in that Mr. Burns when purchasing does not cull the bunch as most of the buyers are obliged to do.[74]

This conclusion, that the ranchers derived direct benefit, could hardly have been drawn from the ranchers' testimonials for a number had asserted that they were forced to sell to Burns because he was the only buyer that would accept any number of culls, and he would do so only if he was allowed to have the entire lot for sale, including the export steers. At the same time the Commission did admit, on the basis of Burns' own statement that were he to close the country would be starving in ten days, that Burns and Company had a monopoly on the retail meat trade of the province.[75] As to that Company's practices, the commissioners stated that accusations against the company could not be substantiated. The depth of the Commission's findings is suggested by the rather lame observation, despite the unanimous testimony of stockmen, that "for some reason there is a lack of healthy competition in the buying of cattle in this province. Almost without exception the producer made the complaint that there was an absolute lack of competition."[76] The only change the Commission was prepared to urge upon the buyers was that the practice of universally deducting 5 per cent of the animals' live weight to allow for shrinkage be discontinued.

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[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid., p. 41.

[76] Ibid., p. 43.

Against a more distant target, the railway, the Commission was prepared to take a stronger stand. "We consider," the commissioners reported,

> that the time occupied in shipping cattle from Alberta to Winnipeg and Montreal, and the treatment the rancher receives at the hands of the C.P.R., must be expressed in no milder terms than outrageous. The delays in transit occasioned by neglect on the part of the C.P.R. . . . in many cases brings ruin and disaster to the western rancher.[77]

It was accordingly recommended that the railway commission be asked to compel the C.P.R. to run a weekly scheduled stock train that would have right of way after passenger trains and maintain a speed of at least twenty miles an hour. The Commission also asked that it be made unlawful to carry stock longer than 42 hours without being unloaded for feeding and watering.

The commissioners concluded that the decision of British Columbia and Saskatchewan not to participate greatly reduced the scope of the investigation. They admitted that their knowledge of the workings of the export industry was deficient and recommended the appointment of a livestock commissioner to be paid by the province whose chief business would be to assist the marketing of Alberta export cattle. The Department of Agriculture acted quickly upon this suggestion with the appointment of F. W. Stevens and his first report in 1908 reveals both the need for and the success of such an officer.

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[77] Ibid., p. 39.

> In a number of cases when farmers refused to sell to buyers at ridiculously low prices and the cattle buyers threatened to leave their animals untaken if their prices were not accepted, and in other cases where the animals were actually left on the feeder's hands, the livestock commissioner has been able to find a market for these animals, frequently at better prices than were originally offered.[78]

While a combine amongst buyers may not have officially existed, there was no doubt that the lack of competition placed stockmen at a severe disadvantage and throughout the period cattlemen continued to complain that the "big packers" had the ability to determine day to day livestock prices.[79] The livestock commissioner, however, was gradually able to shift the balance; he organized trainload shipments for small stockmen, pressured the C.P.R. to deliver cars promptly and prepared detailed marketing reports.[80] Steven's knowledge of the industry and success in the stockmen's interest was such that he was eventually persuaded to leave the government service and work directly for the cattlemen's association.

The picture that emerges during this period is one of an industry in decline. Market conditions, as just outlined, were unsatisfactory. Continuing settlement in the semi-arid region was forcing fundamental economic adjustment.

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[78]Alberta, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1908, Report of the Livestock Commissioner, p. 7.

[79]See for example, Pincher Creek Echo, 15 August 1919.

[80]See for example, Alberta, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1910, Report of Livestock Commissioner, pp. 185-189.

Relations with both levels of government were not favourable to the rancher; from the one he faced increased taxation, from the other a refusal to adopt a lease policy that permitted any measure of economic security. Under these circumstances many ranchers, large and small, left the region or devoted themselves to other pursuits. But the majority of the cattlemen remained to fight for limited concessions and to adjust the nature of their enterprise where it seemed necessary. Out of these trying years emerged the second generation of the stock industry's leadership. In this regard the advent of one individual stands out as of particular importance, both because of the role he was later to play, and in terms of his response to the problems faced by the cattle industry. In the case of the latter, this response represents in microcosm the stratagem attempted with less success by the industry at large.

Alfred Ernest Cross came west from Montreal in 1884 as bookkeeper and veterinary for the Cochrane Ranche Company. A year later he established his own ranch on Mosquito Creek in the foothills 55 miles south of Calgary. By 1900 he was a well established cattleman and as founder and majority shareholder of the Calgary Brewing and Malting Company he was also one of that city's more prominent businessmen. Despite this latter enterprise and his residence in Calgary,

he always considered himself as first a rancher.[81] As a rancher of experience and as an astute businessman, Cross was convinced that the production of quality beef cattle could offer attractive returns and was not inclined like certain of his neighbours to sell out. He recognized with others after the turn of the century that the key to remaining in business was to retain control of sufficient land. To this end Cross and his neighbouring ranchers first consulted as to the strategic locations which controlled water and driftways as well as the entrances to valleys or other such places, the ownership of which prevented easy access to lands beyond, and endeavoured to ensure that as many of such locations as possible were individually or collectively purchased.[82] Cross then commenced to make yearly purchases of adjacent or nearby Crown and railway lands that were available.[83] Even

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[81] In forms requiring identification by occupation Cross always complied with the designation--rancher.

[82] Cross Papers, B56, F442, H. B. Alexander to A. E. Cross, 19 June 1901; J. S. Blake to A. E. Cross 21 April 1902.

[83] Ibid., B57, F455, 1904 purchases for example included:

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|---|---|---|
| Crown | SE 1/4 - S4 - T16 - R1 - W5 (160 acres) | 19 Feb. 1904 |
| " | NE 1/4 - S2 - T16 - R1 - W5 (160 acres) | 12 Jan. 1904 |
| Railway | S23 - T15 - R1 - W5 (640 acres) | 3 Mar. 1904 |
| " | SW 1/4 and NE 1/4 S23 - T15 - R1 - W5 (320 acres) | 28 Apr. 1904 |
| " | NW 1/4 -S25 - T15 - R1 - W5 (160 acres) | 28 July 1904 |
| " | NE 1/4 -S21 - T15 - R1 - W5 (160 acres) | 12 Aug. 1904 |
| " | S 1/2 and NE 1/4 S25 - T15 - R1 - W5 (480 acres) | 22 Oct. 1904 |
| " | S 1/2 and NW 1/4 S21 - T15 - R1 - W5 (480 acres) | 19 Nov. 1904 |
| " | SW 1/4 -S27 - T15 - R1 - W5 (160 acres) | 19 Nov. 1904 |
| " | N 1/2 -S15 - T15 - R1 - W5 (320 acres) | 30 Nov. 1904 |
| | Total - 3,040 acres | |

with an outside source of capital, funds were not initially sufficient to purchase all the lands required, thus necessitating the addition of leased property. While Cross worked as an executive member with the W.S.G.A. to secure a more satisfactory lease policy, he also went to additional lengths on his own behalf. When his first application to lease adjoining property was turned down by officials within the Department of the Interior, he was able to prevail upon his brother Selkirk Cross, senior member of a well known Montreal legal firm, to call personally upon the Minister of the Interior. This visit along with the drafted support of the Minister of Marine, Mr. Prefontaine, was sufficient to have the department change its mind, withdraw the land in question from homestead entry and grant a lease.[84] When Oliver took office, however, the department's withdrawal agreement was rescinded without notice and several of the choice sections taken by homesteaders. Appeals that the department had violated a drawn agreement were ignored in face of Oliver's determination to see the region settled.[85] Unable to come to any understanding with Oliver, cattlemen endeavoured to intercede with two other key officials in the department, the Deputy Minister and the Inspector of Ranches. Before Oliver was

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[84] Ibid., B57, F453, Selkirk Cross to A. E. Cross, 1 February 1904; F454, Selkirk Cross to A. E. Cross, 12 February 1904; Selkirk Cross to A. E. Cross, 7 March 1904; F455, Department of the Interior to Cross, 19 February 1904.

[85] Ibid., B59, F473, See letters January to May 1907.

prepared to grant a lease the land had to be declared unfit for agricultural purposes; it was thus imperative to ensure that the Deputy Minister order an inspection and that the Inspector of Ranches declare the desired lands unfit. To this end Cross was advised by a fellow rancher who had just been to Ottawa regarding such matters to see the Inspector of Ranches as soon as he returned from Ottawa and " . . . hand him a cheque for his trouble, it may have a good effect--he is in poor health and his salary is not large."[86] In this atmosphere trips to Ottawa became even more frequent and the potential increments to the salary of the Inspector of Ranches multiplied.[87]

In the struggle for lands in the foothill region the ranchers did enjoy some initial advantages but after 1900 they were clearly on the defensive. Settlers had the advantage of numbers and official government support at both levels. Through democratic majorities and government legislation they could turn such normally prosaic acts as those providing for school and improvement districts into useful weapons against the ranch interests. That many settlers were not adverse to using such grounds to further their own interests in the ranch country is suggested by the actions

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[86] Ibid., B58, F459, A. B. Macdonald to A. E. Cross, 24 March 1905; A. B. Macdonald to A. E. Cross, 27 March 1905; W. W. Cory, Deputy Minister to A. B. Macdonald, 10 March 1905.

[87] Ibid., B58, F497, T. Duggan to A. E. Cross, 17 January 1910.

of several of Cross' farm neighbours. Two seasons after making homestead entry on part of the lease that Oliver had recently opened, two of the settlers offered to sell their land to Cross. To establish the attractiveness of their offer they informed Cross:

> As you are undoubtedly aware, we have formed a School District, Trustees has [sic] been appointed, and the site for school house decided upon, which is at present before the department for their approval.
> . . . . . .
> You will at once realize that if "Mr. Parks" and myself leaves [sic] the district, the school question will at once drop. I need not point out what this means to you.[88]

Cross agreed to purchase when assured that the school question would be dropped. The settlers made a handsome profit and as such typify many who settled in the vicinity of larger ranches for mainly speculative reasons.

By 1911 a substantial number of homesteaders were offering to sell their quarter sections to Cross, motivated by the drought of 1910, the first very dry year that most of the newcomers had experienced since settlement in the southwest. Beyond this a few had begun to realize that 160 acres was not a viable unit upon which to grow grain or cattle.[89] Until this point most of Cross' land purchases had been from

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[88] Ibid., B63, F497, T. Duggan to A. E. Cross, 17 January 1910.

[89] Ibid., B64, F505. See letters in file; B66, F526, F. Price to Cross, 18 June 1912. The author pleads with Cross to purchase his quarter so that he might move north to better grain country.

the government and the railway, after 1910 they were mainly from homesteaders desiring to move elsewhere.

Coupled with land as the cattlemen's most anxious concern was the question of markets. In this regard Cross seems to have done reasonably well. Though often disappointed with the return gained by his well-bred animals, he was able, by stressing quality and producing several hundred head per year for the export market, to justify remaining in business. The winter of 1906-07 persuaded him to abandon the idea of ranging cattle on the eastern plains, and confirmed his general practice of keeping his herd down to a size that could be grazed within the vicinity of his home ranch and for which adequate winter feed could be prepared. Failure to adopt such methods cost many larger ranchers reduced profits and in some cases even resulted in bankruptcy. While Cross generally received top regional prices for his cattle he also found it difficult, like the small stock grower, to escape the Burns-Gordon and Ironside network. His plans for direct shipment to the British market in 1905, for example, were confounded by the report from his Montreal commission agent that Gordon and Ironside had booked up most of the available shipping space for the summer months. "I don't know if it is this firm's intention to try and secure a monopoly on space for the following months", the agent wrote, "but it looks a little that way."[90] While the bigger operators could press

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[90] Ibid., B58, F458, W. W. Craig to A. E. Cross,

for better terms, it seems that they too were often stuck with Burns or Gordon and Ironside. Ocean shipping rates grew progressively more prohibitive and by the end of the period Cross displayed a growing interest in the Chicago market despite the steep tariff.

Cross' activities show that despite the industry's decline, some cattlemen were still powerful individuals with which to contend. While the application of influence at the federal level grew more difficult, the ranchers still possessed a strong regional power base. Cross, for example, was able to direct the Calgary Board of Trade to petition the government on the ranchers' behalf to establish no more herd districts.[91] Of more direct personal concern, he was similarly able to persuade the Department of Public Works to turn down the petition of residents in the two townships in which his ranch was located to designate the two areas local improvement districts.[92] But not many cattlemen were as well served as Cross. Those who were able, at least in part, to duplicate Cross' management skill and cultivate similar influence seem to have survived this half decade of decline most effectively. Apart from a few of the big

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6 July 1905 and 11 July 1905.

[91] Ibid., B65, F512, C. H. Webster, Secretary, Calgary Board of Trade to A. E. Cross, 26 July 1911.

[92] Ibid., B65, F509, J. Stocks, Deputy Minister of Public Works to A. E. Cross, 3 April 1911.

ranches the survival rate seems to have been highest amongst medium sized operators like Cross. It was the small ranchers who were placed in the most desperate position. The situation they faced in the foothill country was accurately summed up by one of their number, John Bratton, who complained to the Department of the Interior in 1905 that homesteaders had filed on his small bit of grazing land without even bothering to come to look at it first:

> . . . these parts of the Porcupine Hills are not suitable for agriculture but for stock ranching we are unable to by [sic] land at present hy [sic] prices and people are coming in and taken [sic] the land many have not enough cash to carry them over the first year they may be able by working out to stay long enough to acquire a title to ther [sic] land but by that time they will have destroyed the stock industry and they will find it hard to realize enough on there [sic] land to take them out of the countrey [sic].[93]

In this manner many of the small ranchers were compelled to sell out, or if they decided to remain to keep only a few head of cattle, try and grow a small crop and wait for better days. Bratton's prediction, that if he could wait the period out the country would revert back to the small rancher for which it was naturally adapted, proved prophetic, for by 1911, though it was not yet discernible to foothill residents, a gradual movement of farmers out of the region had begun.

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[93] RG15, B2a, Vol. 79, 416960, J. W. Bratton to the Department of the Interior, 12 April 1905.

## CHAPTER VI

## TRANSITION AND THE AMERICAN PRESENCE

It is apparent that the Canadian cattle kingdom had undergone important changes by 1911 and, that these changes, were, in essence, the result of settlement. The impact of the homesteader was immediate and far reaching; his presence changed forever the economic, political and social structure of the southwest. While it is obvious that these three factors relate intimately to one another, a better understanding of the direction and nature of this change can be assisted by focusing separately on each of these areas before arriving at a broader conclusion regarding the Canadian ranching community as it existed during the first decade of the twentieth century.

The cattlemen's empire was built upon the twin pillars of a tremendous demand for beef in rapidly growing urban centres and the availability of vast unsettled grasslands where thousands of head of cattle could be efficiently and cheaply grazed. The formation of the numerous cattle companies during the 1880's was the natural consequence of a ready market and the accessibility of extensive unsettled grasslands in the Canadian west. The great company ranches that were established were the product of the economic rationale which held that size was essential to profit

maximization. During the period of the big leases the main expense after the capital investment in stock was labour, and company directors were quick to realize that the more cattle on the ranch, the less labour needed per animal. On the small ranch one or two men might look after 100 to 300 animals, whereas on the big company ranch the ratio was closer to one man per 1,000 animals. Since the cost per head, in terms of land and labour, declined as the number of head increased, it followed that the rate of return on a given ranch investment increased proportionately to the number of livestock the operation carried, or so it was assumed would be the case under ideal conditions. The large ranch which made more extensive use of land and labour per head also possessed another advantage in its potential ability to survive price fluctuations. Larger returns during normal years enabled the big rancher, unlike the small stockmen with more limited resources, to sell for less or even to withhold his cattle during periods of falling prices rather than sell at a loss or risk damage to his range.[1] With unfavourable climatic conditions or a market decline, it was the small

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[1] In actual practice the big rancher with several hundred export steers to sell was usually able to negotiate a better price than the small producer. It seems that the competition for large lots was greater than for smaller bunches. C. W. Vrooman, G. D. Chattaway, and Andrew Stewart, Cattle Ranching in Western Canada, (Ottawa, Department of Agriculture, 1946), pp. 59-63. The findings of this detailed study confirm the superior investment return of the large operation.

producer that invariably suffered most. The exceptionally severe winter of 1906-07 for instance was not directly responsible for the closure of the big foothill ranches. Though closures do seem to follow in quick succession after that winter, the decision of the big operators was not based on the unfortunate effects of one winter. When the final reckoning was established losses in the western part of the foothill country seem to have varied between 10 and 25 per cent and could be sustained more easily by the big than the small stockman.

The big cattle companies of the early period were economically viable enterprises. Once they had learned to adjust their grazing methods to fit the region's climatic characteristics, particularly through the provision of feed supplies and shelter for unseasonable winters, the big companies that were properly financed and had good local management were most successful, as is confirmed by their yearly returns.[2] There were certainly a number of companies that experienced disaster in the southwest and the strange manner of their operation and subsequent decline has become part of the cattle country's folklore. The Quorn ranch owned by members of the Quorn Hunt Club of Market Harborough, Leicestershire, did produce quality horses for the English market, but the financial burden imposed by the summer visits

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[2]See Chapter II, pp. 139-140.

of numerous titled stockholders and their friends hardly allowed the ranch to function normally and did little to enhance the company's profits. Major General Thomas Bland Strange, artillery officer and commander of the garrison stationed in the citadel in Quebec City before he came west as president and manager of the Military Colonization Company, was an unlikely ranch manager, as was demonstrated in the subsequent debacle of Strange and his ranching pupils who were the sons of fellow officers in the British and Indian armies. But such interesting failures should not obscure the fact that those companies like the Cochrane Ranche Company, the North West Cattle Company, the Glengarry Ranche Company, and the Walrond Ranche Company survived for over a quarter of a century, displaying a tenacity not typical of unprofitable undertakings.[3]

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[3]Records of herd size and composition on the Walrond Ranche are sufficient to confirm that company's long term success. Herd size between 1885 and 1905 seems to have varied between 7,500 and 9,500 head (calves not included). Records of the spring and fall calf branding suggest an average increase of 1,800 to 2,000 head, while yearly sales can be estimated at 1,100 to 1,500 prime steers plus a number of hundred butcher cattle. Through most of these two decades export steers seldom netted less than $40 per head, and on the bases of 1,200 head exported per year, the annual return would equal $48,000. With the sales of slaughter cattle included the ranch probably returned in excess of $50,000 per year. Given the staff required for a ranch of this size and the wage rates of the period it can be estimated that $5,000 to $6,000 was required to meet this expense and perhaps an equal sum to meet other operational costs. While precise figures as to expenses are not available and herd accounts are missing for some years the general picture seems definitely to be one of profibaility. See GAI, Walrond Ranch, Cattle Record and Beef Account Books, 1885-1901. Walrond Ranch Papers, D. McEachran to Sir John Walrond-Walrond, 21 October 1905.

Despite the myth current today in the cattle country that the disappearance of the big foothill cattle companies was due to disastrous mismanagement, their decline or removal to the southeast was entirely the result of the advance of commercial agriculture. In the early period the big ranchers contended with the small stockmen and the mixed farmer of the river bottom; after 1900 their main adversary was the wheat grower who seemed to have mastered the techniques of dry land agriculture. Shortly after the turn of the century the point was reached where it appeared the profits to be realized from the land were greater from farming than from ranching. Because the per acre return for wheat was greater, the immediate result was a rapid escalation in land values. The respective assertions on the part of some officials and ranchers that the region could not consistently produce satisfactory wheat crops was another matter; what was important was that the new homesteaders had full confidence in the country and their ability to grow wheat successfully. Most ranchers had begun a gradual shift of their capital base from cattle to land in the late 'nineties, but by the early 1900's the competition and the price reached a level where the cattlemen could no longer compete. Ranchers who had based their enterprise on one head of cattle per ten to thirty acres, or five to sixteen head per quarter section, were now confronted with the homesteader who was prepared to base his entire enterprise on 160 to 320 acres, and who would

pay five to ten dollars per acre for the land required. This much more compact settlement had the blessings of both the local merchants and of the federal and provincial governments who evaluated the country's well-being in terms of the physical and numerical expansion of rural population. Unable to afford to buy all the land they had formerly leased, cattlemen were forced to reduce the size of their herds, thus losing an important advantage. There was consequently a strong motivation coming from two directions for the big rancher to dispose of his holdings. On the one hand he was no longer able to conduct his business on the scale he preferred or on the scale which to him seemed to offer the best return, and on the other hand the appreciated value of his deeded property offered the possibility of attractive capital gain. Some companies had acquired considerable land and at this point disposal of the property seemed to offer an immediate gain that the raising of beef would take years to duplicate. It was this latter motive, not poor management or a loss of faith in the beef industry, that led two of the oldest and most successful of the foothill ranches to end their operations. In 1906 the Cochrane Ranche Company sold its 60,000 acres to the Mormon Church for six dollars an acre, which, with the several hundred thousand dollars received for the cattle, permitted James Cochrane to enjoy a comfortable retirement. The decision of the Walrond Ranch to cease business several years later was also predicated upon Dr. McEachran's

business-like judgement that the company's lands had become too valuable to continue ranching.[4] McEachran proposed gradual sales by which he hoped to capitalize on increasing yearly values.

In these circumstances some of the big ranchers chose to sell their more valuable foothill land and move to the southeast to continue ranching in a less crowded region, and still others elected to remain and to supplement their deeded holdings with smaller leases deeper in the foothills. While two of the larger of the old companies, the Glengarry and the North West Cattle Company (under new ownership), continued operations in the foothills, most of those remaining were medium sized stockmen who owned from five to fifteen sections and herds of one to two thousand head. The practical alternatives of the small stockman were much more limited. As settlers homesteaded on the land around him, his section or half section did not permit the retention of a herd of an economically viable size. This was especially so given the declining beef prices faced by the industry after 1906. He could not afford to withhold his marketable cattle and in a market not noted for competition among buyers he was at an even greater disadvantage than the larger rancher. With the promise of a much greater return per acre to be gained

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[4]GAI, Walrond Ranch Papers, D. McEachran to Sir John Walrond-Walrond, 21 October 1905. GAI, New Walrond Ranch Company Limited, Reports, prospectus and reports of Canada North West Land Company Limited, 1911-23.

from wheat, many small ranchers sold their cattle and tried to save their investments by putting what land they could to crop.

In the minds of most federal and provincial government officials during the first decade of the twentieth century the dislodging of the big cattle companies was an inevitable mark of progress. Under Frank Oliver's administration the Department of the Interior adopted the attitude that the southwest was a region to be settled like the rest of the prairie west. Legislation formerly enacted in the cattlemen's favour was amended or repealed and the entire region almost from the base of the Rocky Mountains eastward to the new Alberta-Saskatchewan boundary was made available for settlement in 160 acre parcels and the department's immigration officers deemed it their task to see a homsteader on each. The provincial government was confident that winter wheat would be the new crop of the foothill country and that the techniques of dry-land agriculture pioneered in the United States and brought to the south by incoming American settlers made settlement both possible and desirable over the entire area. Both governments, in the best democratic tradition, were prepared to let the settler choose his homestead freely; it was decreed that the homesteader should have the right to try to farm any piece of land he deemed worthy of his attention. What lands the farmer did not want, and these seemed few, were left for the rancher. The

actions of the provincial government were in part motivated by the belief that thousands of farmers each producing a few head of cattle would in the near future produce more cattle for market than the ranchers had ever done in the past.

Though the provincial government persisted in this belief, it did admit by the end of the decade that the transition to the point where the demand for beef could be met by the small farm producer would take longer than previously anticipated.[5] The void left by the decline of the cattle companies was not filled by the mixed farmer as the government had hoped. While there was increased farm participation in the local butcher market, the export market that the companies had developed was maintained by medium sized stockgrowers with herds of 1,000 to 3,000 head. Such herds were small enough to be fed over part of the winter and large enough to prevent inbreeding and warrant the expense of quality bulls. While it should be emphasized that there were at least two herds in the foothill country over 10,000 in size and a number of these large operations in the south and southeast, as well as a number of high quality herds numbering only several hundred, it was the "new man", the middle sized operators, who now dominated the W.S.G.A. and

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[5]Alberta, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1909, Report of the Deputy Minister, pp. 22-23. Canada, Department of the Interior, Annual Report, 1912-1913, Report of the Inspector of Ranches, pp. 144-145.

who saved the western cattle export industry from possible collapse after 1905.

The decline of the cattle companies also marked a fundamental change in the economic structure of the southwest. The regional economic control that the stock industry had exercised over the territories of Alberta and west Assiniboia for two decades shifted in the first years of the new century to the grain grower. At the same time the company withdrawal brought a shrinkage in metropolitan and particularly Montreal financial domination of the beef industry. As the decisions of eastern boards of directors came to apply to a diminishing sector of the industry, there was a corresponding increase in local control that improved the industry's ability to adjust and adapt. In the longer term this meant that henceforth most of the capital accumulated by the stockmen would remain in the region that produced the wealth and be reinvested in ranch improvements or in the growing towns and cities of the southwest. The severed links with the Montreal financial community resulted in the loss of an important source of influence at the national level, but this was partly balanced by the greater political acceptability of the industry's new leaders among the smaller stockmen who had been inclined in the past to view the managers of eastern and British companies as alien. The ranchers' newly emerging power base was much more regional in character and the long-standing bond between the cattlemen and Calgary's business

élite became even more important as the decade advanced.

The shifting economic and political balance within the region was also accompanied by considerable social tension. By 1900 the animosity engendered by the struggle between rancher and farmer for control of the southwest was part of a tradition that was already a generation old, so that the economic and political responses of either group were supported by firmly established social attitudes. To this point the cattlemen, while on the defensive, had faced their adversary from a position of strength and their attitude toward the farmer and his vocation was one of open condescension. The rancher's feeling of superiority and distaste is confirmed in the standard epithet, "sod-buster," which was applied to the farming class. From the outset the cowboy was reluctant to perform what was known as "farm work". This attitude was frequently commented upon by inhabitants of the foothill region through the 1880's and 1890's. In his annual report for 1888 the Commissioner of the N.W.M.P. observed that "the ranchers live well and are hospitable to a degree, but everything even butter, is generally purchased. They all say . . . that the cow-boys will not work on foot."[6] Writing of his experience in the southwest before 1900 Col. S. B. Steele explained that until the Mormon settlement

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[6]Canada, North West Mounted Police, Annual Report, 1909, p. 20. Gazette, 10 November 1893.

was well established in the late 1890's butter, eggs and vegetables were not readily available. "Even the large ranchers who owned thousands of cows used tinned milk, and even tinned vegetables."[7] Most of the hay put up on the larger ranches before the First War was done on contract by neighbouring farmers. While there was obviously some economic advantage to be gained by this procedure it was also clearly understood that the independent-minded cowboy did not like such work. Though ranch hands were gradually compelled to undertake such "menial" tasks, old attitudes died hard. As late as 1921 an experienced ranch foreman seeking employment on the Cross ranch felt obligated to state in his letter of application that although he had been "punching cows" in the region for over twenty years he had changed with the times and was prepared to handle all kinds of ranch work.[8] Disparagement of the sedentary farmer was an ingrained part of the super-masculine cowboy subculture that was fully developed in the cattle country by the turn of the century. The feeling is well portrayed in a mock last will and testiment prepared in 1919 by a cowboy employed by the Matador Land and Cattle Co. The executors of the will were

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[7]S. B. Steele, Forty Years in Canada (Toronto: McClelland, Goodchild and Stewart, 1915), p. 268. For further discussion of this problem see: Gazette, 10 November 1893, and J. D. Higginbotham, When the West Was Young (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1933), p. 132.

[8]Cross Papers, B113, F. R. Pike to A. E. Cross, 25 February 1921.

instructed

> to immediately sell by public auction the whole of my real estate situated in the City of Swift Current, Saskatchewan. And with the monies thus procured to create a fund, to be ultimately used for the extermination of that class of Vermin, commonly known as farmers, who are at present polluting by their presence, the country adjacent to the South Saskatchewan River.

In 1922 a codicil was added.

> I give, devise and bequeath to George Windsor, my navajo saddle-blanket; to William Vincent Smith my rope; to Pete LaPlante my rifle; in recognition of the fact that they are respectively the best rider, the best foot-roper, and the best shot, in the Hills. Finally, I leave to each and every Mossback my perpetual curse as some reward to them for their labors in destroying the Open Range, by means of that most pernicious of all implements, the plow.[9]

In this regard the cowboy's attitude toward the settler reinforced that of his employer and tended to ensure his reliability when given orders in early period to pull down a squatter's house, or later, to graze the herd close to a farmer's fence line.

The feelings of the ranch owner towards the farmer rested upon a somewhat more identifiable basis than those of the cowboy. The differences separating the two grew basically from a straight forward contest between two competing economic systems or patterns of land use. From this foundation grew a definite set of values and attitudes as either contestant endeavoured to assert or defend his position. Those who argued for open settlement were prone to

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[9]GAI, Will of J. B. Henson of Saskatchewan Landing, 28 December 1919.

refer to the ranchers as the "cattle barons", the "vested interests", the "monopolists" or most frequently, "the big men", and they proposed to replace the former with those described as "yeoman farmers", "homesteaders", and "poor, common or small men". For their part the cattlemen attempted to identify southern settlers as "speculators", "misguided agriculturalists", "foreigners" and "squatters". Almost from the outset however, the farmer gained the support of the national press and acquired the advantage of the "under-dog". The stereotyped picture of cattle baron versus yeoman farmer that quickly achieved dominance put the ranchers at a disadvantage in any public defence of their interests throughout the subsequent two decades. Thus when the cattlemen urged strenuously with those from outside the region that vast sections of the southwest were not suitable for agriculture they found the weight of their statements destroyed by the accusation that their motive was simply to protect their own vast empire. While the extravagant claims of aridity, poor soil, and early frost made by some of the cattle companies in the early period no doubt hindered the ranchers' later appeals from being taken seriously, their insistence that the region was best suited to grazing admittedly was spoken with a vested interest at heart, but it was none the less asserted with conviction, sincerity and in some cases with a deep-felt belief that such was ordained by the Creator. Some cattlemen adopted the romantic notion that they, as well as

their vocation, were part of the region's natural environment. Within this context newcomers who desired change were branded as misinformed interlopers who would eventually face retribution in the form of drought. The feeling on the part of some ranchers that their calling had a definite moral sanction is suggested by the recorded sentiments of one long-time rancher who wrote after witnessing the breaking of the prairie sod near his ranch in 1904, that it was " . . . heartbreaking to see these awful wounds appearing on this beautiful prairie."[10] Another old stockman who strongly resented his farm neighbours consoled himself with the belief that when he was " . . . called to the 'Last Great Roundup'" and the land became worn out and useless, it would not be recorded that he "was the one who turned it upside down."[11]

The farmers however appealed to a morality that was much more in keeping with the buoyant enthusiasm of nation building that gripped the country during the first decade of the twentieth century. It was generally accepted that every man had the right to gain his independence and prosperity on 160 acres in the nation's great western estate. Not only was it implicitly believed that this vast expansion of

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[10] n.a. Lachlin McKinnon, Pioneer 1865-1948 (Calgary: J. D. McAra, 1956), p. 177.

[11] GAI, Robert Newbolt, Autobiography. MS p. 22. See also Evelyn C. Springett, For My Children's Children (Montreal: The Unity Press, 1937), p. 155.

independent free-hold farmers strengthened the country's democratic and moral fibre, but the settlement of millions on the western prairies was considered essential to the nation's economic development. There was also general confidence that "modern" farming methods permitted colonization of almost the entire area, particularly the open southern plains, and for a decade the weather conspired to lend credence to such optimism. "Progress" and "settlement" came to be synonymous terms. In this atmosphere the cattlemen who brought forth negative proposals for restricted settlement, or predicted drought and spoke gloomily of disaster, were entirely out of step with national feeling and therefore received little attention and even less understanding.

Evidence of the frustration consequently felt by the ranch community at being unable to respond effectively and the general animosity towards the settler who was destroying the range is revealed repeatedly in the ranchers' correspondence. With undisguised rancour one rancher wrote of his unwanted neighbours: "men of this class are not worth much" and that unfortunately "birds of his [the squatter] feather flock together, and if he does not bring them he may breed them."[12] The communication between W. E. Cochrane, part owner of the Little Bow Cattle Co. near High River, and

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[12]GAI, H. M. Hatfield, Letter to Alberta Provincial Librarian from Yarrow, Alberta, 1908, p. 4.

A. E. Cross is especially interesting in this regard as it spans the period of most intense settlement from 1901 to 1906. In June 1901 Cochrane concluded a letter devoted mainly to the purchase of additional brewery shares, with the information that: "It does nothing but rain here. It is drowning the settlers. There are five shacks below me on the creek and two just above me, all with dogs. We must pray for a drought."[13] Several weeks later he reported to Cross of the success of their invocations. "My farmers in Squaw Coolee are sick, two have pulled out and one is left with his woman and seven months old kid. [The weather] is dry and the cattle have skinned out with the range cattle--his heart is on the ground."[14] Cochrane's relief was short lived and the next summer he reported that there were more settlers than ever.[15] In the summer of 1904 he was again encouraged by the dry weather. "The country is drying up very fast, settlers tongues [are] hanging out for want of water," Cochrane informed Cross.[16] At the same time he reported that his cattle were in "great shape" and that he expected the year's calf brand to equal 600 head.[17] But the long drought that

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[13]Cross Papers, B56, F442, W. E. Cochrane to A. E. Cross, 10 June 1901.

[14]Ibid., 27 June 1901.

[15]Ibid., 18 July 1902.

[16]Ibid., B57, F454, W. E. Cochrane to A. E. Cross, 28 June 1904.

[17]Ibid., 22 August 1904.

the cattlemen hoped would prove their claim did not come and the stockmen had to content themselves with future predictions and frequent oaths like that penned to Cross in the winter of 1906. " . . . these b-d sod-busters have driven me to drink."[18] On occasion the ranchers' hostility burst forth in caustic prose in the local press. In one such instance an irate rancher in the Pincher Creek area protested against being obliged to help pay for roads far back into the hills so that farmers could haul their supplies and produce more easily and charged that "if settlers were mad enough to live up in the mountains they had only themselves to blame for their travelling difficulties."[19] As the debate continued in the Pincher Creek Echo the same rancher went on to question the general intelligence of the offending district councillor who defended such settlement.

> For many years Mr. [S] has been to me a physiological and psychological curiosity, but I often wonder that he has not discovered long ere this, that his vapid and vacuous vaporings are always in vain, inasmuch as they are powerless to remove or obliterate plain hard facts, have no force with the things that count, and are generally charitably attributed to the well known malign effects and influence of a disordered digestion.[20]

With this the debate terminated. In this district, the

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[18] Ibid., B58, F462, W. E. Cochrane to A. E. Cross, 28 January 1906.

[19] Pincher Creek Echo, 20 March 1908.

[20] Ibid., Letter to the editor, 1 May 1908; See also 24 April 1908.

original home of the Canadian ranching industry, emotions regarding the farm-ranch question were always easily aroused. As late as 1911 the main speaker at an "Old Timers" banquet in Pincher Creek felt constrained to call upon his audience to abandon the suspicion and distrust of the farmer and businessman characteristic of former years, and expressed his hope that the latter had won the confidence of the old ranchers with the success of their undertakings.[21]

The phenomenal settlement of the grazing country between 1900 and 1910 completely changed the social and cultural structure of the region. Not only did the economic pursuits of most of these newcomers set many of them aside from the original inhabitants, but their mainly American origin gave them a political and social background that contrasted sharply with the British and Canadian ranch establishment. This new population was not prepared for the most part to become British-Canadians, or even Canadians unless on their terms. They were proud of their own democratic tradition and republican institutions and viewed themselves as the agents of progress, and in some cases of manifest destiny, in the Canadian west. Their preferred model was in short, the "American" and not the "British" way. As the noted student of North American migration, Marcus Lee Hansen, has observed, the people who found their way northward were used

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[21] Ibid., 19 January 1911.

to moving where opportunity seemed to beckon, these people " . . . viewed the continent as a whole" and for them the border held no real meaning.[22] The confident attitude of this new population is well illustrated in the tone of an article that appeared in The Cosmopolitan in 1903 entitled "The Americanization of the Canadian Northwest". The author spoke of the great changes wrought by American enterprise and predicted eventual annexation to the United States as the American population continued to expand.

> . . . since 1890 it is estimated that there has grown up in Western Canada a community of one hundred and thirty-five thousand American farmers, growers of wheat, corn and flax--settlers inbred with not only the American spirit of enterprise, but with American ideals of government and American aspirations for the future of the country which they have made their home.
>
> With the coming of the Americans the lethargic first dwellers of Manitoba and the Territories have been awakened as from a dream. The busy sound of hammers has become heard throughout the land, marking the erection of new buildings and of barns to store the grain, and the splutter of machinery in the wheat fields has told of new methods in harvestry.[23]

In the foothill country this "American" presence added another dimension to the rancher-settler relationship. Some cattlemen feared the danger of cultural assimilation as a menace second only to the economic threat posed by the arrival of thousands of American farmers. Duncan McEachran

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[22]Marcus Lee Hansen, The Immigrant in American History (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1948), p. 190.

[23]William R. Stewart, "The Americanization of the Canadian Northwest", The Cosmopolitan, XXXIV (April 1903), 603-604.

expressed the feeling of many of the original ranchers in the foothills when he informed his fellow shareholders:

> . . . I would prefer when we go out of business that British people reap the benefits of our struggles and anxieties instead of as may happen it be given over to the Mormon Church [as was the case with the Cochrane Ranch] as American speculators. . . .[24]

A. E. Cross was also concerned about Americans acquiring the ranches of departing Britons and announced his preference " . . . to have good British people as neighbors much rather than inferior, moving Americans. . . ."[25] While all ranchers found it distressing that the farmers seemed to receive government preference, the vexation of some was intensified by the fact the farmers were Americans whom they considered as foreigners rather than fellow North Americans.[26] In the words of the wife of one rancher regarding the period before farm settlement, "the first families who came in were different from those who came after. They were a superior class

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[24]GAI, Walrond Ranch Papers, D. McEachran to Sir John Walrond-Walrond, 21 October 1905.

[25]Cross Papers, B113, F909, A. E. Cross to Captain Balfour, 12 April 1911. Cross was anxious to encourage the Prince of Wales to establish a ranch near his own in the Porcupine Hills. Before the letter was sent, however, the Prince announced his intention to purchase another property in the same area.

[26]Pearce Papers, 14B12, Louis and John Garnett. The file contains the records of a ten year dispute between the Garnetts' who settled in the Pincher Creek area, and the Department of the Interior regarding homestead rights. See especially L. O. Garnett to W. Pearce, 14 March 1899. For another example of this kind of sentiment see Lathrop E. Roberts (ed.), Alberta Homestead: Chronicle of a Pioneer Family (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968), pp. 25-26.

of people who came first - no foreigners except an occasional Mexican."[27] When the stockmen's solicitor, R. B. Bennett, warned the Canadian Club in Montreal of the threat to British institutions posed by this vast influx of Americans, he echoed the sentiments of many of his fellow members of the Ranchmen's Club.[28] Such concern regarding the rapidly growing American population which developed after the turn of the century grew easily from the anti-American bias that had existed in the region for a full generation. The police who came west to establish Canadian claim to the region and to remove the scourings of the American frontier from Canadian soil remained skeptical of mass American settlement from the beginning[29] and the original ranch population had always been instilled with the idea that they were building a British-Canadian west and were anxious to exclude Americans.[30] In 1912 the Ranching Commission established at the cattlemen's

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[27]GAI, Edna Kells, Pioneer Interviews, MS, 1935, p. 157. The comment is that of Miss Abigail Sexsmith whose father came to ranch in the High River area from Hull, Quebec in 1883.

[28]Lethbridge Herald, 12 March 1912; Pincher Creek Echo, 22 March 1912. Both papers took issue with Bennett. The regional press which was invariably pro-settlement was traditionally quick to counter charges of Americanization. See for example Lethbridge News, 11 September 1908.

[29]See Commissioner's Annual Reports. Police officers expressed even stronger concern regarding immigration from eastern Europe.

[30]See for example RG15, B2a, 141376, Vol. 159, pt. 1, F. Stimson to Department of the Interior, 1 September 1887.

request to investigate the problems facing the stock industry was confronted not only with demands that leases be made more permanent, but that they be restricted to British subjects. This provision was eventually included in the Order-in-Council that gave effect to the Commission's recommendations.[31] This thread of anti-Americanism present within the ranch community which is woven through the entire period complicated what was essentially a conflict of economic interests.[32]

Conscious of the fact that they had become a minority within their own region and aware that their community had also suffered an absolute decline in its upper social echelon commencing with the South African War, some in the community

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[31]Cross Papers, B66, F532, "Resolutions Presented to the Ranch Inquiry Commission by the Ranchers of Gleichen District", 20 November 1912; "Suggestions Presented to the Ranch Commission at their Session in Calgary", 22 November 1912. Canada, Department of the Interior, Ranching and Grazing Investigation Commission, p. 7. Order-in-Council, 16 February 1914.

[32]In this regard the author feels that the assertion by Howard Palmer that the antagonism which developed between American farmers and British and Canadian ranchers " . . . lacked nativist significance since it was based on a conflict of economic interests and did not extend to fears of a threat to national life", needs to be qualified. Howard Palmer, "Responses to Foreign Immigration: Nativism and Ethnic Tolerance in Alberta, 1880-1920." (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Alberta, 1971), p. 17. The general economic objection to farm settlement which was peculiarized by a widespread anti-American sentiment amongst the ranch population was compounded further by a general feeling of Anglo-Saxon racial superiority which led the cattlemen to consistently oppose "pauper immigration" from Eastern Europe to the prairie west. See for example C. E. Denny, Riders of the Plains (Calgary: The Herald Co. Ltd., 1905), p. 218. Herald, 16 September 1891; 5 July 1893; 22 November 1900. Gazette, 10 December 1891; 23 June 1893.

endeavoured to redress the population imbalance through a scheme to increase the number of British ranchers. While ranch pupils from Great Britain had been accepted on some ranches since the early 'eighties, the idea of a proper "Ranche School" for Englishmen seems to have originated in 1904. A draft proposal circulated among some of the more prominent ranchers described the main object of the non-profit school as preparation of Englishmen from sixteen to eighteen years of age for a ranching life through a three year program of instruction wherein "they would be taught everything connected with a ranche, the value of land under different circumstances, the business of a ranche and the ordinary labor on a ranche. . . ."[33] Any boy leaving the school to establish a ranch was to receive the assistance of the manager and the board of visitors as well as an expert appointed at the expense of the school to evaluate and report on the chosen property. The proposal stated that " . . . the right kind of names on the board of visitors" was essential to the enterprise and suggested that, in addition to the five founders, the Anglican Bishop of Calgary, the Premier of the Northwest Territories, the Chief Justice and another man of prominence be secured. It was believed that there were hundreds of young Englishmen of means that

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[33]Cross Papers, B56, F457. "General Idea of Proposed Ranche School."

would be attracted to such a school. The type of young Englishmen the promoters had in mind was quite explicit.

> The preliminary expenses would pay the cost of sending an agent to England, his salary there for three months, advertising during that time in "The Field", "Land and Water", "The Country Gentleman", and the Eton, Harrow, Winchester and Westminister school magazines. The printing and sending out to the landed interests of a prospectus which would show the objects of the school, the great advantages of climate, sport, etc.[34]

The ranch school for public school boys and the sons of the English landed gentry that was eventually established six years later by the Reverend H. B. Gray, D.D., Warden of Bradfield College,[35] Berkshire, was somewhat less pretentious than that envisaged by the promoters of the original scheme. The Bradfield College Ranche for Bradfield Boys, situated near Calgary, restricted itself to the training of boys mainly from one public school and its curriculum was designed to provide the kind of training required for a smaller stock raising enterprise combined with the growing of some crops. None the less the emphasis was placed on ranching; as Dr. Gray explained in his prospectus his ranch was not in a wheat growing district. "The exclusively wheat-growing regions are generally situated in the monotonous and 'prodigious plains', eastward of Calgary, and have often a depressing

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[34] Ibid., the names of the intended founders of the school remain unknown but the draft in the Cross papers seems to suggest that Cross was one.

[35] Library of the Royal Commonwealth Society, London. H. B. Gray, The Bradfield College Ranch for Bradfield Boys Near Calgary (Reading: Blackwell and Gutch, 1909).

effect on the settler."[36] He stressed that the Bradfield ranch was located " . . . in a high valley amid the scenery of an English park, with low trees and hills."

The purpose of the ranch was described as twofold, to dispel the "remittance man" image through the provision of a program of instruction to ensure the greatest likelihood of success for those Britishers embarking on a ranching or agricultural career and to help save the region from complete American dominance.

> Though no one ought to grudge our American cousins their enterprise, foresight, and progressive sagacity, yet it would appear the bounden duty to the British Empire of those in positions of trust and influence in England to act as pioneers in encouraging the best of our sons to people and control the immense tracts of our great Dominions.[37]

The Bradfield College Ranche however proved unable to fulfil the desire of many cattlemen to stem the American agrarian advance through the recruitment of more congenial British colonists. The first three pupils of 1909 were joined by four others the following year and the pattern was repeated with four or five students being added each year to 1913. The resources of only one public school proved insufficient to supply the twenty-five to thirty students yearly as originally intended and the project was abandoned. With the outbreak of the war nearly all of those who had come out

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[36] Ibid., p. 12.

[37] Ibid., p. 8.

returned to enlist, and none returned.[38]

Nevertheless, despite their inability to maintain or improve their numerical position in face of the mass agrarian influx, the foothill ranching community remained a viable social group through this period. Though the established country squirarchy proposed by professor W. Brown of the Ontario Agricultural College at Guelph[39] did not emerge in the western grazing country, a British core and a broader British facade were much in evidence. It seems in fact that for some the facade became increasingly important as social stress within the community mounted.[40] Visitors to the foothill ranching country near Calgary at the turn of the century observed that many of the cattlemen had " . . . established themselves in charming homesteads, surrounded by the same kind of comfort and refinement which Englishmen associate with the life of an English country house."[41] Such comfortable surroundings were made possible

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[38]GAI, G. Park, "History of Bradfield Ranch near Millarville, Alberta" MS.

[39]A. Begg, "Stock Raising in the Bow River District compared with Montana", Manitoba and the Great North West, ed. J. Macoun (Guelph: The World Publishing Co., 1882) pp. 273-277.

[40]Such reaction amongst "better" class British immigrants has been noted at several junctures in Canadian history. See S. D. Clark, Movements of Social Protest (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959), p. 484 and Aileen Dunham, Political Unrest in Upper Canada 1815-1836 (Carleton Library ed.; Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1963), p. 28.

[41]J. J. Young, "Ranching in the Canadian North-West",

by the special economic characteristics of the stock industry which, unlike farming, made the country estate ethic workable. First of all the establishment or purchase of a cattle ranch required considerable capital and therefore, from the outset, attracted those with greater resources and relative social preferment. The second important factor setting the ranch apart from the farm was the matter of labour. The large Old Country farm with its overseer, labourers and tenants could not be duplicated on the Canadian prairies, as the singular failure of all such attempts bears mute witness.[42] Those who wanted to farm were not inclined to take permanent employment on a gentleman's farm in a region where they might easily acquire land of their own. The ranching enterprise on the other hand was different; it was much more congenial to the establishment and maintenance of a country estate. Staff was always readily available for work on the ranches and the retinues, including governess, cook, foreman and cowboys reached substantial proportions on some of the larger ranches. The medium-sized Quorn Ranch, for example,

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Canada an Encyclopaedia of the Country, Vol. V, ed. J. Castell Hopkins, (Toronto: The Linscott Publishing Company, 1899), p. 62.

[42]See for example Herald, 10 September 1895, quoting the Toronto Globe, 4 September 1895. "Farming in the west has not been able to support the great houses and the lavish equipment of an English estate. But in many cases expensive houses were built and the manners, customs, and expenditures of an English estate attempted". The attempt at Cannington Manor in southeastern Saskatchewan is probably the best known of such ambitious undertakings.

maintained a staff of fourteen people from May to October 1891, for a combined wage of 495 dollars per month. Five employees were retained with pay through the winter and often several others were allowed to remain and work for their lodging.[43] Thus as a gentleman rancher, the proprietor could maintain the large household he was accustomed to in Great Britain or the Eastern Townships of Quebec. Cattle ranching permitted the retention of the manager-employer relationship as well as a leisured life style and in this manner actually assisted in the perpetuation of an imported social system that set the ranch community apart from the general social development of the agrarian frontier. In their comfortable homes with a Chinese cook and a maid or governess to look after their children, the members of the cattle compact dwelt in a manner that contrasted sharply with the agriculturist in his sod or frame house situated on the often treeless and windswept plain.

The leisured social pursuits of the ranch establishment continued through this decade as they had in the past. While cricket seems to have disappeared and riding to the hounds was stopped in deference to the farmers' barbed-wire fences, horse racing continued to flourish and cattlemen's

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[43] GAI, Quorn Ranch Company: Account Books, 1891-92. A cowboy's wages varied for most of this period between $30 and $100 per month, depending on experience. In addition to his wage he also received board and lodging and in some cases, a horse and related equipment such as a saddle and rope.

polo teams reached their greatest proficiency and acclaim. In the winter the trek to warmer climates, which by this time had the force of twenty years' tradition, were continued.[44] Other ranchers like A. E. Cross whose business interests kept them closer to home purchased homes in Victoria where their families might spend vacations.

During this decade Calgary consolidated its social and economic dominance of the southern hinterland and the cattlemen's influence within the regional metropolis became increasingly important as the cattle industry's Montreal connections became more tenuous. In the social context the ranch establishment remained pre-eminent. Already some of their number had gained the sanctity conferred by aspiring newcomers through the title--the "Old Families". The Ranchmen's Club continued to flourish as "the" club, at a time when its American equivalent, the Cheyenne Club in Cheyenne, Wyoming, had long been in decline. The club's continued acceptance is suggested in the financial statement for the year ending 30 April 1914 which shows 201 members on the

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[44]The Cross Papers are full of reports of the winter time activities of fellow ranchers in Bermuda, Tahiti, Hawaii and more often in Britain. The letter from W. E. Cochrane to A. E. Cross dated 31 January 1905 is representative. "We had a pleasant trip down on the 'Baltic'. Cowan was with us and their friends. I had ten days in London painting the town. Walter Gordon-Cumming was there also Waldy and H. B. Alexander who was in great form." The letter went on to mention the great shooting in the north, the availability of capital if Cross wanted it to expand the brewery, and his plan to return in the spring by way of Old Mexico. B58, F458.

rolls and net profit of $7,744.28 on revenues amounting to $23,650.09.[45] While those whose livelihood rested solely on the stock industry were by this time a small minority of the membership, there were many others who supplemented their city business endeavours with substantial investments in the cattle industry and who were thus both sympathetic to the stockmen and well acquainted with the problems faced by the industry. Consequently, while the club remained non-political by constitutional definition, it still continued to function as a useful vehicle through which the close social and economic ties between the cattle compact and the region's business and professional élite were fostered and maintained. Some ranchers who spent much of their time overseas and others whose ranches were too distant from the city to warrant membership in the Ranchmen's Club, continued as they had done through the 'nineties to make the Alberta Hotel their city residence. Z. M. Hamilton, who was editor of the Calgary Herald for several years after 1900, in his reminiscences of the place of this hotel in Calgary and ranch society has noted that the guests were mainly men from the range. "There were tall lean Englishmen of the type supposed to denote Norman ancestry, some in riding breeches, the cut

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[45] Cross Papers, B68, F544, Ranchmen's Club Calgary. The club's bank balance for 1914 of $300,806.72 had benefited greatly from the sale of their choice downtown property the year previous. In 1914 the membership authorized the expenditure of $120,000 for the construction of elegant new quarters.

of which indicated Bond Street, and others in the 'chaps' and belled spurs of the cattle country."[46] In all, whether observed at the Ranchmen's Club or at the Alberta Hotel, at the polo matches or in the confines of their sandstone homes in the foothills, the cattlemen's fraternity as it existed in the Canadian west before World War I seems neither to evoke the image generally associated with the American ranching frontier nor fit the "stampede" stereotype that has subsequently developed.

In keeping with the Canadian ranch community's peculiar ethos was a strong Imperial bias and this sentiment amongst both the British and the Canadian components of the western ranch community remained undiminished as is shown in their response to the South African War and later to the First Great War. Rumours of impending war in the Transvaal brought forth the notice in Fort Macleod Gazette from one cattleman and veteran of the Indian Mutiny " . . . let all British subjects of home and abroad exclaim, with one voice, that we are ready to meet Boers, Metabeles and all other outsiders who are enemies of our gracious Queen."[47] When war was officially declared Lionel Brooke, a neighbour of the above and one of the first to begin ranching in the area,

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[46]Zachary MacCaulay Hamilton and Marie Albina Hamilton, These are the Prairies (Regina: School Aids Text Book Publishing Co. Ltd., 1948), p. 184.

[47]Gazette, 15 May 1896. The rancher quoted was R. Ryan.

immediately outfitted himself and proceeded directly on his own to South Africa. The enthusiasm of others followed more regular channels. Among former British military men in the foothills were many reservists who returned to their old units. Others with no direct military commitment like Harry Adams, a nephew of Lord Kitchener, were led to South Africa by strong feelings of Imperial solidarity and family tradition.[48] Many of the much-maligned remittance men also answered the call of Empire, most never to return to the Canadian west. Several hundred other Canadians and Britons joined the ranks of the Canadian Mounted Rifles and Lord Strathcona's Horse, both recruited in the region. The example of the eighteen volunteers who left Pincher Creek for South Africa was duplicated in all the foothill communities between Calgary and the American boundary. Enlistments greatly thinned the ranks of the police and to a lesser extent of the English ranching community and additional cowhands had to be recruited from the body of incoming farmers.

While subsequent memorial services in the town of Pincher Creek honoured the loss of three of their young men in a minor engagement at a railway defence point near Honing Spruit, overall casualties amongst the foothill soldiers and

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[48] PMA, Harry Long: pioneer cowboy and rancher. Tape Recorded Interview, 1957.

and cavalrymen were not excessive.[49] The loss suffered by the ranch community was however greater than the casualty figures indicate. Some of those who enlisted returned to Great Britain after the war and a number of the ex-policemen, like Colonel S. B. Steele, remained with the Imperial forces, while a few prominent ranchers such as H. Samson, co-owner of the "XY" ranch, remained in South Africa where they felt they could continue their ranching careers free from the nuisance of incoming farmers.[50] In this regard the effect of the South African War on the ranching community foreshadowed the dramatic effect that the Imperial call to arms would have a decade and a half later with the outbreak of World War One. In the interval the military tradition that had been brought to the foothill country by the early settlers and carried forward with the formation of Captain Stewart's Rocky Mountain Rangers in 1885 and Lord Strathcona's Horse in 1899 was maintained within the region's reserve cavalry units. Military sports days like that sponsored by "C" Squadron of the 15th Light Horse of High River, in which one of their number offered to meet all comers in the bayonet and sword contest, were popular events.[51] In a letter written during the 1909 naval scare to the president

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[49] Pincher Creek Echo, 27 June 1913, Memorial Service on 13th anniversary of the battle in which the loss occurred.

[50] Cross Papers, B56, F445, H. Samson to A. E. Cross, 22 August 1901.

[51] Pincher Creek Echo, 14 June 1907.

of the Navy League in London requesting membership and organizational information, A. E. Cross asserted that though the region was far from the sea the people " . . . are very patriotic to the British Empire when an occasion arises. . . ."[52] In keeping with this feeling the military heritage of some ranch families was continued from their new homes in the Alberta foothills by returning their sons to attend school in Great Britain or by sending them to The Royal Military College at Kingston.[53]

While the economic contest between rancher and farmer in the foothills was coloured by the contrasting social values of the protagonists, the agrarian advance in the southern and southeastern portion of the grazing region resulted in an essentially straight-forward economic contest. During the late 1890's American cattlemen from Montana began to move in significant numbers into the region around Medicine Hat, the Cypress Hills and Swift Current. The movement from the crowded southern ranges grew after the turn of the century and included both large companies and small stock growers.[54]

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[52]Cross Papers, B67, F495, A. E. Cross to R. Yerburgh, 30 October 1909.

[53]A. C. Critchley, Critch! The Memoirs of Brigadier-General A. C. Critchley C.M.G., C.B.E., D.S.O. (London: Hutchinson of London, 1961), see Chapter I regarding his youth on his father's ranch near Calgary.

[54]To evaluate the nature and magnitude of the movement of American ranchers into the southeast see the following. Pearce Papers, 14-D-14, "Settlement in Southern Alberta, 1898-1901". P. S. Long, Seventy Years a Cowboy (Saskatoon:

The British and Canadian group, always numerically very small in the southeast, was completely submerged. There was a limited movement of ranchers from the foothills to the southeastern plains, but most of the foothill ranchers, confronted with only the choice of selling or moving east, chose the former rather than going to what they considered to be inferior and less pleasant country. With the rush of American farmers into the south after 1900 the farm-ranch competition that increased in tempo differed in one respect from the foothill contest in that the contending parties were both comprised mainly of Americans. It was thus on the dry southern plains of the Canadian cattle kingdom that the American grazier and dry-lander enacted in a somewhat less turbulent manner the last chapter in the struggle they had initiated a quarter of a century before far to the south. While there remained an underlying economic unity that bound together ranchers throughout the entire region as they sought redress of common problems, it is evident that the ranching community in the Canadian west from 1900 was composed of two dissimilar

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Freeman Publishing Co. Ltd., 1965). RG18, A1, Vol. 242, 25 pt. 1, Superintendent J. V. Begin to Inspector McEllre, 19 October 1903. RG15, B2a, Vol. 172, 145330, pt. 4, R. H. Campbell to Ryley, 17 April 1905. Canada, Department of the Interior, Annual Reports, 1896-1910. Some of the large American companies included: The Conrad-Price Cattle Company, The Cresswell Cattle Company, The Bloom Cattle Company, The Matador Cattle Company, The Spencer Brothers Cattle Company, Kohn Kohr and Company, and the Floweree Brothers Cattle Company.

social groups. American ranchers had formed an important part of the Canadian ranching community from the beginning but it was not until after the turn of the century that they became a numerous or socially and economically significant group. The growing American ranching community remained concentrated in the south while the once dominant British-Canadian cattlemen remained in the western foothills and from this point the evolution of two somewhat different ranching societies can be observed. In addition to the different social base there was also a minor variation in economic orientation between the two communities. In the southeast the range cattle industry remained dominant and ranchers looked to the Chicago market, while in the foothills the cattlemen decreased the size of their operations and concentrated on preparing quality cattle for the British market. This regional economic variation within the cattle country is reflected in the different emphasis to be found within the minutes of the stock associations in the two areas.[55]

In all, the changes that occurred within the cattle empire during the decade 1900 to 1910 were fundamentally the consequence of massive agrarian settlement. The dramatic increase in population meant the creation of two new

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[55]GAI, Stock Growers Association of Medicine Hat, Minutes, 1896-1901. The Medicine Hat minutes, in contrast to the W.S.G.A. minutes display a preoccupation with the traditional problems of the "range" cattle industry.

provinces which introduced a new political framework and at the same time changed the region's economic base. Similarly, the primacy of the old social order declined. The vast majority of the new settlers were American, making the rural areas of southern Alberta, apart from the political system, not much different from the western farm states to the south. In the foothills and in Calgary the remnants of the old cattle kingdom survived with a strength still vastly greater than their numbers, but a gradual departure of the leading families to the west coast and to Great Britain was already apparent. Many of the smaller stockmen at the lower levels of the social ladder had become mixed farmers and already the social distinctions between this group and their newer farm neighbours were beginning to blur. It was to be another two decades before the decline ran its full course. Ironically the old Canadian cattle kingdom, hitherto considered to have been simply an economic and social adjunct of the American west,[56] was in fact one of the main bulwarks of the British tradition in the southwestern prairie region. The society that the cattlemen established and maintained in

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[56] R. W. Murchie, Agricultural Progress on the Prairie Frontier, Vol. V of Canadian Frontiers of Settlement, ed. W. A. Mackintosh and W. L. G. Joerg (Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd., 1930), p. 53. C. A. Dawson and E. R. Young, Pioneering in the Prairie Provinces: The Social Side of the Settlement Process, Vol. VIII of Canadian Frontiers of Settlement, ed. W. A. Mackintosh and W. L. G. Joerg (Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd., 1930), p. 12. W. S. MacNutt, "The 1880's", The Canadians 1867-1967, ed. J. M. S. Careless and R. Craig Brown (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1967), pp. 83-84.

the southwestern foothills until the First Great War existed apart from the general farm population, and contrary to popular belief was very far from being a cultural extension of the American ranching community to the south.

# PART III

# REGENERATION 1911-1921

## CHAPTER VII

## A NEW GOVERNMENT AND A NEW POLICY 1911-1913

The onset of the second decade of the twentieth century brought a new political dilemma to the cattle country. The main issue in the prairie west during the federal election campaign of 1911 was the question of reciprocity. The reciprocity proposals that the Liberals presented to Parliament in January 1911 provided for free trade between Canada and the United States in a long list of natural products and some selected manufactured goods. From the cattlemen's point of view the attraction of such an agreement was duty-free access to the immense Chicago beef market. Enticing though the proposal was, its proponents were of the wrong party--the party of the farmer and open settlement, and worst of all, of Frank Oliver. At first it seemed that the lure of the Chicago market might be strong enough to lead many ranchers to abandon their longstanding support of the Conservative party. Aware of the uncertain feeling in the cattle country, the Conservative incumbent, John Herron, an ex-policeman and one of the region's earliest ranchers, sought to hold the enthusiasts for reciprocity by announcing support for the principle in his nomination acceptance speech. "I see a good many dangers in Reciprocity," he declared, "but I

see enough good in it to influence my choice. The greatest advantage, in my opinion, is that if the people do not find it to work out well it can be cancelled by a stroke of the pen."[1] But as the debate progressed into the summer of 1911 there emerged another consideration that evoked deep concern in the hearts of many ranchers. The opponents of reciprocity charged that the agreement would result in the severing of the British tie as well as economic subordination and eventual annexation to the United States. At the same time statistics began to appear that threw some doubt on the alleged advantage of the Chicago market. It was reported that cattle production in the United States during the decade 1900 to 1910 had increased 57 per cent and that this increase, which was greatly in excess of the population increase, meant that Canadian producers could expect growing competition rather than a growing market. A much quoted publication of the United States Senate (No. 862) which stated that, "the free listing of live-stock benefits farmers and stock raisers on both sides of the line, but probably those in the United States get the larger benefit" seemed to confirm the suspicion of many.[2] The fear of American competition and the threat to the British connection were exactly the same concerns that

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[1] J. Castell Hopkins, The Canadian Annual Review: 1911 (Toronto: The Annual Review Publishing Co. Ltd., 1912), p. 246.

[2] Ibid., pp. 214-215.

had led the cattlemen to oppose vigorously the Liberal's "Commercial Union" platform of 1887.[3]

The evolution of the ranchers' attitude toward reciprocity is well illustrated in the person of A. E. Cross. In the early spring Cross informed the Chicago livestock commission firm of Clay, Robinson and Company that:

> that as a whole, I think that the reciprocity agreement will be a good thing, more especially over the western half of Canada. Speaking as a manufacturer, of course, we believe in protection on manufactured articles. The agreement so far has not materially altered the position of the manufacturer in Canada. . . .[4]

With regard to the cattle industry, Cross explained that the opening of the United States markets would do away with the basic problem faced by the Canadian stockmen of too few buyers to make for satisfactory competition. Yet by the summer of 1911 Cross had decided to vote against the agreement.[5] A subsequent confidential assertion by W. Fares of Gordon, Ironside and Fares Co. Ltd., that at any time in 1911 " . . . we could have brought in beef from the U.S. much cheaper than the price current here" had the duty not existed, may have led Cross to reappraise the economic value of the agreement to the cattle industry and thus bolstered the

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[3] Gazette, 25 October 1887.

[4] Cross Papers, B64, F508, A. E. Cross to Clay, Robinson and Co., 10 March 1911.

[5] Ibid., F513, A. E. Cross to F. L. Newman, 16 August 1911.

decision that he had already made on political grounds.[6]

It was soon evident to the farm press in the southwest that the cattlemen were the only important group in the region that had misgivings about the proposed reciprocity arrangement, and throughout August Liberal papers endeavoured to demonstrate to the stockmen that access to the Chicago market would mean better prices. In a leading editorial on August 22 the Medicine Hat News told the rancher "his loyalty, and his devotion to Britain and Canada, [would] not be minimized or dwarfed because of that extra $10 on each steer," which the agreement was alleged to assure.[7] Cattlemen were urged to give the arrangement a try. Later in the month the Honourable C. R. Mitchell read to southern audiences letters from American commission firms to Canadian ranchers which outlined the advantages of the Chicago market and invited patronage, as evidence of the kind of competition and improved prices that reciprocity would bring.[8] Coupled with their economic arguments, Liberal politicians and their press supporters made persistent efforts to refute the charges of disloyalty that became more frequent as the campaign advanced.[9]

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[6] Ibid., W. Fares to A. E. Cross, 31 August 1911.

[7] Medicine Hat News, 22 August 1911.

[8] Ibid., 30 August 1911.

[9] Ibid., 13 September 1911; 21 September 1911. See for example: Herald (Calgary), "Reciprocity Means the End of Canada's Independence," 31 August 1911; "Every Patriotic Canadian Should Swat Reciprocity," 14 September 1911.

The Liberals approached the cattlemen in the Fort Macleod-Pincher Creek area with the same arguments and assurances, but in this constituency their task was compounded by the fact that the Conservative incumbent had declared himself in favour of reciprocity. Their consequent tactic was to declare that Herron was at heart opposed to reciprocity and their assertions in this regard were supported by the conflicting statements made by some of the ranchers on the Conservative Association's executive to the effect that the Liberal government's naval policy and the proposed agreement with the United States would lead to the break up of the empire.[10] On election day the majority of electors in the Fort Macleod constituency registered their approval of the Liberal government and the reciprocity bill, as did the voters in all other Alberta constituencies except Calgary, which favoured R. B. Bennett and the Conservative party. Outside of the prairies the Liberals fared less well and the Conservatives were returned to power for the first time since their defeat in 1896.

While John Herron lost the Fort Macleod riding to the Liberals, most of the ranchers remained firmly in the Conservative fold, as the polling statistics demonstrate.[11]

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[10] Pincher Creek Echo, 17 August 1911; 24 August 1911; 14 September 1911; 19 September 1911.

[11] Ibid., 22 September 1911. In addition to their strong showing in those parts of the foothills country where ranching predominated, the Conservatives also won majorities

Though some cattlemen were prepared to concede the advantages of reciprocity, many, given their anti-American bias, felt that the potential economic advantage was more than offset by the close integration with the United States that reciprocity promised to bring. But above all, most ranchers were not prepared to support what they considered to be a farmers' party and their enmity towards the Liberal Minister of the Interior, Frank Oliver, and his pro-settlement policies had grown from the date of the first Liberal victory in 1896.[12]

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in some of the Crowsnest mining towns where there existed some fear of American competition under the reciprocity plan. The Conservatives also gained majorities in the old cattle towns of Fort Macleod, High River and Okotoks. In Pincher Creek the vote was split almost evenly. In contrast to their rural hinterlands the towns of Medicine Hat and Lethbridge also voted for the Conservative candidate. Medicine Hat News, 22 September 1911. While the tendency of many townsmen to vote against the Liberals in this election might be explained in part by economic factors, there seems evidence to suggest another factor that merits consideration and further investigation. Many prairie towns in the south during this period, unlike the surrounding countryside, had a majority Anglo-Saxon population which in this instance was more receptive to the pro-imperial arguments used by the Conservatives in their campaigns. This British and Canadian population in the towns seems to have been composed of many who had immigrated to the west during the first wave of immigration before 1896. By virtue of their earlier arrival these settlers were able to take advantage of commercial opportunities. Moreover, great numbers of these first homesteaders from the wooded lands of Ontario and Great Britain found the prairies to be an especially harsh and unrewarding land. They were thus not reluctant to sell their holdings to the next group of in-coming settlers and commence a new life in newly growing towns.

[12]The ranchers' feeling towards Oliver is exemplified in a letter written by A. E. Cross to an eastern friend some months after the election. "The late Minister of the Interior always seemed to be hostile towards the cattle man and cut off all the lease[s] and range as much as he possibly could."

In 1900, the first election after 1896, the ranchers attempted to unseat Oliver with R. B. Bennett as their standard bearer. In the words of Bennett's main organizer in the south: "the ranching country was Conservative. The cattlemen and their retainers could be relied upon to support the candidature of Mr. Bennett;" the main task in the south was therefore to counter the Mormons' Liberal vote.[13] The latter task proved impossible and Oliver's strong plurality in the North again tipped the balance in his favour. Cattlemen fought the next contest in 1904 with renewed hope, for the electoral redistribution since the previous election made Calgary and southern Alberta separate constituencies. Aware of the ranchers' virtual unanimity, the Liberal party's main western strategist, Clifford Sifton, attempted to persuade one whom he thought was an important member of the cattlemen's fraternity to run as the Liberal candidate. Pat Burns however declined Sifton's request with the explanation that to stand as a Liberal would be " . . . disastrous for my business."[14] Burns' judgment proved sound for both the

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Cross Papers, B56, F525, A. E. Cross to W. R. MacInnes, Freight Traffic Manager, C.P.R., 13 July 1912.

[13]Zachary Macaulay Hamilton and Marie Albina Hamilton. These are the Prairies (Regina: School Aids Text Book Publishing Co. Ltd., 1948), pp. 146, 155.

[14]Sifton Papers, microfilm C555, P. Burns to C. Sifton, 28 December 1903.

Calgary and the southern Alberta riding went Conservative, the latter electing one of the region's prominent ranchers, John Herron. The Conservative victory was repeated in both constituencies in 1908. The ability of the stockmen to win the Macleod riding in the face of the more numerous farm population and the solidly Liberal vote of the Mormons is explained by the fact that most of the new American farmers had not yet become Canadian citizens and in the 1908 election most of the Mormon population became part of the new oddly shaped Medicine Hat riding.[15] Having thus consistently voted Conservative since the first federal election in the Territories in 1887, the cattlemen were not prepared in 1911 to break a voting tradition that went back a full quarter of a century.[16] During the entire Liberal administration

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[15]The Conservatives also won the Medicine Hat riding in 1908 on the personal strength of their candidate C. A. Magrath who was held in high esteem by the Mormon community, and who was able to capture much of the Mormon vote. The new Macleod constituency comprised the entire foothill region from just south of Fort Macleod to Calgary thus greatly enhancing the ranchers voting power.

[16]Canada, Session Papers, No. 29, Vol. XXXI, 1897, "Return of the Eighth General Election, 1896," pp. 308-315; No. 36, Vol. XXXV, 1901, "Return of the Ninth General Election, 1900," pp. 2-5, 8-11; No. 37, Vol. XXXIX, 1905, "Return of the Tenth General Election, 1904," pp. 354-363; No. 18, Vol. XLIII, 1909, "Return of the Eleventh General Election, 1908," pp. 394-401; No. 18, Vol. XLVI, 1912, "Return of the Twelfth General Election, 1911," pp. 473-483. The different southern Alberta voting pattern at the provincial level has also been assessed by Thomas Flanagan in "Political Geography and the United Farmers of Alberta," a paper delivered to the Third Annual Western Canadian History Conference at Calgary, March 1972. Flanagan notes the tendency of the foothill population to vote differently from their fellow Albertans in the prairie and parkland regions.

only two members of the ranch establishment, George Lane of the Bar "U" and A. B. Macdonald of the Glengarry Ranche Co., were prepared actively and openly to assist the Liberal cause, and both as it happened, were recipients of the very rare closed leases that Sifton handed out with careful discrimination in 1905.[17]

Some months after the 1911 election the Medicine Hat News berated the cattlemen for their economic nearsightedness, noting that George Lane, a firm believer in reciprocity, had just shipped a train load of Alberta beef to Chicago where it netted one dollar more per animal than he could have obtained in Canada despite the heavy duty imposed.[18] The editor emphasized that without the duty the difference would have been at least $25. The ranchers however were unrepentant for at last after fifteen years the party of their choice was in power and they could anticipate important assistance to their beleaguered industry. The cattle compact wasted little time in their endeavour to persuade the new Acting Minister of the Interior, Robert Rogers, to initiate a new government policy toward their industry. Early in the winter of 1912 a committee of stockmen waited upon the Prime Minister and the Minister of the Interior and indicted the previous

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[17] Pincher Creek Echo, 17 August 1911, re Lane's support of the Liberal candidate in the 1911 election. A. B. Macdonald ran unsuccessfully as the Liberal candidate for Fort Macleod in the 1908 election.

[18] Medicine Hat News, 5 December 1912.

Liberal government's complete disregard of their business. They urged the new administration to establish a commission to investigate the ranching industry and to make recommendations as to the means by which the stock raising business might be restored to its former favourable condition.[19] Though the cattlemen were confident that such a commission could be led to report favourably on their behalf, they none the less made private representations at the highest levels to ensure that they would get what they wanted. In February, 1912 George Lane informed A. E. Cross from Ottawa:

> I think I have done a good deal of good on this trip for the Ranchmen. I went to the Minister of the Interior last night, explained this situation to him and asked for a 21 year lease on the land, telling him the two year clause was what started the people disposing of their cattle. He told me he would do this. I want you to make application right away, and if necessary you should be ready to come down here not later than the fifth of March. You want to force this right now. I have also held out that they should sell 10 percent of the lease at $1.00 [per acre].[20]

The ranchers' official request for redress was forwarded to the government through the Calgary Senator, James Lougheed. In this memorial the W.S.G.A. charged that on the basis of a few wet seasons the previous government had adopted a policy to induce settlement in all parts of the country regardless of whether it was suitable for agriculture or not, with the result that the large scale ranching

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[19]Cross Papers, B66, F521, A. E. Cross to George Lane, Vice President of the W.S.G.A., 6 February 1912.

[20]Ibid., G. Lane to A. E. Cross, 15 February 1912; G. Lane to A. E. Cross, 17 February 1912.

enterprises were very nearly all put out of business. The association noted that there was now a great shortage of breeding cattle, a consequent shrinkage in the beef supply, and the highest consumer prices on record. In the association's view the situation could be remedied if those parts of the country most suitable for raising cattle were set apart from homestead lands and leased on a permanent basis to stock growers. The W.S.G.A. also requested that their past president, Walter Huckvale, be named to the commission that was to be established to assess the situation.[21] Cattlemen throughout the southwest expected a change in government land policy and the memorials of smaller local groups supplemented and lent strength to pressures being exerted by the Calgary ranch establishment and the W.S.G.A. Ranchers in the Pincher Creek vicinity, for example, urged the Department of the Interior to extend the forest reserve boundary south and eastward to meet the line of foothill settlement in order to prevent further settlement and so protect the remnants of the stock industry from being pushed from their last stronghold deep in the foothills. They requested quick attention to their situation and insisted, as cattlemen had done ritually for 30 years, that " . . . the land in question is only

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[21]Cross Papers, B66, F526, A. E. Cross to P. Burns, President of the W.S.G.A., 24 June 1912, enclosure, W.S.G.A. to Hon. J. A. Lougheed, "Live Stock Grazing Leases." The Burns referred to here is not the Calgary meat packer.

a stock country and totally unfit for farming in any shape or form."[22]

Within the Department of the Interior a change of attitude was soon apparent. In March, 1912 it was decided to officially discourage settlers' applications to invoke the two years cancellation in order to obtain properties within leaseholds.[23] From certain western officials came reports whose tone had not been duplicated since the days of William Pearce. The attitude of the new Inspector of Ranches, E. E. Taylor, is indicative. After a number of inspections during the spring and summer of 1912 he concluded: "The stock business is fast going into decay and it is up to us to do everything we can to assist it."[24] Taylor soundly condemned the policy of encouraging homesteading deep in the foothills. He informed Ottawa, with reference to the foothill region south and west of Pincher Creek, that he found the country to be a first class stock raising area, it being very rough and broken but with plenty of water and good grass. He noted however that many homesteaders had gone into the hills, right up to the Rocky Mountains, and that none of them were making any success unless they went in for stock raising. "I am of

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[22]RG15, B2a, Vol. 172, 145330, pt. 4, Petition of Pincher Creek Stockmen, 6 July 1912.

[23]Ibid., B. York to Deputy Minister, 8 March 1912. Proposal approved 13 March 1912.

[24]Ibid., E. E. Taylor to Department of the Interior, 22 October 1912.

the opinion" he informed his superiors "that it is a crying shame that this country should be so broken up by home-steaders, they pick out the choice spot for grass and water and drive the cattle men to hills or out of business."[25] Taylor described the would-be farmers, who had ruined the country's grazing potential and driven the ranchers to desperation in their search for alternative range, as a " . . . miserable and worthless class of home-steaders who would starve to death if it were not for the stock men."[26] The implication was that the settlers made ends meet by stealing cattle from their ranch neighbours. The Inspector of Ranches recommended that all remaining lands in the western part of the foothills be withdrawn from homestead entry and reserved for the ranchers through reasonable sized leases.

The government seems to have been quite prepared to accede to such recommendations from within the Department of the Interior and from the cattlemen, but Conservative politicians were also conscious that the matter was one that could arouse sharp public controversy, especially if the government appeared to be acting in an arbitrary manner. To avoid the suspicion that Ottawa was simply acting at the ranchers' direction, it was decided to conduct an open public inquiry

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[25] Ibid., Second letter, E. E. Taylor to Department of the Interior, 22 October 1912.

[26] Ibid.

into the state of the ranching industry as the cattlemen had initially suggested, and then act upon the recommendations of this "outside" body. The eventual recommendations of the three appointed commissioners, George H. Pope, Clarence F. Graham, and Walter Huckvale (the latter named at the request of the W.S.G.A.) were never in doubt. In addition to assessing the general condition of the ranching industry, the commissioners were specifically charged to report upon what tract, if any, should be withdrawn from homestead entry and held exclusively for grazing purposes, and the advisability of extending the permanency of leases.[27] Public hearings were accordingly held in the main centres throughout the ranching country from Willow Bunch, Saskatchewan to Calgary, Alberta during October and November 1912, and the cattlemen turned out in force to present their case. The arguments and demands presented were hardly new; they had been announced with unfailing regularity to anyone who would listen since the 1890's. Ranchers condemned the government's unwise settlement policy which they said encouraged homesteading on unfit lands, as well as the refusal to institute a satisfactory lease policy. Two essential remedies were demanded, first, that those areas in the south country where less than 25 per cent of the land was found fit for agriculture be withdrawn from settlement and held for the cattlemen,

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[27]Canada, Department of the Interior, Ranching and Grazing Investigation Commission, 1913, p. 3.

and second, that permanent leases of not less that 15 years be granted within such districts so that required capital expenditures could be justified.[27]

The ranch establishment was aware that the government was sympathetic and predisposed to act in their favour, but understood that the hearings would have to demonstrate both widespread concern and unanimity within the ranch community itself. To this end the larger stockmen endeavoured to ensure representative attendance at the various meetings, see that there was some degree of coordination amongst the various presentations and make certain that sufficient complementary detail was included within the submissions. As A. E. Cross informed one of the smaller ranchers: "I think it is of great importance that you should be here to give evidence, as it will be the last chance as far as I can see to get leases put on a permanent basis, [as well as] anything else you want . . ."[29] Cross further advised his friend to get together with his neighbours and come prepared with the necessary information. Of the consequent details about which consensus emerged at the various meetings several warrant mention. The cattlemen requested leases be given only to naturalized British subjects, that lease size be limited

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[28]Medicine Hat News, 2 November 1912; 7 November 1912. Pincher Creek Echo, 8 November 1912; 15 November 1912.

[29]Cross Papers, B66, F532, A. E. Cross to G. Porter, 9 November 1912.

to two townships (46,080 acres) for individuals and four townships (92,160 acres) for companies and partnerships, that the lessee have the right to purchase 10 per cent of the land within the leasehold in the event that the lease was cancelled at the end of the period, and that where isolated settlement was found to occur in unquestionably grazing districts, the government endeavour to transfer the settlers to more suitable locations.[30]

Farmers at first seem to have taken little notice of the Commission's hearings and when full accounts of discussions at the meetings began to appear in the press, it was too late to organize counter submissions. The ranchers' consensus was challenged from only two sources and these were of degree rather than kind. Sheepmen, the oldest and much detested competitors for unsuitable agricultural lands, also sought to gain the favourable attention of the government. Stockmen endeavoured to maintain the absolute exclusion of this group and bitter debate raged between the two factions at the meetings throughout southern Alberta.[31] The second challenge came from the provincial government. While provincial authorities were prepared to concede assistance to the cattle industry, they were at the same time interested in

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[30] Ibid., "Resolutions Presented to the Ranch Inquiry Commission by the Ranchers of the Gleichen District," 20 November 1912; "Suggestions Presented to the Ranch Commission at their Session in Calgary," 22 November 1912.

[31] Pincher Creek Echo, 8 November 1912; 15 November 1912.

maximum settlement, and in regions not wholly suited to agriculture they wanted to ensure a numerous ranch population rather than occupation by a few large companies. The Alberta Livestock Commissioner accordingly informed the commission that closed fifteen year leases should be granted but such leases should not exceed ten sections. The Livestock Commissioner presented the opinion that ordinarily six sections were sufficient to graze a herd large enough to support one family and the ten section maximum would allow flexibility to account for varying topographic or other conditions. It was argued that leases of this size would ensure a sufficient number of families in a township to support a public school.[32] The Alberta government was still hoping to encourage what it defined as a "mixed" farming community in such areas and remained convinced that beef production from such operations would eventually surpass that of the cattle ranches and at the same time be of much greater social benefit.

The report of the Ranching Commission, published 11 January 1913, informed the government that the decline in the number of livestock in the grazing country during the preceding five years was at least 75 per cent, and that the reduction was particularly significant because it applied

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[32]Alberta, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1912, pp. 202-204.

particularly to breeding stock.[33] The supply of beef had been maintained to some degree by the importation of stocker cattle, making the Canadian grazing country increasingly dependent on outside sources of supply. The essence of the problem, though not explicitly stated in the commission's report, was that most cattlemen were not prepared to invest the large sums required to build and maintain a large breeding herd when range land was constantly diminishing and the lease system did not guarantee permanency beyond two years.[34] In recognition of these facts the Commissioners presented the government with a number of recommendations that they felt would assist the industry's recovery. In keeping with the ranchers' requests they urged that areas where arable land did not exceed 20 per cent be set aside for grazing, that leases guarantee ten years uninterrupted possession, that no applicant be granted a lease in excess of 24,000 acres, that the lessee be required to maintain a minimum of one animal for every 30 acres, that lease applicants owning adjoining lands be given preference to encourage the development of mixed farming, that leases be granted only to British

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[33] Canada, Department of the Interior, Ranching and Grazing Investigation Commission, 1913, pp. 5-7.

[34] The capital invested in an average sized breeding herd of medium quality is suggested by sales return of the herd belonging to the Two Bar Ranch of Gordon, Ironside and Fares of Winnipeg. Between 28 February and 14 November 1906 the entire herd was marketed and the sum returned equalled $109,230. GAI, Gordon, Ironside and Fares; Statements of Cattle Sales, Wintering Hills, 1906.

subjects, and that present leaseholders be allowed to bring their existing leases under the new regulations. The Commissioners also suggested that the Dominion government communicate with the provinces with a view to the adoption of regulations more favourable to the ranching industry with regard to such matters as taxation, herd and pound laws, and the fencing of road allowances. Accompanying the text was a map showing the areas throughout the southwest where it was proposed that no further settlement be permitted.[35]

Farmers in the grazing country suddenly began to feel that they had been outmanoeuvred. The hearings had no sooner concluded when the Medicine Hat News warned the government that it was " . . . playing with fire" when it proposed the granting of long leases to ranchers, and expressed concern that the Borden government might not treat the farmer with the regard to which he was entitled.[36] As soon as farmers became generally aware of the Commission's proposals they began to petition the Department of the Interior against such measures. Those who discovered that they were in areas where further homesteading was not to be allowed were especially alarmed and feared they might be driven from their lands. One group of thirty-one recent homesteaders southeast of

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[35]Canada, Department of the Interior, Ranching and Grazing Investigation Commission, 1913, pp. 5-7.

[36]Medicine Hat News, 28 November 1912.

Medicine Hat appealed to the government not to declare their region a free range area. Explaining that they had already taken one or more satisfactory crops from the land, the petitioners added optimistically that they had advanced past the experimental stage and had proven the country's suitability for agriculture. On the basis of this success the homesteaders informed Ottawa that they

> viewed with alarm any thought of the district being declared a free range country, as . . . it would create conditions under which it would be impossible for us to follow the occupation of farming with success we therefore appeal to your Department to protect us, and our holdings by not granting the request of the ranchers, but to allow the district to remain as at present, with benefit to the Dominion and district, and help us to become loyal and prosperous subjects of his Majesty King George V.[37]

A memorial from one local of the United Farmers of Alberta protested that the Ranching Commission had listened only to the "wealthy cattle owners."[38] The secretary of another farm group that took exception to the proposed setting apart of ranching areas informed the Department of the Interior in an accompanying letter:

> In wording the petition I have endeavoured to temper with moderation the zeal exhibited at the mass meeting held to take some steps to stay the proposed action. The settlers feel very keenly on this subject, and many things said at the meeting are unprintable.[39]

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[37] RG15, B2a, Vol. 172, 145330, Petition to Department of the Interior, 30 December 1912.

[38] Ibid., W. A. Lind to the Minister of the Interior, 1 February 1913.

[39] Ibid., E. E. Brown to Department of the Interior,

The supplicants informed the government that their municipality, which had grown to 1,000 inhabitants from forty or fifty just three years previous, was in danger of being engulfed in one of the large ranching areas if the recommendation that lands containing less than one-quarter arable acreage be set aside for ranching was approved. The farmers argued that if this came to pass it would not only exclude settlement from the considerable area of good farmland that remained in the vicinity, but the population would decrease and a return to frontier conditions would ensue. The government was further assured that settled farming country could maintain many more head of stock than the open range and that closed leases were desired only by "selfish men."[40]

While many farmers were naturally apprehensive, the ranchers' general assertion was valid for large tracts of the southwest were not suitable for agriculture and much of this territory had been unwisely settled. In addition to unfavourable government legislation cattlemen also had to contend with unscrupulous "locators" who made it their business to locate desirable quarter sections within leaseholds and then, for a fee or sometimes simply with a mind to increase

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28 March 1913, enclosing petition dated 25 March 1913 signed by fifty-six residents of the Russthorn district of southwestern Saskatchewan.

[40] Ibid., for additional opposition to the Commission's proposals see Ibid., Petition to Minister of the Interior, 8 April 1913, from farmers and small stockmen in the Cypress Hills.

settlement to a point where the cattleman was forced to abandon the area, directed newcomers to such parcels.[41] The increase of this practice through the spring of 1913 caused ranchers to press the government for speedy action on the Ranching Commission's proposals.[42] But despite the merits of the ranchers' case and the government's general sympathy towards the cattlemen's cause, the strong reaction against the recommendations of the Ranching Commission brought some hesitation. This caution was reinforced by the attitude of some officials within the Department of the Interior. B. L. York, head of the department's timber and grazing branch, was of the opinion that the commissioners were too generous. He argued that within the proposed tract to be set aside for grazing was a considerable quantity of agricultural land, that the withdrawal of such lands from homestead entry would isolate existing homesteaders and prevent them from maintaining schools and churches, and would consequently lead to continuous bitter opposition of those settlers within the tract as well as those without, who desired homestead entry. The head of the timber and grazing branch cautioned that the

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[41] Ibid., R. Sexsmith, Asst. Ranch Inspector, to the Department of the Interior, 14 May 1913. The Asst. Ranch Inspector urged the Department, in fairness to the stockmen, to withdraw all leases from homestead entry until the new lease policy was decided in order to prevent this widespread practice.

[42] Ibid., H. Butcher, Secretary, Twin Butte Cattle and Horse Association to the Minister of the Interior, 29 July 1913.

Ranch Commission did not have the time to make a personal examination of the territory shown on their map to be set aside and were guided in their selection by ranchers living in the different localities affected who were naturally interested in having as large a tract as possible reserved. York forwarded repeated memorandums to his superiors outlining his objections and suggesting that the provision of closed leases after inspection was sufficient to safeguard the ranchers' interests without setting aside an entire region in which further homestead entry would not be permitted.[43]

The growing opposition to the commission's report complicated what had originally been planned as simply a public formality and caused the Minister of the Interior, W. J. Roche, to seek additional assurance.[44] Roche requested a personal assessment of the recommendations from A. E. Cross, and, in view of Cross' previous exertions on the ranchers' behalf before the commission, it is not surprising that his reply to the Minister, after consulting with certain of his ranch friends, was in favour of the recommendations.[45] The

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[43] Ibid., Memorandum, B. L. York to J. G. Mitchell, Secretary to the Minister, 16 April 1913; Memorandum, B. L. York to J. G. Mitchell, 8 May 1913; Memorandum, B. L. York to W. J. Roche, Minister of the Interior, 25 September 1913.

[44] The Ranche Commission had been appointed by Roche's predecessor, Robert Rogers.

[45] Cross Papers, B69, F542, W. J. Roche to A. E. Cross, 20 November 1913; A. E. Cross to D. Hardwick, 29 November 1913; A. E. Cross to W. J. Roche, 29 November 1913; A. E. Cross to W. J. Roche, 3 December 1913. Cross' reply was

other person of whom the Minister sought advice was the one on whom previous Conservative governments had relied, William Pearce.[46] In keeping with past practice and his profound interest in efficient land use in the south, his reply was detailed and reflected the insight of almost thirty years experience in the region. Given such an opportunity Pearce could not resist a gibe at the policy of the former Liberal government which he characterized as being devoted to demonstrating that the lease system in force from 1882 to 1896 was erroneous. Pearce was pleased to note that the intervening decade had demonstrated the desirability of the closed leases. The former Superintendent of Mines expressed his support in principle with the Ranche Commission's report

> . . . when I review closely the meteorological conditions which have existed during the past 30 years I can come to but one conclusion, that . . . for probably 40 percent of what is considered the grazing areas the conditions have for 75 percent of that period proved sufficiently favourable to furnish a fair return to the farmer in the way of grain and fodder cultivation providing of course the soil and topographical conditions were suitable. There are some districts which during that time have not had the meteorological conditions fitted to produce a crop 25 percent of the time. No mixed farming settlement should be planted in any district except where at least fair crops can be obtained for at least two-thirds of the time.[47]

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followed by a visit to Ottawa by an official delegation from the W.S.G.A. who in turn urged quick action on the terms recommended by the commission. See W.S.G.A. Papers, B1, F3, Minutes, 2 January 1914, pp. 220-221, Special General Meeting.

[46]Pearce Papers, 14- -H, W. J. Roche to W. Pearce, 17 November 1913.

[47]Ibid., p. 3.

Starting from this premise Pearce examined each of the recommendations. With regard to the map delineating the lands to be reserved for grazing purposes he observed that considerable change could be made that would fortify the government against the adverse criticism that Pearce knew from experience would inevitably ensue. There was only one provision of real concern to the stockmen to which Pearce took exception. He viewed the proposed 24,000 acre maximum for leases as excessive and suggested that a 12,000 to 15,000 acre maximum would be more appropriate as this was sufficient for a herd of 500 head and would encourage ranching operations of a more desirable size.[48] In all, Pearce's characteristic reply was more complete and showed greater political awareness than did the report of the commission.

The grazing regulations which were finally approved by Order-in-Council several months later show the mark of Pearce's appraisal as well as the vigorous protests of certain farm groups. Under the new provisions leases of up to 12,000 acres of vacant dominion lands unsuitable for agriculture were made available to British subjects at a rental of two cents per acre per annum. The new leases were closed to settlement during the ten year period for which they were in force and at the end of the lease period, if the government decided to re-lease the lands covered, the holder of the

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[48] Ibid., pp. 9-10.

lease had prior right to a renewal. Those with leases granted under previous regulations were entitled to relinquish their old lease if it had ten or more years to run, and have the new regulations apply regardless of whether or not the old lease was over 12,000 acres. In other words, previous lessees were favoured and could have leases of more than 12,000 acres. Other of the more important provisions included the obligation of the lessee within three years to build and maintain a herd equal to one animal for every thirty acres, as well as the requirement that at least 25 per cent of the herd be breeding stock. The latter was intended to discourage the less desirable feeder operations that had recently appeared in the south, whose practice was to ship thousands of inexpensive Mexican steers north, feed them for the summer on Canadian grass and then market the stock in the fall. In an obvious gesture towards the leaseholders' farm and other neighbours, the lessee was required to enclose his lease with a suitable fence, and was denied lake, river or creek frontage in excess of one mile for every four miles in the depth of his lease. In areas where several parties desired the same tract of land and where it would be an injustice to give the lease to any one person, and where it was also impracticable to divide the lands, the Minister was permitted to withdraw the land from homestead entry and reserve it for public grazing. The lessee was permitted to cultivate any portion of his leasehold so long as the purpose was to

grow feed and was not for barter or sale. In a token effort to encourage homesteaders to leave unsuitable lands in the grazing country the regulations provided that the holder of an unpatented homestead could, after the Inspector of Ranches declared the land unfit for agriculture, sell his improvements to the rancher and be granted the right to re-enter for land elsewhere.[49]

While this was a long way from reserving large sections of the southwest for grazing purposes only and forbidding homestead entry, as recommended by the Ranching Commission, the new grazing regulations promised a degree of security that the ranching industry had not known for a decade and a half. Though many cattlemen had hoped for more, all recognized the significance of the gain that had been achieved. The new regulations moved one stockman to send his personal compliments to the Department of the Interior. "I see no reason that the livestock industry will not grow rapidly if given a chance" he wrote, "we have suffered hard and long but now comes our rejoicing. . . ."[50] In his annual report the Inspector of Ranches stated that practically all stockmen seemed satisfied with the new regulations and that renewed zeal and energy were everywhere evident since the

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[49] RG15, B2a, Vol. 172, 145330, pt. 5, Order-in-Council, 16 February 1914.

[50] Ibid., H. A. Noble to B. L. York, 17 March 1914. See also W. H. Ogle, President, Saskatchewan Stock Growers' Association, to Secretary, Minister of the Interior, 3 March 1914.

ranchers were assured the premanency of their leases.[51] The Ranch Inspector's encouraging assessment was seconded by the Dominion Land Agent in Calgary who praised the new regulations and noted the expansion of the Calgary stock yards to keep pace with the sudden rapid growth of the livestock market.[52]

Coupled with the incentive created by a satisfactory lease policy was a suddenly buoyant beef market. Between 1911 and 1913 the price of beef practically doubled. In the latter year steers sold for 8-1/2 cents per pound live weight, or from $100 to $200 per head, the highest prices ever known in the west.[53] The cause of this dramatic increase in price was the scarcity of cattle that had followed the depletion of the ranchers' herds. The Ranch Inspector judged that cattle were so scarce that there was hardly enough beef in Saskatchewan and Alberta to feed the local population let alone supply foreign markets. The situation roused one of the local Calgary papers to report:

> for several years . . . the amount of stock available for market purposes has been continually decreasing with the result that meat prices have soared out of all reach of the common people, while in a great many sections of the country the grain which has been grown in

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[51] Canada, Department of the Interior, Annual Report, 1913-1914, Report of the Inspector of Ranches, p. 139.

[52] Ibid., Report of the Agent of Dominion Lands, Calgary, p. 14.

[53] Canada, Department of the Interior, Annual Report, 1912-1913, Report of the Inspector of Ranches, p. 144.

> such preponderance, to the exclusion of livestock, has been a drag on the market so that the farmers have been heavy losers.[53]

The paper urged agriculturists to go into stock raising for their own, and the public's benefit.

Beyond the encouragement offered by the new lease regulations and the return of good markets, the rancher's confidence was restored most of all by the renewed political influence that came with their party's election victory in 1911. The new government after all met their collective request to alter the lease system, and at the individual level ranchers understood that their persuasive power had increased and that henceforth their appeals would receive serious consideration. The cattlemen's favoured solicitor, R. B. Bennett, was the director of party patronage for the southern half of the province[55] and stockmen individually or through A. E. Cross were soon using their advantage to good effect.[56] In all, with permanent leases, soaring prices, and a government in whom they had confidence it appeared to those ranchers who had survived the settlers' onslaught that the corner had been turned and that the cattle kingdom would yet survive.

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[54] Ibid., p. 145, quoting one of the Calgary papers.

[55] Cross Papers, B68, F534, A. E. Cross to A. Kerfoot, 25 February 1913.

[56] Ibid., See Cross-Kerfoot and Cross-Bennett correspondence on files 533, 534, 538. See also F537, A. E. Cross to R. B. Bennett, 14 October 1913; R. B. Bennett to A. E. Cross, 28 October 1913.

# CHAPTER VIII

## DROUGHT AND THE "SOD-BUSTERS" RETREAT 1914-1919

The expansion or contraction of the cattle industry was essentially determined by the availability or deficiency of land and markets. In 1914, with the vast improvement in cattle prices and the existence of a suitable lease system, the industry was thus poised for a period of growth. Hundreds of ranchers obtained leases or changed their old ones to the new form and began to establish or increase their breeding herds. The confidence and prosperity that the decade brought to the cattle industry contrasts sharply with the position of the homesteader in the southwest who remained skeptical of the new government and who eventually faced disaster when confronted with the long-predicted dry cycle. While the Conservative government's grazing lands policy was viewed with alarm by many, the ranchers' horizons had suddenly expanded by 1914 as the Department of the Interior set about the task of translating the provisons of the new policy into functional administrative procedures. In this task the heavy hand of the Minister characteristic of Frank Oliver's administration was absent and federal officials were left more or less to themselves to work out

the details of interpretation, procedure and administration. Aware of the political sensitivity of the farm-ranch question in the southwest that had plagued them for the past thirty years, and because of the rather loose construction of some of the provisions of the act, department officials proceeded slowly and it was several years before the new legislation was functioning efficiently. In general the department's efforts to make the regulations workable show a desire, particularly on the part of officials in the west, to arrive at an interpretation and administrative routine that was acceptable to the ranch interests.

It was initially decided to administer the application and granting of the new leases entirely from Ottawa. Ranchers immediately complained that this was much too time consuming. The department therefore altered the procedure so that applications could be accepted by local Dominion Land Agents who were authorized to reserve temporarily all available land covered by the application. Final approval then came later from Ottawa, pending assessment of the property by the Inspector of Ranches.[1] Senior officials in Ottawa were never prepared to abandon final authority in the granting of leases to western officials. From the Minister's point of view

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[1] RG15, B2a, Vol. 173, 145330, pt. 6, B. L. York to Dominion Land Agent, Calgary, 8 April 1914; B. L. York to Dominion Land Agent, Calgary, 19 July 1914; B. L. York to the Deputy Minister, 2 November 1914.

there was an obvious political advantage to be maintained, but it seems also that there was always a reluctance on the part of the Deputy Minister, the Dominion Land Commissioner, and the head of the timber and grazing section, to trust fully the judgment of an Inspector of Ranches who frequently seemed to be overly sympathetic to the cattlemen's interests.

Interpretation of some of the provisions was a more fundamental problem than that of devising administrative routine. The department quickly learned for example that the 12,000 acre assignment clause could not be made legally binding on those holding leases under the former regulations.[2] The "stock homestead" clause in the Dominion Land Act posed an even greater difficulty. This recent provision permitted a homesteader in the southern region to earn the patent for his homestead by the substitution of stock in lieu of breaking and seeding. The existence of this clause in the Dominion Land Act made the implementation of the new grazing regulations especially difficult. The question was immediately raised by the Inspector of Ranches as to what constituted the difference between a quarter section suitable for a stock homestead and one which was suitable only for a grazing lease. The inspector was left to make a purely subjective judgment in reporting whether a piece of land which had been applied for as a grazing lease would be more suitably used

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[2] Ibid., B. L. York to the Deputy Minister, 17 June 1914.

in this way or for homesteading under the stock clause. Departmental guidance as to how the decision was to be made confused the matter further. The inspector was reminded, lest he be too much inclined to favour the big rancher, that if in the tract applied for there was sufficient suitable land for stock homesteads the land should not be recommended for a grazing lease, " . . . the object being to avoid as far as possible, granting leases for lands which are fairly fit for stock homesteads."[3] It was suggested further that in the southern region the ranch inspector interpret his instructions liberally on the side of the applicant for a grazing lease, while elsewhere he was told to exercise care " . . . not to tie up under grazing lease, lands which settlers could profitably homestead under the Stock Clause." Anyone familiar with the stock industry could see that there was a basic conflict here. Finally, in desperation after being advised that he was not pointing out in his reports to the department whether or not land was fit for homesteading under the stock clause, the Inspector of Ranches pleaded that he could not make any sense of Ottawa's directives.

> . . . to allow a Homesteader to take a Homestead under the Stock Clause it would be necessary for him to have sufficient grass to run cattle enough to make a living for himself and family during the whole year, and I might honestly say that I do not think that there is

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[3] Ibid., W. W. Cory, Deputy Minister to J. W. Greenway, Commissioner of Dominion Lands, 22 February 1915.

> a Homestead or a quarter section of land in the Province of Alberta at least none that I have seen, which will carry sufficient stock during the period of [a] year. . . .[4]

The inspector pointed out that additional adjoining lands would have to be reserved for the homesteader's cattle as he could not survive on a quarter section and he advised his superiors that he could make no recommendations regarding lands suitable for stock homesteads until they could provide him with a definition of what was meant by "Stock Homesteads." In the end Ottawa was unable to formulate such a definition and henceforth the "stock clause" in the Dominion Land Act seems to have been ignored.

The difficulty faced by the Inspector of Ranches manifests a problem which had confronted the stockmen for over a quarter of a century. Few eastern officials outside the Department of the Interior's timber and grazing branch really appreciated just how different the southwest was climatically from the rest of the prairie region, and they seldom understood the economic structure of the western beef-raising business. While it was widely agreed that the revival of the ranching industry should be assisted through the issuance of more permanent leases, many still seem to have harboured the deep seated feeling that the big ranchers' resurgence should be a temporary phenomenon. For this reason they preferred the ten rather than the fifteen or twenty-one year

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[4] Ibid., G. M. Cloakley, Inspector of Ranches to B. L. York, 26 April 1915.

lease. The ranchers might have the land for the decade, while the settlement frontier paused and farming techniques were refined, before a renewed push into the dry region was commenced. The cattlemen's successful adaptation was not preferred for his economic enterprise precluded further population growth. If cereal agriculture could not succeed then the next preferable alternative in the minds of most was the small "mixed" farm or the small "stock" farm. It was believed that this was not only desirable but in the long run inevitable as late arriving settlers were forced to take poorer land.[5] There was thus an underlying concern in some quarters that the prospects of future homesteaders not be compromised and the region locked into a perpetual lease system. Such anxiety was traditionally strongest within the Department of the Interior's lands branch and on occasion set this section at odds with the timber and grazing division. Conflict between these two departments as to the procedure to be followed on the cancellation or termination of a grazing lease provides a case in point. The practice until the summer of 1915 was simply to post notice in the Land Office that such lands were available for homestead entry in the usual way. In the view of the head of the timber and grazing branch this procedure was, as he informed the minister,

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[5] Ibid., Memorandum, H. E. Hume to B. L. York, 12 April 1915.

quite unsatisfactory.

> If a rancher desires to lease a cancelled ranche, or a portion thereof, he is obliged to line up in the Land Office with intending homesteaders when the land is thrown open. The result, most likely, would be that if he were first in line and applied for the whole tract, that any intending homesteaders who might be present would be dissatisfied, and, on the other hand, if he were not first, the homesteaders ahead of him would take up homesteads at different points in the tract, and thus spoil the tract for grazing.[6]

Since, in the case of all closed leases, the land had been reported unfit for agriculture before they were granted, he argued that it was hardly logical to open the land on termination of the lease on a first come basis. It was suggested that before such lands were opened another inspection be made and unless reason was found to change the original assessment, the land be reserved for grazing applications only.

The Commissioner of Dominion Lands on the other hand was opposed to this recommendation. He asserted that a more satisfactory policy, and one that would be subject to "very much less criticism", would be to throw the land open to all applicants for leases or homesteads with the onus of proof as to the character of the land to be left to the individual applying. Each person should then be left alone to complete the duties required under his class of entry. The Commissioner's view represents the traditional laissez faire attitude, that each individual had the right to judge the land

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[6] Ibid., Memorandum, B. L. York to the Minister of the Interior, 20 April 1915.

for himself as well as the right to use the land for the purpose he chose, with his success or failure not the direct concern of the government. The commissioner warned that

> numberless cases can be cited where land said to be unsuited for agricultural purposes have been included in forest reserves, grazing leases, irrigation reserves and afterwards have been withdrawn from such reserves because of pressure being brought on the Department and the matter being closely investigated it was found that the lands were fit for agriculture.[7]

The Commissioner's implication that most of the closed lands could be farmed was not however accepted by the Minister of the Interior when he was compelled to adjudicate this difference of opinion within his department. In view of the fact that the Department was compelled to send relief to drought-stricken settlers in the south during 1915 the arguments of the land office seemed strangely out of place and the Commissioner was curtly informed that the minister was " . . . adverse to opening up for homestead entry lands which we know to be unsuitable for farming especially in the Southern country."[8] He was informed further that the policy advocated by the timber and grazing branch would be followed and instructed to include within the notices advertising the availability of terminated or cancelled grazing leases the warning that squatting on such grazing lands would not be recognized in any way.

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[7]RG15, B2a, Vol. 173, 145330, pt. 7, J. W. Greenway, Commissioner of Dominion Lands to W. W. Cory, 25 August 1915.

[8]Ibid., W. W. Cory, Deputy Minister to J. W. Greenway, 27 September 1915.

Another provision of the new grazing regulations that troubled officials was the British subject clause.[9] There was initially some uncertainty whether a lease taken by a British subject could afterwards legally be transferred or assigned by its new owner to an American citizen. Despite instructions sent to ranch inspectors that the government would not allow such assignments[10] there remained a question as to the legality of the department's position with regard to companies incorporated under dominion or provincial law. Uncertainty regarding the department's insistence that companies furnish statutory declarations showing the president or chairman and the majority of directors to be British subjects caused officials at one point to consider the War Measures Act of 1917 as a vehicle to support their action if challenged.[11] Reliance on such an awkward expedient was ended by a subsequent government decision to allow all but companies incorporated in enemy countries equal rights in the development of Canadian natural resources. As grazing lands were included within the broad definition of natural resources the question was settled. Individuals making applications for leases were however still required to submit

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[9]RG15, B2a, Vol. 172, 145330, pt. 5, Inspector of Ranches to Department of the Interior, 19 March 1914.

[10]RG15, B2a, Vol. 173, 145330, pt. 6, B. L. York to Inspector of Ranches, 13 May 1914.

[11]Ibid., 145330, pt. 7, E. Rayan to B. L. York, 29 January 1917; Memorandum, B. L. York to the Deputy Minister, 14 May 1914.

a statutory declaration of British citizenship.[12]

Though the new lease regulations were of sound intent, they were poorly formulated. As a result the new policy from the outset was plagued by conflicting interpretations and it was not until 1917 that the new system began to work efficiently. Such difficulties were however overshadowed by the new feeling of confidence which the policy engendered in the ranching country. Cattlemen abandoned ideas of going out of business and made capital commitments that could not have been considered when the permanence of leases could only be guaranteed for two years. The increase in the numbers of leaseholders from 1,780 in 1912 to 6,105 in 1920 and the addition of over 2,500,000 leased acres as shown in Table XI is evidence of the ranchers' change in attitude and of the success of the government's new policy.

The vast expansion of leased acreage was predictably accompanied by renewed animosity between ranchers and settlers in many districts. The new group of petitions, complaints and appeals that were directed to the Department of the Interior during the second decade of the twentieth century, like those that had been forwarded to the department for the previous twenty-five years, followed a definite pattern and reflect, at each stage, the relative strength of the contending parties. During the 1880's and 1890's protests came mainly

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[12] Ibid., B. L. York to Dominion Land Agents, 13 June 1917.

TABLE XI

LEASE ACREAGE 1912-1922[13]

| Year | No. of Leases | Manitoba | Saskatchewan | Alberta | British Columbia | Yearly Increase | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1912-13 | 1,780 | 818 | 1,450,077 | 2,099,912 | 412,063 | | 3,962,870 |
| 1913-14 | 1,916 | 818 | 1,696,898 | 2,402,622 | 380,553 | 517,932 | 4,480,802 |
| 1914-15 | 2,457 | 24,843 | 2,106,222 | 2,330,110 | 392,380 | 372,752 | 4,853,555 |
| 1915-16 | 3,352 | 34,596 | 2,313,437 | 2,500,589 | 366,445 | 461,512 | 5,215,067 |
| 1916-17 | 4,060 | 64,399 | 2,724,368 | 2,509,527 | 391,170 | 474,397 | 5,689,464 |
| 1917-18 | 4,796 | 66,563 | 2,723,217 | 2,563,145 | 393,253 | 56,714 | 5,746,178 |
| 1918-19 | 5,346 | 86,033 | 2,824,654 | 2,850,002 | 410,606 | 422,117 | 6,168,295 |
| 1920 | 6,105 | 126,679 | 2,869,084 | 3,095,955 | 407,030 | 330,453 | 6,498,748 |
| 1921 | 6,201 | 140,629 | 3,021,556 | 2,908,215 | 417,234 | -11,114 | 6,487,634 |
| 1922 | 6,518 | 415,246 | 2,911,365 | 2,879,504 | 415,246 | -145,682 | 6,341,952 |

[13]Canada, Department of Interior, Annual Reports, 1912-1922, Reports of the Deputy Minister.

from would-be settlers opposed to the hegemony of the cattlemen. In the first decade after the turn of the century the balance shifted so that appeals to the department for redress came mainly from ranchers who alleged that they were being driven from the region. After 1912 complaints again came mainly from farmers and as such are a measure of the cattlemen's renewed political favour.

The nature of the farmers' concern during this period was indicated in the initial protests against the new lease regulations. Small groups of homesteaders in predominantly grazing areas knew that unless their communities were allowed to expand they would be unable to acquire or maintain desirable social services. One group in the Manyberries area fifty miles south of Medicine Hat protested that they were surrounded by a large grazing lease which contained much arable land. Urging that the land be opened to settlement, one farmer explained, "We want neighbors--farmers who will check the weeds, we want schools, churches, stores, post offices, wagon roads, railroads, [and] coal mines."[14] The department in turn advised that the land in question had been inspected before the lease was granted and declared unfit for agriculture, but in response to repeated appeals finally agreed to order a second inspection. The homesteaders

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[14]RG15, B2a, Vol. 146, 581514, T. L. Duncan to the Minister of the Interior, 23 August 1913; see also T. L. Duncan to the Minister of the Interior, 5 April 1913, petition enclosed.

however gained no support from the Inspector of Ranches who reported after his inspection that while much of the land in question could grow good grain, rainfall was too deficient to assure continued success and the region should therefore remain closed. The inspector also informed the department that J. H. Wallace, the rancher whose lease enclosed the settlers, had agreed to build a school house and pay the salary of a teacher to be selected by the homesteaders. Wallace also agreed to allow the settlers' stock to run on his lease as well as to purchase whatever grain, hay or green feed they were prepared to sell at market price.[15] In the view of the Ranch Inspector and the department this was a very fair proposition and the farmers' petition was denied. At the same time, in order further to protect his interests, Wallace requested and was granted a new ten year closed lease to replace his former lease which was subject to two years notice.[16] Not satisfied with Wallace's offer, the settlers made repeated requests and received continued refusals from the government over the next four years. At one point the homesteaders appealed to the Governor General with the slogan "a farmer on each quarter section" to assist

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[15] Ibid., G. H. Cloakley to B. L. York, 24 April 1914.

[16] Ibid., W. W. Cory, Deputy Minister to B. L. York, 5 February 1915.

the Empire in its hour of need.[17] Other appeals to assist their cause directed to the Prime Minister, Robert Borden, Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the Minister of Agriculture proved to no avail. The department remained adamant and became increasingly annoyed at the homesteaders' persistent claim that the land in question was suitable for farming.

The debate between the department and irate farm petitioners naturally centred upon the government's definition of land "unsuitable" for agriculture. Farmers who wanted lands set aside by the department were never prepared to accept the technical judgments of people like William Pearce or the Inspector of Ranches whom they saw as guardians of vested interests. One agitated homesteader, who took exception to the department's claim that land leased to the Sarnia Ranch Company was unsuitable for agricultural purposes, protested: "I can assure you, Sir, on my oath, that is [the land desired] - - I may safely say - - <u>the best land for farming</u> purposes in the whole township! I live only about 100 yards from said land. . . ."[18] In the Bassano area, seventy miles southeast of Calgary, 300 farmers requested that Ottawa cancel seventeen leases totalling about 90,000 acres in their vicinity. In addition to presenting the

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[17] <u>Ibid.</u>, T. L. Duncan to The Duke of Connaught 21 January 1915.

[18] PAS, P142, Department of Agriculture, Lands Branch, 52992, W. Guenthner to Department of the Interior, 23 February 1912. This file was originally part of the Department of the Interior records.

usual arguments about ranchers' cattle trampling their crops, and the need for a greater population to warrant the building of roads and construction of schools, the settlers insisted that the area in question was good farm land capable of supporting 300 additional families.[19] Questioning the integrity of the Inspector of Ranches, the editor of the town paper asserted, after conducting his own investigation, that

> we do not blame the holders of the leases for clinging most tenaciously to such rich and productive leases. With grasses belly deep in every direction these leases make the most excellent ranch lands, but any intimation--expressed or implied--that they are not rich agricultural land at the same time, cannot be construed as anything more nor less than a biased opinion activated by purely selfish interests.[20]

To its credit the department stuck firmly to its belief that not all lands could be farmed, the editor's picture of "belly deep grass in every direction" was not accepted and this and other petitions were ignored.[21] This attitude was vindicated over the next few years as the worst period of drought experienced in the southwest since the early 1890's drove beleaguered homesteaders from the land. The drought

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[19] RG15, B2a, Vol. 147, 591130, A. T. Connolly, Chairman; Special Leases Committee of Bassano Board of Trade, to W. J. Roche, Minister of the Interior, 10 June 1916.

[20] Ibid., clipping, Bassano Mail, 10 August 1916.

[21] Ibid., B. L. York to A. T. Connolly, 26 September 1916. See also RG15, B2a, Vol. 147, 590712, petition concerning grazing lands in southern Saskatchewan; Vol. 148, 592184, petition concerning grazing lands near Jenner, Alberta. RG15, B2a, Vol. 173, 145330, pt. 6, G. H. Fawcett to Department of the Interior, 27 April 1914.

also brought a temporary halt to the petitions seeking cancellation of the grazing leases.

While drought and government policy stayed the advance of the agrarian frontier in the southwest after 1912 and relieved the pressure on remaining grazing lands, improved beef markets further assisted the ranchers' recovery. In 1913 the price paid for choice export steers reached 7-3/4 cents per pound, leading the Alberta Livestock Commission to explain that "the high prices that have prevailed during the last two years for all kinds of livestock, together with the unsatisfactory conditions that have attended the marketing of grain, have combined to create a keen interest in the production of livestock."[22] The principal export market for the gradually increasing beef surplus in the Canadian southwest was Chicago, to which Canadian cattlemen finally gained duty-free access in October 1913, and it was largely the influence of this market along with increased war-time demands that held beef prices at their highest levels in history.[23] During 1915 and 1916 there remained an active demand and firm prices for all classes of livestock and the increasing registration of new cattle brands (2,838 in 1916) is indicative of the increased popularity of the

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[22]Alberta, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1913, Report of the Livestock Commissioner, p. 136.

[23]Ibid., 1914, p. 75.

beef-raising business.[24] As in the past the export industry continued to be dominated by the large producers. The huge "76" ranch which began operations in the Powder River country in Wyoming in the late 1870's and moved to Canada in 1886, and was eventually acquired by Gordon, Ironside and Fares, in 1917 possessed over 250,000 acres of deeded and leased land. The "76" herds which were maintained at 10,000 to 12,000 head produced several thousand head for export yearly.[25] Other big ranches owned by George Lane, Pat Burns, the Cresswell Cattle Company and the Matador Land and Cattle Company produced in a similar fashion.[26]

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[24]Ibid., 1916, Report of the Recorder of Brands, p. 122. After 1913 the allocation of new cattle brands averaged over 2,000 per year. While some of these registrations represented routine changes that came with changes in ownership et cetera, it is probably safe to say that at least one half the registrations resulted from the establishment of new cattle herds and as such are a rough measure of the industry's growth in the south. It should be noted also that many farmers who kept a few head of cattle on fenced pastures did not bother to obtain registered brands so that most of the new registrations were for herds in excess of fifty cattle and were from the south where cattle still ran freely on the open range in some areas. See also, Alberta, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1915, Report of the Livestock Commissioner, p. 74; 1916, p. 63.

[25]T. B. Long, Seventy Years a Cowboy; a Biography (Regina: Western Printers Association, 1959), pp. 97-99.

[26]PAS, The Matador Land and Cattle Co., 1905-1916. In October 1913 the Matador shipped 2,057 head from southern Saskatchewan to Chicago and netted $147,228. In November 1914 the 1,179 steers sent to Chicago averaged $93.40 net each and earned the manager of the Canadian operation praise from the company's general manager. "This means right at $17.00 a head more than what we were offered for the cattle in Canada and everybody connected with the Company are glad to hear of the splendid sales made by you." MacBain to

Cattle prices continued high in 1917 with choice steers ranging from 9-1/2 to 9-3/4 cents, and average butcher steers from 8-1/4 to 8-3/4 cents at Calgary during June. Equivalent prices for the same month at Winnipeg were 10-1/4 to 11-1/4 and 8-1/4 to 9-1/4 and at Chicago steers ranged from 8-1/2 to 13-3/4 cents depending on quality.[27] In 1918, with the cessation of hostilities in Europe, beef prices dropped slightly and in 1919 dropped further in response to decreasing demand, increased supply, and the effect of the third year of drought which forced cattlemen to reduce their herds for want of sufficient feed and pasture.[28] The downward trend in prices came just as the production from newly established herds reached its peak and smaller stock-raisers were forced to sell their cattle in a declining market, thus reducing their own profits and at the same time contributing an excess supply which held prices down after 1920. This cyclical pattern of high returns followed by a period of lower prices demonstrates a problem inherent in the beef industry. As prices rise more producers are attracted, as

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J. R. Lair, 6 November 1914. Sales in 1915 consisted of four trainloads totalling 2,237 head (averaging 1,204 pounds each) which netted an average of $85.58 each.

[27]Cross Papers, B110, F883, "W.S.G.A. Bulletin No. 5". July 1917.

[28]Alberta, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1918, Report of the Livestock Commissioner, pp. 64-65; 1919, p. 13.

was the case between 1911 and 1914. Once farmers and others decide to enter the cattle business or vastly expand existing herds, it requires from three to five years before this decision results in a greater supply of cattle reaching the market. As the increased numbers of cattle begin to reach the market the beef price peaks and begins to decline. Eventually the prices decline to a point where the smaller producers are driven out of business. Then as the numbers of cattle taken to market decline prices begin to rise and the cycle begins again. The peaks of four such distinct cycles occurred in 1884, 1902, 1915, and 1928.[29] While this underlying pattern imposes a certain regularity to beef price trends, it must be emphasized that other outside forces such as the selling pressure that accompanied the decline of available grazing lands, the new government lease policy, and the impetus of a war economy, have direct influence upon the duration of upward and downward price movements as well as the level of the highs and lows, as is shown in the period discussed. It is evident also that the incidence of hardship imposed by this cycle weighs most heavily on the small producer who commences stock raising too late to gain the best prices and is compelled to sell in a falling market.

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[29]F. A. Rudd, "Production and Marketing of Beef Cattle From the Short Grass Plains Area of Canada", (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Alberta, 1935), p. 119.

Cattle exports during the period as well as the phenomenon of continued growth during the latter three years of a declining market are shown in Table XII below.

TABLE XII

CATTLE EXPORTS AND LOCAL SHIPMENTS
1912-1920[30]

| Year | Exports* | Local Shipments | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1912 | 56,544 | 78,708 | 135,252 |
| 1913 | 46,966 | 84,668 | 131,634 |
| 1914 | 60,572 | 87,635 | 148,207 |
| 1915 | 28,585 | 56,994 | 85,579 |
| 1916 | 33,568 | 108,349 | 141,917 |
| 1917 | 59,319 | 138,971 | 198,290 |
| 1918 | 99,570 | 235,624 | 335,194 |
| 1919 | 213,419 | 329,998 | 543,417 |

*Export means outside of Alberta

The most important factor in the improved health of the beef market was the opening of the Chicago market to Canadian cattle in 1913. Canadian stockmen had endeavoured to gain duty-free entry since the 1890's and many had shipped their cattle to this market intermittently over the preceding twenty years despite a prohibitive customs duty of 20 to

[30]Alberta, Department of Agriculture, Annual Reports, 1912-1920. These statistics show that the vast majority of the cattle marketed during these years came from the ranching region. It seems also that beef production in Alberta equalled or surpassed that of Manitoba and Saskatchewan combined, especially if one excludes the cattle produced in the ranching country of southwestern Saskatchewan. See Canada, Department of the Interior, Annual Report, 1914-1915, Report of the Deputy Minister, xxxi.

30 per cent. Once unrestricted entry was gained, the quality of cattle raised on the northern range assured their favourable reception as was demonstrated by the excellent prices paid for western cattle. Canadian success in the Chicago market proved however also to be a liability in the long run as the cattle lobby in the southwestern United States soon began to press for the exclusion of Canadian beef. Consequently for the next decade the main concern of Canadian cattlemen was the retention of free access to this market.

The importance and effect of the Chicago market upon western cattle producers is shown clearly in the returns from A. E. Cross' "A7" ranch. In the summer of 1912 Cross confided to a friend that while scarcity had pushed beef prices upward there was still no real competition amongst buyers and that prices paid were low compared to prices paid at markets outside the country.[31] The decision of the American government in October 1913 to open their markets to Canadian cattle completely changed the state of affairs and Canadian prices drifted upwards as the much more competitive Chicago market became the standard dictating beef prices over all of North America. Cross was informed of the change by telegram from a large Chicago commission firm hours after President Wilson signed the bill and though Cross' cattle

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[31]Cross Papers, B68, F525, A. E. Cross to W. R. MacInnes, 13 July 1912.

were not among those being sold in Chicago several weeks later, the price he was able to negotiate with Burns for his 1913 cattle was greatly improved by virtue of the Chicago alternative.[32] During 1914 Cross was approached by several Chicago commission houses seeking his business. The Clay, Robinson Company was particularly aggressive and sent an agent to visit all the larger centres in the cattle country during 1915. The company also began to forward weekly livestock reports to all the larger Canadian ranchers.[33] The end result was that the bargaining power of the Canadian cattleman was greatly increased. As Cross informed a friend in the autumn of 1915 at the onset of the range market season: "I am waiting for Mr. Burns to return from the East, and if I cannot get the proper price here, I intend to ship them to Chicago through Clay, Robinson and Company."[34] When it turned out that he was unable to get what he judged to be a satisfactory price, Cross sent his cattle to Chicago and was pleased with the results.[35] By 1916 all the large ranchers

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[32] Ibid., B69, F541, A. E. Cross to Clay, Robinson and Co., 14 November 1913; A large shipment of cattle from the Maunsell ranch near Pincher Creek to Chicago in late October 1913 sold between $8.15 and $7.40 a hundred weight. B69, F437, Clay, Robinson and Co. to A. E. Cross, 22 October 1913.

[33] Ibid., B108, F871, Clay, Robinson and Co., to A. E. Cross, 24 June 1915.

[34] Ibid., B109, F873, A. E. Cross to G. Porter, 20 October 1915.

[35] Ibid., B109, F876, Clay, Robinson and Co., to A. E. Cross, 17 November 1915. The 185 head that Cross marketed returned between $7.60 and $8.80 per hundred weight for

were shipping cattle to the Chicago market and on 13 November 1916 Cross' cattle topped the market to break the previous record for range cattle.[36]

Cross' success reflected his longstanding policy of stressing quality over quantity, as the plaudits extended by his fellow cattlemen acknowledged. When asked to account for his stock raising accomplishments for the benefit of the readers of the North West Farmer, Cross stressed that quality made a vast difference in the net returns and urged stockmen to purchase the best bulls they could afford. He recommended

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steers and $5.25 and $7.00 for cows. After all expenses were deducted the net proceeds equalled $17,409.98.

[36] Ibid., B109, F879, Clay, Robinson and Co. to A. E. Cross, 13 November 1916, sales receipt.

SALE

| Cattle | Class | Weight | Price | Amount |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 35 | steers | 50,120 | $10.75 | $5,387.90 |
| 68 | " | 96,150 | 10.40 | 9,999.60 |
| 22 | " | 31,000 | 9.75 | 3,022.50 |
| 17 | " | 23,160 | 9.25 | 2,142.30 |
| 38 | " | 50,000 | 9.75 | 4,875.00 |
| 37 | cows | 41,740 | 8.00 | 3,339.20 |
| 23 | " | 25,500 | 7.35 | 1,874.25 |
| Total 240 | | 317,670 | | $30,640.75 |

CHARGES

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Freight Charges | $2,600.96 (13 cars) | |
| Yardage 240 | 60.00 | |
| Hay 5400 lbs. | 54.00 | |
| Commission | 139.35 | |
| Total | $2,854.31 | |
| Net Proceeds | | $27,786.44 |
| Shipping | | 114.48 |
| | | $27,671.96 |

the Shorthorn breed as the proper foundation for a beef herd and expressed his opinion that the best range steer was the progeny of a Shorthorn cow and a Hereford bull.[37]

Canadian cattle continued to do well in Chicago through 1917, 1918 and 1919. In September 1917 Alberta steers again topped the market at $15.50 per hundred weight and in October 1919 a shipment of Burns' cattle gained similar distinction.[38] In the latter year Cross gained $15.25 for his top steers.[39] The shipments by P. Burns to Chicago during these years underlines the attractiveness of the American market and at the same time points to the fact that the more lucrative export market was dominated by the big producers. Smaller stockmen selling less than several carloads found it easier to sell locally unless they were able to persuade some of the bigger stockmen to include their cattle as part of a larger consignment. Moreover, the quality of cattle produced by many of the lesser stock raisers did not warrant the expense of shipping to the United States and thus they did not participate in the more lucrative export business. Most of the stock marketed by the growing numbers of small

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[37] Ibid., B109, F878, A. E. Cross to the North West Farmer (Winnipeg), 31 January 1916.

[38] Ibid., B109, F880, Clay, Robinson and Co. to A. E. Cross, 17 September 1917; BIII, F893, P. Burns to A. E. Cross, 3 October 1919.

[39] Ibid., B112, F897, telegram, Clay, Robinson and Co. to A. E. Cross, 12 November 1919.

producers was sold in Calgary or Winnipeg where the big cattlemen sold their inferior cattle.

While the cattlemen prospered during these years, grain farmers in the southwest generally fared less well and the movement of small farmers out of the foothill country gained momentum.[40] The confidence that abounded amongst farmers between 1896 and 1910 gradually evaporated as the fields that once produced bounteous harvests became increasingly reluctant and eventually barren. The drought that cattlemen had experienced during the 1880's returned to the southwest during the second decade of the twentieth century to verify the ranchers' persistent but unheeded warnings. Despite several severe drought years before 1917, it was not until 1919 and 1920, after three or four years of continuous crop failure, that many officials and farmers were prepared to admit that much of the southwest was unsuitable for cereal agriculture. Unfavourable climatic conditions had resulted in crop failures through much of the region in 1907 and the Department of the Interior was required to assist needy settlers with advances of grain to enable them to seed their 1908 crop. On the strength of the satisfactory 1908 harvest however the Deputy Minister dismissed the bad experience of

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[40] See for example, Ibid., B108, F870, Correspondence November 1914 to December 1915. The Cross papers contain letters during this period from numerous individuals anxious to sell their homesteads to Cross so that they might move elsewhere.

the year previous with the assurance: "It has [been] demonstrated beyond doubt that if the expectations of one season are not realized, those of the next may be safely relied upon. . . ."[41] In 1910 the government was again compelled to assist drought stricken settlers. At the same time the Department of the Interior was actively settling newcomers in the most seriously affected regions, and while the Commissioner of Immigration admitted that the hardship weighed most heavily on the recent homesteaders, he advised:

> It is unnecessary, just yet, to speak of the condition of these homesteaders, as they all, more or less, suffered by last year's drought. But they are a hopeful and energetic class, and not at all depressed over their prospects, especially owing to the abundant precipitation all winter. . . .[42]

Continued settlement was further justified by the rather devious means of speaking of a "good average crop." It was stated that because of the ever increasing acreage brought under cultivation the same climatic conditions were not likely to prevail in all regions and that therefore "the day when there can be a total crop failure in western Canada may be said to have passed away entirely. . . ."[43] In this manner, while drought was acknowledged in southern Alberta,

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[41] Canada, Department of the Interior, Annual Report, 1907-1908, Report of the Deputy Minister, p. i.

[42] Ibid., 1910-1911, Report of the Commissioner of Immigration, p. 95; Report of the Agent of Dominion Lands at Medicine Hat, p. 36.

[43] Ibid., Report of the Commissioner of Immigration, p. 95.

it was held that the 1910 season produced a good average crop. With this device the fact that some regions were more prone to crop failure could be ignored.

By 1912 the high hopes that farmers had held for winter wheat had begun to wane and acreages sown to this crop began to decline. Furthermore, the 1912 crop was seriously damaged by the fine spring-like weather that the foothill country experienced during February which, ironically, was the very condition that made the region so attractive for stock raising.[44] In the Pincher Creek area, formerly hailed as the centre of the winter wheat region, homesteaders began to leave the westernmost parts of the foothill region.[45] Elsewhere, in the Medicine Hat vicinity drought conditions were reported in some parts which, with the low price of grain, prevented many farmers from meeting their pre-emption payments.[46] The following year the Dominion Land Agent at Medicine Hat reported that many settlers had abandoned the region and that many of those remaining were beginning to recognize that "it [was] not advisable to depend wholly on the production of wheat and oats, and have reached the

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[44]Alberta, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1912, Crop Statistics, p. 49.

[45]Pincher Creek Echo, 5 April 1912.

[46]Canada, Department of the Interior, Annual Report, 1912-1913, Report of the Commissioner of Dominion Lands, pp. 15, 33.

conclusion that it is more profitable to have some stock."[47] The Alberta Department of Agriculture was also concerned about the conditions on southern farms in 1913 and was pleased to note that "mixed" farming was on the increase. The department observed that:

> . . . a few successful years of growing grain crops turned the heads of many with the result that a serious attempt was made in many localities to engage exclusively in growing grain. The drought of 1910, unfavourable conditions in 1911 and again in 1912, clearly demonstrated that it was not wise to stake all on one crop.[48]

Drought conditions continued through 1914 in some parts of the southwest thus accelerating further the movement from marginal areas and the growing interest in stock raising.[49] This trend was temporarily arrested with the return of favourable climatic conditions in 1915 and 1916.[50] The resultant high crop yields coupled with excellent prices restored the farmers' optimism and led many in the south to continue their dependence upon grain production. In 1917 however the south again received below average rainfall

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[47] Ibid., 1913-14, Report of the Agent of Dominion Lands at Medicine Hat, p. 34.

[48] Alberta, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1913, Report of the Deputy Minister, p. 6.

[49] Ibid., 1914, Report of the Deputy Minister, p. 8. Pincher Creek Echo, 1 May 1914. Canada, Department of the Interior, Annual Report, 1914-1915, Report of the Deputy Minister, p. ix; Report of the Inspector of Ranches, Maple Creek, p. 142.

[50] Ibid., 1915-1916, Report of the Deputy Minister, p. 1. Report of the Inspector of Ranches, Maple Creek, p. 139.

which motivated the Alberta government to pass the Livestock Encouragement Act in order to promote diversification.[51] The "Cow Bill," as it was popularly known, established a fund from which farmers could borrow in order to purchase female breeding stock. The fact that the fund was oversubscribed within a few months points to the fact that most small farmers on 160 acres did not possess sufficient capital, not to mention sufficient land, to begin raising livestock. The following year in the grazing country was the driest on record and crop yields were the lowest ever. At the same time in central Alberta first class crops were harvested.[52] As the agricultural disaster in the south became ever more apparent unfortunate settlers within the region began to press the federal government to undertake extensive irrigation works. In response to such mounting requests the Deputy Minister of the Interior counselled in his 1918 annual report that while projects were desirable in what was again being called the semi-arid region, that "unfortunately there is only sufficient water available to irrigate 10 percent of the land requiring irrigation and plans for development must be limited by a consideration of this fact."[53]

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[51] Alberta, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1917, Report of the Livestock Commissioner, pp. 56-59.

[52] Ibid., 1918, Report of the Deputy Minister, pp. 9-11.

[53] Canada, Department of the Interior, Annual Report, 1918-1919, Report of the Deputy Minister, p. 23; See also, Report of the Director of the Reclamation Service, p. 6.

By 1917 farmers, who a few years before had urged the government to cancel the stock watering reservations established by William Pearce after 1886, were requesting that such a programme be implemented.[54] On the initiative of the Lethbridge Board of Trade a Water Conference was held in that community on 22 June 1917.[55] It was attended by officials of the federal and provincial governments as well as interested farm groups and representatives of the Canadian Pacific Railway. The consensus of the delegates was recorded in the motion:

> this conference respectfully requests that full inquiry be made by the Department of the Interior of the Dominion Government into the important question of reservation along the rivers, lake and coulee fronts for sanctuary for livestock in time of drought in the drier areas of Southern Alberta and Southern Saskatchewan, with a view to making such reservations.[56]

The Department of the Interior had been specifically awaiting the outcome of the conference, and given the unanimous interest in a water reserve policy abandoned the programme of disposal that Oliver had begun in 1905. The reserves remaining in William Pearce's once extensive system became the base of an expanded system jointly administered by the Timber and Grazing and Irrigation Branches.

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[54] See correspondence in RG15, B2, Vol. 164, 141376.

[55] See correspondence in RG15, B2a, Vol. 147, 586849.

[56] RG15, B2, Vol. 164, 141376, "Conference on Farm Water Supply".

The drought in the south continued through 1919 for the third consecutive year and by this time even the cattlemen began to suffer. Practically no crops were produced in what Department of the Interior officials had begun to call the "dry belt."[57] Hay was almost impossible to obtain and the larger ranchers were forced to import hay from the Edmonton area and in some cases from as far away as Winnipeg. Ranchers began to sell some of their breeding stock and others shipped their cattle to more favoured northern regions where, according to the Alberta Deputy Minister of Agriculture, "many districts throughout the centre and north were favoured by heavy local showers and in the Peace River country these were sufficiently frequent to meet requirements. In such areas good crops were harvested."[58] The deficiency of rainfall continued during 1920 and 1921. In the latter year very little rain fell in April and May, June was extremely dry and the newly sown crops were seriously damaged by the hot desiccating winds characteristic of the region so that in spite of the fact that July rainfall was near normal, it came too late to save most crops.[59] In 1922

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[57]Canada, Department of the Interior, Annual Report, 1920, Report of the Director of the Reclamation Service, p. 1.

[58]Alberta, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1919, Report of the Deputy Minister, pp. 9-11. Pincher Creek Echo, 28 November 1919; 12 December 1919.

[59]Canada, Department of the Interior, Annual Report, 1922, Report of the Director of the Reclamation Service, p. 175; 1921, pp. 1-4.

there was some improvement and a satisfactory crop was obtained in the western half of the southern region, but in the Medicine Hat area the drought continued and the wheat crop averaged a meagre nine bushels per acre. Reporting that central and northern Alberta also experienced a dry year, the Deputy Minister of Agriculture asserted that over-all agricultural conditions in Alberta had not improved over previous years.[60] The situation faced by farmers in the southwest was desperate, the last satisfactory crop harvested by most had been in 1915, property payments had long been discontinued and by 1920 many were without even basic necessities.[61] The critical moisture deficiency faced by the grain farmer in the southwest after 1915 can be inferred from Table XIII. It should be noted also that the decade began with a very dry year. The annual rainfall for 1910 at Calgary, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat and Edmonton equalled 12.0, 5.7, 6.5 and 14.4 inches respectively.[62]

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[60] Alberta, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1922, Report of the Deputy Minister, pp. 7, 95.

[61] Ibid., 1920, p. 10. "During the year it was found necessary in a few cases where families had suffered from repeated lightness of crops to give relief in household necessaries [sic] such as fuel and flour."

[62] Ibid., 1922, "Precipitation Averages 1885-1922", p. 107.

TABLE XIII

PRECIPITATION AND CROP PRODUCTION 1911-1920[63]

| Year | Calgary District Rainfall (in.) Growing Season | Calgary District Rainfall (in.) Yearly Total | Calgary District Yield (bu.) Wheat | Calgary District Yield (bu.) Oats | Lethbridge District Rainfall (in.) Growing Season | Lethbridge District Rainfall (in.) Yearly Total | Lethbridge District Yield (bu.) Wheat | Lethbridge District Yield (bu.) Oats |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1911 | 14.2 | 20.0 | 19.3 | 43.4 | 13.3 | 22.2 | 20.3 | 44.0 |
| 1912 | 13.7 | 20.1 | 20.6 | 38.5 | 6.6 | 13.2 | 17.8 | 35.2 |
| 1913 | 12.0 | 17.4 | 26.7 | 40.3 | 9.6 | 14.1 | 17.0 | 32.4 |
| 1914 | 7.9 | 17.7 | 17.5 | 29.6 | 7.3 | 17.6 | 8.7 | 14.6 |
| 1915 | 10.8 | 18.2 | 39.5 | 59.5 | 12.3 | 17.4 | 39.3 | 63.9 |
| 1916 | 9.0 | 13.9 | 28.1 | 45.2 | 13.6 | 25.9 | 29.4 | 49.3 |
| 1917 | 5.7 | 11.4 | 22.8 | 34.8 | 5.7 | 11.9 | 18.2 | 30.5 |
| 1918 | 5.7 | 9.1 | 10.2 | 20.3 | 3.5 | 8.9 | 8.0 | 13.0 |
| 1919 | 6.7 | 12.2 | 14.8 | 21.8 | 5.5 | 13.4 | 5.0 | 12.0 |
| 1920 | 7.3 | 14.4 | 30.8 | 42.6 | 4.9 | 14.1 | 16.3 | 23.4 |
| | Medicine Hat District | | | | Edmonton District | | | |
| 1911 | 9.3 | 16.0 | 18.2 | 36.4 | 16.1 | 20.7 | 22.8 | 36.9 |
| 1912 | 5.3 | 9.8 | 15.6 | 26.8 | 14.5 | 20.2 | 22.9 | 36.7 |
| 1913 | 8.6 | 12.7 | 12.8 | 24.9 | 13.6 | 19.6 | 22.1 | 37.0 |
| 1914 | 3.6 | 12.2 | 5.4 | 13.4 | 16.1 | 25.3 | 24.6 | 34.8 |
| 1915 | 11.2 | 16.1 | 38.7 | 72.7 | 14.2 | 18.6 | 26.6 | 45.2 |
| 1916 | 13.2 | 17.9 | 27.3 | 49.0 | 11.4 | 20.9 | 23.5 | 39.8 |
| 1917 | 5.6 | 13.4 | 19.0 | 30.4 | 8.5 | 15.3 | 23.9 | 26.1 |
| 1918 | 5.2 | 10.2 | 4.3 | 8.7 | 10.6 | 17.9 | 10.2 | 27.7 |
| 1919 | 3.0 | 7.7 | 4.2 | 9.6 | 7.1 | 16.4 | 30.8 | 34.2 |
| 1920 | 4.8 | 10.7 | 11.0 | 14.5 | 11.2 | 18.2 | 35.5 | 40.2 |

[63] Ibid., 1921. "Graphic Presentation of Precipitation Data for Southern Alberta with Relation to Crop Production," The statistics presented for each district are the averages of statistics collected at several points in each district e.g., Calgary district (Calgary, Gleichen, Cochrane, Didsbury, Okotoks), Lethbridge district (Lethbridge, Warner, Cardston, Pincher Creek, Macleod), Medicine Hat district (Medicine Hat, Redcliff, Taber), Edmonton district (Strathcona, Leduc, Stony Plain, St. Albert, Victoria).

The problem faced by the farmer in the southwest was not simply the fact of too few inches of rainfall during the growing season. Summers in the south were characterized by hot dry windy days which meant not only a higher summer temperature than regions further north, but also a significantly higher rate of evaporation. In short, the semi-arid region gets less rainfall to start with and loses more of what it does get. Recent studies show that the plains region south of the Red Deer River and east of the foothills is truly a water deficient area. The amount of additional moisture that plants could use for optimum growth in average soil areas within this region varies from six to twelve inches.[64] The difficulty imposed by the high rate of evaporation in the region was actually compounded by the farmers' much lauded dry-land farming techniques. As the director of federal government's newly created reclamation service noted in 1920:

> The success of dry farming as now practiced depends primarily upon a system of summer-fallowing and frequent stirring of the surface so as to produce a mulch or blanket of fine soil particles which will prevent losses of moisture by capillarity. But this constant cultivation soon pulverizes the fine soil of the dry belt to a light powder which the frequent high winds blow about at will, either burying the seed or young crop, or blowing them out entirely.[65]

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[64]W. C. Wonders et. al., Atlas of Alberta (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press in association with University of Toronto Press, 1969), "Water Demand, Surplus, and Deficiency", p. 19.

[65]Canada, Department of the Interior, Annual Report, 1920, Report of the Director of Reclamation Service, p. 3.

It was this phenomenon that, ten years later, contributed the label "Dirty" to distinguish the thirties from more prosperous decades. The migration that so drastically reduced the farm population in this region during the 1930's was actually preceded by a similar smaller-scale movement at the beginning of the previous decade. One recent study of the American farmer in the Canadian west estimates that as many as two-thirds of the American settlers who came to Canada between 1896 and 1913 had returned to the United States by the end of the next decade[66] and there is no doubt that the southwestern drought was the major cause of this vast exodus. The tragedy was that much of the region should never have been settled in the first place. The dry cycles characteristic of this region were well documented by statistics that had been collected since the late 1870's. Important officials within the Department of the Interior like William Pearce argued consistantly against the folly of unrestricted settlement. Yet the Liberal government was not prepared to stand in

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[66]Karel D. Bicha, The American Farmer and the Canadian West, 1896-1914 (Laurence, Kansas: Coronado Press, 1968), pp. 137-144. Between 1898 and 1914, 591,996 American emigrants declared their destinations to be Saskatchewan and Alberta, but according to the 1916 census there were only 179,581 American born residents of Saskatchewan and Alberta. The Americans who left the prairies did not locate elsewhere in Canada, thus, some 400,000 would-be homesteaders seem to have returned to the United States after very short residence in Canada.

opposition to public opinion and thousands of misguided settlers learned to their cost that "modern" farming methods had not surmounted the moisture deficiency. The cattleman on the other hand had adjusted much more successfully to this frequently hostile environment.

While the agricultural frontier was in the process of withdrawal from its point of farthest advance deep in the foothill country and farmers were in full retreat on the open plains, thereby strengthening the ranchers' hold on remaining vacant lands, opposition to renewed control by the large stockmen developed from a quite unexpected quarter. During the last year of the war the Canadian government began to consider the problem of soldier resettlement. The grazing region contained much of the remaining unsettled land in the prairie west and though the continued drought showed plainly that grain farming should not be attempted in areas that could not be irrigated, it seemed to some that the settlement of returned veterans in this area as mixed farmers and small stock raisers was feasible and preferable to leaving the region to the large leaseholders.

In February 1916 an article in the Montreal Gazette describing plans of New Zealand Government to reserve large areas for the settlement of returned soldiers, caught the eye of the Prime Minister, Robert Borden. He noted also that one of the Australian states had set up farm colonies for

returned soldiers and consequently advised the Minister without Portfolio, Senator Sir James Lougheed, that: "It would seem well to secure information about these schemes and their operation."[67] In January 1917 the provinces were invited to a conference to acquaint them with the proposals of the federal government for the assistance of those soldiers who desired to settle on lands still at the disposal of the Crown. The end result was the creation of a Soldier Settlement Board which began to select dominion lands suitable for the scheme and apart from the Peace River area their attention was most attracted to the grazing region. The Dominion Land Office was instructed accordingly to notify the Board whenever a grazing lease was cancelled so that they might ascertain whether the lands were required for their purposes.[68] The interest of the Board in southwestern lands was such that in the late spring of 1918 the Deputy Minister of the Interior felt it necessary to warn the Acting-Chairman of the Soldier Settlement Board that despite persistent allegations that there was much good land suitable for settlement enclosed by grazing leases, this was not the case. He cautioned that grazing lands on the whole did not offer a good prospect for settlement and advised that any action in that regard should entail

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[67] PAC, Borden Papers, MG26, H, 1(a), Vol. 67. R. Borden to Hon. J. A. Lougheed, 4 March 1916. Senator Lougheed was subsequently appointed Minister of Soldiers' Civil Re-establishment in February 1918.

[68] RG15, B2a, Vol. 174, 145330, pt. 8, Memorandum, W. W. Cory to J. W. Greenway, n.d.

a thorough inspection.[69] Some lands within the dry belt were none the less selected despite the strong objection of officials in the timber and grazing branch long acquainted with the semi-arid region. The head of the grazing section thought it was a mistake to depart from the policy established in 1915 of reserving unfit lands in the south for grazing purposes when it was generally admitted that it had been a mistake to open the southwestern portion of Saskatchewan and the southeastern portion of Alberta in the first place. "I do not think that either returned soldiers or anyone else who may happen not to be a judge of land, should be given an opportunity of making entry for lands of this character," he informed the Deputy Minister.[70] He predicted that entrants would fail within two years. Fortunately, the prediction did not come to pass as the region remained fixed in the grip of a continuous drought through 1918, 1919 and 1920, and few returned veterans were inclined to homestead in areas where many of the remaining inhabitants were dependent upon government assistance. Thus, while it seemed for a short time that the war might be indirectly responsible for the closing of much of the ranchers' remaining grazing lands, the threat did not materialize.

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[69] Ibid., W. W. Cory to Acting Chairman of the Soldier Settlement Board, 30 May 1918.

[70] Ibid., B. L. York to W. W. Cory, 28 January 1919.

In another regard however, the war did have a lasting impact upon the ranching community. Quite apart from the obvious economic boost, the war seems to have dealt the coup de grace to a social order that had been in decline for a decade. The Canadian and British born in the ranching country responded to the call to arms much as they did during the South African War. On 22 August 1914 the Pincher Creek Echo announced that when the call comes for "our Rangers [23rd Alberta Rangers] to go and fight for the Mother Country, overseas or otherwise, they will go in full strength."[71] Recruitment for the Rangers was undertaken at Pincher Creek, Claresholm, Cardston, Magrath and Fort Macleod and by 4 September 350 volunteers had assembled.[72] Even the less popular infantry which sought twenty-five enlistees in Pincher Creek two months later attracted seventy recruits, most of whom had rendered previous service in the British Army.[73] The feeling characteristic of the foothill country is well illustrated in the lines of an anonymous would-be poet who wrote in the Okotoks Review in the autumn of 1914:

"When Britain Goes to War"

. . . . . .
We raise our herds of cattle;
We tend our fields of corn;
. . . . . .
But we send our men to battle,

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[71] Pincher Creek Echo, 22 August 1914.

[72] Ibid., 28 August 1914; 4 September 1914.

[73] Ibid., 27 November 1914.

When Britain goes to war,
O mother, mother, Homeland,
We want you to now to feel
The strength of our affection
In this your dire ordeal.
. . . . . .
We offer you our manhood,
Our bravest of the brave.
For we Britons here in Canada
Would British honour save.
. . . . . .
What tho' they fall in battle
And fill the soldier's grave?
They fall, as falls the Briton,
Toward, not from, the foe.[74]

The public school boys at the nearby Bradfield Ranche all returned to do service.[75] The few remaining remittance men also departed and gained the rare compliment of the editor of the Calgary Eye Opener: "they may have been green but they were not yellow."[76] Many of the ranch establishment, like C. D. Hardwick and O. A. Critchely, returned to Great Britain to take commissions in the British Army.[77] Others of the younger generation, like the latter's son who had attended the Royal Military College at Kingston, served with Lord Strathcona's Horse. With the male population of the

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[74]Quoted in E. Ference, "Literature Associated with Ranching in Southern Alberta," (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Alberta, 1971), p. 40.

[75]GAI, E. Park, "History of Bradfield Rancher near Millarville, Alberta."

[76]K. Liddell, "The Remittance Man," Western Producer, 4 June 1959.

[77]RG15, B2a, Vol. 103, 476534, J. R. Watt to Controller, Timber and Grazing Branch, 16 October 1916, A. C. Critchley, Critch! The Memoirs of Brigadier-General A. C. Critchley CMG, GBE, DSO (London: Hutchinson of London, 1961).

grazing region so drastically thinned, experienced cowboys became extremely difficult to find and ranchers had to accept assistance from practically anyone who could ride.[78]

The ranks of those who left were decimated through the carnage on the Western Front, and many of those who were fortunate enough to survive decided to sell their ranches and remain in Britain or move to the Pacific Coast. Many of the older generation who lost sons overseas also lost their incentive to continue ranching. The British leadership within the ranch community was especially reduced. Prominent longtime executive members of the W.S.G.A. and the Saskatchewan Stock Growers' Association were lost to the ranching fraternity.[79] A. E. Cross drew attention to the decline of the old social order in his testimony in 1916 before the Royal Commission on Land Settlement and Irrigation. Speaking of the British ranchers who had settled in the grazing country Cross explained:

> We had another class of men that originally came up, that is, the public-school boy from England. I was at a public school in England myself, so I know them. They

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[78]See for example, Cross Papers, B108, F870, A. E. Cross to C. B. Waddell, Manager of "A7" Ranch, 22 June 1915. Cross instructed his foreman to get the haying done quickly as so many had gone to war there would soon be few left. Ibid., B109, F875, See correspondence with C. B. Waddell, December 1915 to December 1916. Long, p. 102.

[79]W. Huckvale, D. Hardwick, Eckford and O. A. Critchley were missed by the W.S.G.A. "Lord" Ogle, founding president of the S.S.G.A. also retired from the country and spent his declining years at his country home in Sussex and on the French and Italian Riviera. PAS, Ogle Reminiscences.

> were very nice men and great sporting characters, ranch life appealed to them. They had money, more or less, but did not have the experience, wanted too much pleasure and not enough work, and nearly all of those chaps have gone back. A lot of them have gone to the war. . . . there are a few left in the country today. A few have buckled down, stuck to the thing, and took the opportunity and are fairly well off.[80]

The loss sustained through the war coupled with the attrition that had been underway for the previous decade ensured that the ethos of the old Canadian cattle kingdom would fade quickly during the 1920's. On to the ranches of the retiring and departing members of the early cattle compact moved a new group which seems to have been composed largely of the native born from western Canada and the United States. It is perhaps observation of this later group and the failure to note the democraphic evolution of the ranching frontier in Canada that has led to "popular" acceptance of the "American" stereotype.

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[80] Cross Papers, B109, F880, Minutes of Evidence, p. 125. Cross' cultural bias shows clearly in his judgement of the other major group, the American farm settlers. "When the country was thrown open for settlement there was a large emigration into the country of Americans from the south, and there were a good many came up here of what we call a sort of hobo class, that is, people that come into a country for a time and then drift on. They are never settled. I myself bought out several of them. They came up here with the express purpose of getting a homestead and getting the certificate of title to their place, and as soon as they got that they sold it out, . . . and went on somewhere else or went back to the States, and that accounts for a good many of them that went away again. You see, they were people that have a wandering nature, they were never settled in any country. . . ." Cross charitably accorded eastern Canadian settlers the honour of being comparatively better.

## CHAPTER IX

## ORGANIZED CATTLEMEN AND THE CATTLE EMBARGOS 1919-1922

The cattlemen's most pressing concern after 1919 was the question of markets. After seven very profitable seasons ranchers were suddenly faced with a precipitous decline in beef prices and a situation of oversupply as abnormal wartime demands terminated. Western stockmen were thus particularly sensitive to the state of the Chicago market where they had shipped most of their cattle since unrestricted entry was gained in 1913. When it was rumoured in 1919 that the Americans were considering reimposing a customs levy on Canadian cattle there was near panic in ranch circles. In an attempt to counter such an eventuality Canadian ranchers acted on two fronts. First, they organized to take extreme measures to control the recent outbreak of mange in the southwest so as not to afford the Americans an ideal excuse to exclude Canadian cattle. Then they redoubled their efforts to gain removal of the British cattle embargo that, since 1892, required the slaughter of Canadian cattle at the port of entry. The long rail trip to Montreal plus the lengthy ocean voyage usually caused western cattle to arrive at British ports in an inferior condition which resulted in a much lower price to the producer. If the British government could be persuaded to allow Canadian cattle inland to

be fed for several months on English or Scottish farms before being sold, Canadian cattlemen were convinced that a profitable export trade could be renewed. This campaign became increasingly urgent as closure of the American market grew imminent.

Under duress the ranchers responded in the traditional manner--through the creation of a new stock association. As in the past the impetus and direction came from the big cattle exporters. The ranchers' first fear was that the mange outbreak would be used by American cattlemen as a lever to have Canadian cattle excluded from the Chicago market. In January 1918 the American government informed Ottawa that during the previous three months at least seven shipments of cattle infected with mange (scabies) had arrived at American stock yards from Canada, and inquired what preventive measures were in operation to ensure against repetition.[1] The Veterinary Director-General in Ottawa immediately warned some of the leading stockmen that

> our experience with the United States Bureau is, that [if], after receiving a letter of this kind, further shipments of diseased stock occur, drastic regulations will be put in force in that country limiting the importations of cattle from Canada,[2]

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[1]GAI, Cross Papers, B110, F88, F. R. Mohler, Chief of United States Department of Agriculture Bureau of Animal Industry to Dr. F. Torrance, Veterinary Director-General, Ottawa, 5 January 1918.

[2]Ibid., George E. Hilton, Acting Veterinary Director-General to A. E. Cross, 11 January 1918. Of the seven diseased shipments, four came from Alberta and three from Saskatchewan.

and then imposed a blanket quarantine covering all of southern Alberta and southwestern Saskatchewan. All stock shipped from the "mange area" had to be accompanied by a certificate of inspection. The problem was that such procedure also penalized the majority of ranchers with "clean" herds and tended to label the entire region suspect. Foothill stockmen like A. E. Cross were particularly unhappy as mange had not been reported in their area for many years. While most of the foothill region remained outside the mange area, cattlemen there were prevented from moving their cattle to traditional summer pastures further east in the restricted zone, thus seriously hindering the operations of some of the big ranchers like George Lane who owned ranches both in and outside the quarantine area and who were accustomed to moving large numbers of cattle back and forth. Though in order to protect their market they supported rigourous measures such as compulsory treatment for all cattle known to be in contact with infected animals, they objected strongly to what they judged to be an unnecessary universal quarantine that depreciated the value of all stock.[3]

Cattlemen first attempted to deal with the mange question through the established stock association. The

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[3]Canadian cattle sent to Chicago from the quarantine area were sent to a special section of the stock yards and many buyers of stocker and feeder cattle refused to bid on these cattle despite proof of inspection. The result was reduced prices that cost Canadian cattlemen thousands of dollars and an unfortunate label which threatened to cost them the U.S. market altogether.

W.S.G.A. had however fallen on difficult times and its vitality was much reduced. With a buoyant beef market and the lease question in abeyance, it seems that interest lagged after 1914 and many cattlemen allowed their membership to lapse. In the interval, as interest declined, power within the association began to shift in favour of the plains cattlemen and away from the foothill establishment that had always run the association in the past. The headquarters of the association was eventually moved to Medicine Hat to be closer to the majority of the membership. The move in one sense is evidence of the fact that the need for an association of the traditional mold was still more widely felt on the plains where the old range system still existed in some part, and where there was consequently the need for a body to organize round-ups and supervise various matters peculiar to range practice. In 1919 activities of the W.S.G.A. were almost at a standstill for want of funds[4] and when the old association proved unable to pull its membership together and act with the speed and force some of the big foothill ranchers judged necessary, they quickly established a new organization.

The driving force behind the movement was George Lane, owner of the vast Bar "U" ranch. On November 22, 1919, Lane

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[4]GAI, Cross Papers, B111, F894, D. A. Thompson, Sec.-Treas. of the W.S.G.A. to A. E. Cross, 8 September 1919; A. E. Cross to D. A. Thompson, 30 September 1919; B112, F900, W. Huckvale, Pres. W.S.G.A. to A. E. Cross, 19 November 1919. Appeals to leaseholders to renew their memberships did not meet with success. Most seem to have lost confidence in the ability of the W.S.G.A. to act effectively.

met in his Calgary office with five other ranchers, E. Kenny, L. L. Smith, J. Currie, T. Jackson, and T. Birt, to found the Cattlemen's Protective Association of Western Canada (C.P.A.).[5] Those assembled each signed a $5,000 bond to cover organizational expenses and to pay for whatever services were required of R. B. Bennett, their chosen solicitor. Notices were immediately forwarded to all large ranchers outlining the purposes of the new association and requesting their support in the form of a signed guarantee bond for $5,000. The response was enthusiastic; within three weeks sixty-five ranchers in the Calgary area had signed pledges amounting to $325,000.[6] The C.P.A.'s appeal lay in the ranchers' urgent feeling that the beef market was about to deteriorate even further, and their conviction that only an organization that united all the big exporters and possessed large capital resources to pay for the best professional and legal talent available could command the political respect their industry required at this juncture. The ranchers needed ". . . an organization that will command respect wherever its representatives go" the C.P.A. informed the Knight, Watson Ranching Company near Lethbridge. The C.P.A. felt recruitment had lagged somewhat in the south and urged the Knight,

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[5]GAI, W.S.G.A. Papers, B1, F4, "Cattlemen's Protective Association of Western Canada, Constitution and Minutes, 1919-1920", p. 1. Hereafter cited S.G.P.A. Papers.

[6]S.G.P.A. Papers, B12, F110, W. Wilson, Secretary C.P.A. to the Knight, Watson Ranching Co., 12 December 1919.

Watson Company, one of the largest and most prominent in the south, to lend its influence to the cause. The association's secretary warned the company that

> the opportunity is now and now only, for the completion of such an organization and if the stockmen of southern Alberta are going to be indifferent towards it, it unquestionably will cost them a lot of money. . . . Look at the way the freight situation is being messed up. With proper handling there might be no hardship in this country at all, but it will be messed around by politicians. . . . I would ask you as [men] live to the situation to give the necessary time to take advantage of the present opportunity to complete one of the strongest organizations that has ever appeared in Western Canada. The cattlemen of this section have come behind it wholeheartedly and I know if you will take this in hand and explain it as it should be explained to your people, that they will not be in any way backward.[7]

The new organization was anxious to draw the few remaining large ranchers associated with the W.S.G.A. into their association so that they could claim legitimately to speak for the big producers. In the first months of organization there was even some question as to whether the smaller stockmen should be invited to join.

By the first week in December enough support had been gathered to warrant calling a formal organizational meeting. The ranch establishment accordingly gathered at Calgary's Palliser Hotel on December 12 where they named George Lane honorary president. D. P. McDaniels, a prominent cattle broker, was elected president, along with two vice-presidents

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[7] Ibid.

and six directors.[8] The preparation of a constitution and by-laws were left to R. B. Bennett as the ranchers turned their attention to the issue of first priority--the mange question. Exactly a week later the new executive met again in the Palliser with the federal Deputy Minister of Agriculture, and Dr. F. Torrance, Veterinary Director-General, and secured a promise that the blanket quarantine would be lifted. The government agreed that if the stockmen would co-operate to ensure that all cattle in the mange area would be gathered, dipped and held for two weeks for a second treatment under veterinary supervision, the blanket quarantine would be removed and stockmen could then ship their cattle without any interference. Any cases of mange thereafter would be dealt with by individual quarantines.[9] Other stockmen who had not yet joined were quickly impressed by the new association's vigour and success, and by the end of the year the C.P.A. boasted 110 members and bonded support of over $500,000.

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[8] Ibid., B1, F4, Constitution and Minutes, p. 71. Officers elected: President, D. P. McDaniel; Vice Presidents, P. Burns and G. McElroy; Directors, E. Kenny, D. P. McDonald, J. M. Dillon, M. J. Stapleton, W. McIntyre and E. Wade.

[9] Ibid., B12, F110, W. Wilson, to Dr. Grisdale, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, 29 December 1919; B12, F107, Dr. F. Torrance, Veterinary Director-General to Dr. J. H. Grisdale, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, 7 January 1920. The "dipping" process consisted of forcing each animal to swim individually through a vat containing a solution of sulfur and lime. The mammoth task of collecting and dipping every head of stock in the range country was completed during the early summer of 1920 and the quarantine was consequently lifted by Order-in-Council passed on August 6. Complaints were registered by many small stockmen and farmers who believed their cattle to be clean and did not wish to go to the expense of dipping.

Early in 1920 the C.P.A. persuaded the Alberta Livestock Commissioner, W. F. Stevens, to leave the government service to become their secretary-treasurer and manager of the association's affairs. With a well-paid permanent staff and the best legal counsel available the cattlemen's new association was well on its way to becoming a modern professional lobby. The C.P.A.'s activities during 1920 and early 1921 are indicative of the new organization's energy and superior techniques. Its major success during this period, and the one that convinced members that the association should be continued even though its main purpose had been accomplished, was registered with the Department of Agriculture's abolition of the mange area in August 1920. In addition to its main preoccupation with the mange question and the Chicago market the C.P.A. had also been active in other areas. A delegation had been sent to Ottawa to discuss grazing lease matters while several deputations had journeyed to Edmonton to press for amendments to pound and stray animal laws. Another group had attended the annual meetings of the Maple Creek Stock Association and the Saskatchewan Stock Growers' Association in an attempt to persuade these groups to affiliate with the C.P.A. so that the beef industry could present a united front. The association also challenged the

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The regulations were, none the less, carried out to the letter under the supervision of the federal Department of Agriculture, and the big cattlemen and their association.

Canadian Pacific railway and successfully negotiated reduced freight rates for live cattle shipped eastward from Calgary. In a notable legal action also directed against the C.P.R. on behalf of the Knight, Watson Ranching Co., the C.P.A. won a guilty verdict for the railway's negligence and the payment of damages. Whatever the association undertook during this period it handled with care and precision. All federal matters were directed through the parliamentary office of Major Lee Redman, Conservative Member for Calgary East and solicitor in the Bennett-Lougheed legal firm. Deputations were sent armed with detailed statistics to support well-prepared arguments that bore the mark of the knowledgeable ex-Livestock Commissioner. The C.P.A. actions were co-ordinated with timely press releases as well as weekly preparations in Calgary's Market Examiner,[10] and late in the year, in keeping with their new concern about public relations, the ranchers changed the name of their organization to the Stock Growers' Protective Association (S.G.P.A.) in order that the association would appear less exclusive.

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[10]For detail regarding these activities see Ibid., B1, F4, Constitution and Minutes 1919-1920, pp. 3-12; B4, F21, Directors Correspondence, "Report of Committee to Maple Creek and Shaunavon." The delegation was pleased with the reception they received from the Maple Creek stockmen but they judged the members of the Saskatchewan Stock Growers' Association rather condescendingly as men of a different class. "At Shaunavon the majority of the delegates were of a different class from those at Maple Creek; they consisted chiefly of farmers who were running small bunches of stock, in some cases on deeded land. . . ."

In face of the S.G.P.A.'s aggressive campaign the W.S.G.A. seems to have abandoned the field, its programme dwindled to almost nothing and no directors' meetings were held during 1920. Initiative for amalgamation eventually came from the S.G.P.A. which was anxious to acquire the charter of the old association so that it could assume the W.S.G.A.'s part in the joint administration with the federal government of brand inspectors outside the province.[11] A special meeting of the W.S.G.A. was thus called by the president, W. Huckvale, to discuss the S.G.P.A.'s overture. Most of the twenty-two who gathered on March 4 at the Medicine Hat city hall realized that there was no sensible alternative but to accept. The condition of the W.S.G.A. is suggested by the fact that all those present to discuss the matter first had to pay their dues before they could vote legally. After limited debate southern ranchers agreed to put the matter before a special general meeting called for April 1. Even those founding members with a strong sentimental attachment to the old association like A. E. Cross, one of the few Calgary ranchers to retain membership, admitted that the S.G.P.A. was a much healthier organization. Convinced that two competing associations were undesirable Cross urged the president of the W.S.G.A. to accept union, but advised that

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[11] Ibid., B1, F6, Amalgamation of the Western Stock Growers' Association of Western Canada, W. F. Stevens to J. Mitchell, Medicine Hat, 26 February 1921.

> the name of the former [be] retained if possible, as I feel its traditions are certainly a credit and [it] has done a great deal of good for the stockmen of this country, and I am sorry to say, has not been appreciated in recent years. It was unfortunate, as I said at the time, that the eradication of mange was not taken up under its name. There is certainly a necessity for a stockmen's Association in the Province of Alberta in order to protect the livestock interests, especially in taxing, leaseholds, and marketing of cattle, and I hope everything will be done to maintain such an Association.[12]

At their subsequent meeting southern cattlemen followed the advice of Cross and their executive to dissolve the older association. The charter was turned over to the S.G.P.A. on the understanding that members in good standing in the old association would be accepted by the new group without additional entrance fees. Members of the old association were accorded a warm welcome at the S.G.P.A.'s annual convention the following week and were given strong representation on the newly elected executive.[13] The amalgamation signalled the end of the traditional rangemen's organization; henceforth the cattlemen's association existed much more on the model of the professional interest group typical of the business community.

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[12] Ibid., A. E. Cross to W. Huckvale, 18 March 1921. Cross had actually been advocating union for over a year. See, Cross Papers, B112, F905, A. E. Cross to W. Huckvale, 21 April 1920.

[13] W. Huckvale, the last president of the W.S.G.A. was named Honourary President, A. E. Cross was elected Second Vice President and J. Mitchell of Medicine Hat was chosen as one of the Directors. Others elected to the executive included: D. E. Riley (later Senator) of High River, President; G. M. McElroy (Calgary), First Vice President; Directors; J. M. Dillon (Calgary), E. Kenny (Calgary), C. Bartsch

With their strength consolidated the ranchers now devoted their main attention to the situation evolving in the United States where it seemed the protectionists were gaining the upper hand. Early in 1921 Chicago commission houses warned their Canadian customers that a protective tariff seemed inevitable and suggested that northern producers organize to have Ottawa put pressure on the United States to ensure the continued duty free entry of Canadian live cattle.[14] In the ensuing struggle it seems that Canadian ranchers were able to rely on the tacit support of most of the Chicago commission firms who were prepared to lend advice as to how the campaign might best be conducted and to provide the names of those sympathetic to the cause who could provide assistance.[15]

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(Gleichen), D. P. McDonald (Cochrane), M. J. Stapleton (Jenner). C.P.A. Papers, B1, F4, Constitution and Minutes, p. 73.

[14]See for example, Cross Papers, B113, F906, Clay, Robinson and Co. to A. E. Cross, 21 March 1921. "I think it would be a good plan for your statesmen at Ottawa to make a big fight towards allowing your live cattle to come in free of duty. They could also use the argument there is no duty on cattle from the [states] going into Canada, also the fact that there is not enough cattle coming from Canada to affect our market, in fact, they . . . do us a lot of good . . . as our cattle feeders like the young Canadian cattle for fattening purposes."

[15]S.G.P.A. Papers, B9, F64, W. Dunbar of Walters and Dunbar, Chicago to J. Dillon, C.P.A., 28 June 1922. "We have canvassed the situation locally and are strongly of the opinion that all of the Live Stock Exchanges at the northern markets are absolutely friendly to the suggestion of your people for placing Canadian feeding steers on the free list in the new tariff bill now pending in Washington, but as a matter of policy they are compelled to keep silent when it comes to a matter of politics, as you are well aware that the cattlemen here in the States are very much divided in their views when it comes to matters of politics and the tariff." The above is representative of the many letters in F64.

Also allied to the S.G.P.A.'s cause were many American farmers in the corn belt who preferred Canadian feeder cattle to those from the American southwest.[16] Thus dependent on the assistance of one group that could not afford to play an open political role and upon a second group with whom they lacked direct contact, the S.G.P.A. was, as one of the commission firms put it,

> up against a tough proposition . . . from the Western states such as California, New Mexico, Texas and Wyoming who have plenty of stockers and feeders and want to push them in on the American corn belt at prohibitive prices and [it is established] that they are not as profitable to the corn belt feeder as the northern feeders that come from a climate that makes them more rugged and a class that stretch out and show a whole lot bigger gains than these southern bred animals.[17]

In addition to the pressure exerted from a powerful regional interest group, Canadian ranchers faced the general protectionist sentiment of the governing Republican party and it is a measure of their valuation of the Chicago market that they were prepared to contend against such odds.

Western ranchers had hardly completed the union of their two organizations in preparation for the work ahead when the American Congress passed the Young Emergency Tariff

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[16] See for example Ibid., Kay Wood of Wood Bros., Chicago to J. Dillon, C.P.A., 13 June 1922; F. McGurk of Miller, White and Woods to J. Dillon, 26 June 1922.

[17] Ibid., F. McGurk of Miller, White and Woods to J. Dillon, 28 June 1922. See also F. McGurk to J. Dillon, 23 June 1922; B9, F65, K. Wood of Wood Brothers to J. Dillon, 12 June 1922.

on 27 May 1921. The emergency tariff imposed duties on a wide range of agricultural products and was broadly intended to meet undefined

> . . . present emergencies, and to provide revenue; to regulate commerce with foreign countries; to prevent dumping of foreign merchandise on the markets of the United States; to regulate the value of foreign money; and for other purposes.[18]

But despite the 30 per cent ad valorem duty on imported cattle imposed by the tariff, Canadian ranchers continued to ship to the Chicago market during the 1921 season. Since the duty was computed on the basis of the significantly lower value prevailing on the Canadian market on the date of export, and because sales returned more highly valued American dollars, superior profits were still to be gained on the southern market.[19] The legislation intended to provide a permanent tariff to supplant the emergency tariff was however, much more stringent. The provisions of the proposed tariff as outlined in the "Fordney Bill" included a levy of one cent per pound on imported cattle less than two years old and one and one-quarter cents per pound on cattle two years and over.

The Canadian aspect of the ranchers' counter campaign was naturally directed first towards the Canadian government.

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[18] Ibid., B10, F66, copy of Emergency Tariff Bill presented in the House of Representatives, 12 April 1921.

[19] Ibid., Walters and Dunbar to the S.G.P.A., 16 August 1921.

In June the stockmen outlined their plans to the federal Minister of Agriculture, W. R. Motherwell, and requested the support of his department. They proposed that Ottawa open negotiations with Washington and be prepared to yield in all areas of the beef trade except the entry of feeder or grass-fed cattle. Western cattlemen were of the opinion that it would be politically inexpedient to attempt to fight the proposed duty on finished beef or grain-fed animals as this threat of competition would alienate the one group that they hoped to rally to their cause, the mid-western cattle feeder. The stock farmers or cattle feeders whom the Canadians courted based their enterprise on the purchase of grass-fed animals which they fed for one to three months and then sold, earning on the basis of 1920 figures, about $50 per head. At the same time the western stockman, unlike his eastern counterpart, did not believe he was giving up a great deal as according to statistics gathered by the S.G.P.A. an estimated 90 per cent of western exports were of the feeder type.[20] The S.G.P.A. candidly informed Motherwell that:

> our object at home is to induce our Government at Ottawa to make these proposals to the United States Government at Washington. The object of our

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[20]The association was disappointed to learn later that only 41 per cent of Canadian steers arriving at the Chicago market were taken back to the country leaving 49 per cent to go directly to slaughter. While this said a lot for the quality of the western Canadian grass-fed steer, it was not publicized. Ibid., B9, F64, Miller, White and Woods to S.G.P.A., 6 July 1922.

> propaganda in the United States is to place the Senate at Washington in a proper mood to receive them favorably. . . .[21]

With this object in view, the ranchers asked that the Commissioner of Agriculture and former Minister of Agriculture for Alberta, Duncan Marshall, travel through the corn belt and speak at the numerous fairs and stock meetings held through the summer advocating the removal of the duty against Canadian feeder steers while praising the latter's quality. In recognition of the fact that the Alberta cattle export industry contributed an estimated $50 million to the Canadian economy, both levels of government were reasonably receptive to the ranchers' appeal.[22] It was decided Marshall would go to the United States and that while direct interference in American politics through speeches in opposition to the duty was quite out of the question, he could none the less undertake private discussions. "I know a good many livestock men in the Corn Belt States" Marshall informed the S.G.P.A.,

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[21] Ibid., B9, F64, S.G.P.A. to W. R. Motherwell, Minister of Agriculture, 23 June 1922; see also S.G.P.A. to D. Marshall, Commissioner of Agriculture, 23 June 1922; S.G.P.A. to Hon. G. Hoadley, Alberta Minister of Agriculture, 22 June 1922. Hoadley, a stockman, volunteered to travel to the United States on the association's behalf.

[22] Ibid., B9, F65, S.G.P.A. to J. A. Walker, Chairman, Calgary Clearing House, 20 June 1922. The details of the computation are included in this letter. The S.G.P.A. was able to gain the support of the Bankers Association of Western Canada.

and

> my plan will be to get them to raise the agitation there for the removal of the duty, in order that they might get our cattle to feed. I do not know how successful we can be in this matter, but you may depend we will leave no stone unturned in securing markets for our live-stock and farm products, which is the most serious question facing governments in Canada.[23]

A month later a delegation from the S.G.P.A. that included the former Alberta Minister of Finance, gained the promise of financial assistance for their proposed publicity campaign from the Minister of the Interior, Charles Stewart.[24]

The association's plan was to reinforce Marshall's visit to the corn belt region through a circular to American farmers in the region pointing out the advantage that they were about to lose. For this endeavour the Chicago commission firms were of key assistance. Though these companies were not prepared to take a public stand, they were predisposed to provide the S.G.P.A. with much needed mailing lists.

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[23] Ibid., B9, F64, D. Marshall to M. Dillon, 30 June 1922.

[24] Ibid., J. Mitchell to Secretary S.G.P.A., 31 July 1922. "He [Charles Stewart] said while he was not able to say right out that they would give us a grant, that he had no doubt but that he would be able to get it for us, from what source he could not say and above all that it would have to be a grant for say, the Association for the stock industry in general, and that it must not be told that we asked for the assistance nor that he nor the Government is granting it. You will, therefore, keep this confidential. He is returning to Ottawa about the 10th of August and he told Mr. Dillon personally that we would get a grant which we might use for our campaign." The delegation to visit the Minister consisted of some of the most important members of the ranch establishment including A. E. Cross, J. Dillon, M. Stapleton, D. Hardwick, A. McHugh, W. McHugh, R. Macleay, D. McDonald, D. McDaniel, and J. Mitchell.

We "will send you tomorrow a list of addresses of our customers in the Corn Belt", one firm wrote, but explained that while the S.G.P.A. was "at liberty to use it in sending [farmers] a letter on the subject and asking them to urge their Representatives in Washington to accomplish [the association's] purpose. . . ." it did not wish the name of the firm revealed. The company also promised a second " . . . large list of Corn Belt stockmen . . . obtained from another source that is friendly to you, but whose name we are not at liberty to mention."[25] Eventually over 30,000 letters were mailed to American farmers reminding them of the quality of Canadian bred animals, that free access was sought for grass-fed steers only, and that if the American market was closed the displaced Canadian cattle would be sent to compete with American cattle on the British market. It was also inferred that if such a contest came about, Canadian quality, not to mention political advantage, would soon place American exports in jeopardy.[26]

In addition to the letters the S.G.P.A. endeavoured to circulate press releases in both countries in support of the ranchers' cause. Support was also sought from all other organized western groups including the United Farmers of

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[25] Ibid., Walters and Dunbar to J. Dillon, 28 June 1922.

[26] Ibid., J. Dillon to Secretary, The Canadian Bankers' Association, 26 July 1922. The ranchers' campaign is outlined in the letter and a draft copy of the letter sent to American farmers is enclosed.

Alberta, the Western Canada Livestock Union, the United Grain Growers, the stockgrowers' associations in Saskatchewan and the British Columbia interior, and the various city boards of trade.[27] In the Canadian west their efforts met with almost unanimous success but the attempt to influence American organizations, particularly the stock growers' associations, made little or no progress. In a curt rebuff the powerful American National Livestock Association informed Canadian ranchers that

> Canada overlooked a golden opportunity when it failed to ratify the so-called reciprocity treaty. Conditions have somewhat changed in this country since that time and there is not the slightest doubt that the tariff bill before the Senate now will contain import duties on practically all agricultural products, including livestock and meats. So far as [we are] advised there will be no preferential rates to any country on these livestock commodities.[28]

The American association was of the opinion that there should be reciprocal relations between the two countries but Canada had had its chance and while a general change in sentiment would in time occur and result in mutual tariff modifications

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[27] Ibid., S.G.P.A. to Hon. J. L. Perron, Quebec Minister of Public Works, 27 June 1922. The letter identifies the groups supporting the ranchers' campaign. Perron was a friend of D. Riley, president of the S.G.P.A., and he promised to take the matter up with Sir Lomer Gouin, federal Minister of Justice and former Premier of Quebec, to ensure the Canadian government acted energetically on the ranchers' behalf.

[28] Ibid., American National Live Stock Association to J. Dillon, 30 June 1922. The Canadian request for a list of the leading livestock publications in the United States was turned down with the comment that such a list could be obtained through any important Calgary newspaper office.

" . . . that time is not at present." These feelings were shared by members of the Montana Cattle Growers' Association who were convinced that the sale of Canadian cattle in the United States caused their own sales to decline.[29]

As the real strength of the cattle interest in the Senate became increasingly apparent the S.G.P.A. decided that they would have to expand the basis of their support, which centered in the Chicago area.[30] They consequently hired the services of a well known professional Washington lobbyist, Theodore M. Knappen, to prepare a brief and present it before Congress.[31] Knappen lamented that he had not been asked to act months before when the bill was in committee in the Senate, but since the House of Representatives and the Senate

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[29] Ibid., Clay, Robinson and Co., to S.G.P.A., 1 July 1922.

[30] In addition to tacit support of the Chicago commission house the S.G.P.A. gained the friendly press of the Chicago Daily Drovers Journal. Noting that Canada was America's best customer for manufactured goods, the Journal argued that it would not " . . . hurt us any to be just a little generous in considering the tariff claims of our neighbour on the north." Ibid., clipping 2 July 1922; See also letter to S.G.P.A. re editorial of 18 July 1922. The big city newspapers seem also to have been anti-protectionist. See Ibid., Chicago Tribune, 3 July 1922, clipping.

[31] Ibid., Theodore M. Knappen to J. F. Langan, 3 July 1922. Theodore Knappen of the Knappen-Ulm Service claimed a thorough understanding of Canadian-American relations having specialized on the subject for twenty-five years and having resided for a number of years in Canada. Knappen seems to have been well-known to the Canadian Bankers' Association and through his efforts the British Columbia lumber interests had gained a number of tariff concessions. See Ibid., S.G.P.A. to Secretary, Canadian Bankers' Association, 26 July 1922.

had each passed a different levy to be set on live cattle, a conference committee of the two houses was due to be convened to iron out differences and while no new matter could be introduced before the committee, Knappen proposed to present a brief supporting the lower levy of the House of Representatives.[32] Alberta ranchers were told that to achieve any significant change they would have to think in the longer term. If the Democrats took control of the House in the coming fall election the picture would alter considerably; in the meantime Knappen advised that the ground be prepared and contacts made so that they would be ready if the rising tide of public opinion forced the Republicans to redraft the entire bill.[33] Knappen's programme in the interval would have two general objectives, to overcome the opposition of American farmers outside the Corn Belt by working through their organizations, which Knappen explained would be assisted through his close personal touch with the president of the American Farm Bureau Federation, and second, to show members of Congress that while the cattle tariff did hurt the Canadian grower it did not help the American.[34] The latter objective was to be based in part on statistical evidence which showed

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[32] Ibid., T. Knappen to J. F. Langan, 3 July 1922. The tariff bill passed in the House carried a duty of one cent a pound on live cattle. The Senate adopted this portion of the bill but raised the tariff to two cents.

[33] Ibid., T. Knappen to J. Dillon, 10 July 1922.

[34] Ibid., T. Knappen to J. Dillon, 18 July 1922.

that all Canadian cattle exports to the United States during 1919, 1920 and 1921 respectively, supplied only 1/44, 1/70, and 1/110 of the total receipts of cattle at American markets.[35] On the basis of this plan Knappen was hired by the S.G.P.A. for the retainer of $500 per month plus a monthly expense allowance of an equal sum.[36] This agreed, Knappen wanted it clearly understood that he would run the campaign from this point.

> It would not help matters for the Canadian papers to have anything about me nor yet the cause. That is the kind of publicity that is best conveyed by word of mouth. Let them say all they want about getting a better Tariff deal--but don't let them say who it is they are working through. I think this will be obvious to anybody. Remember I know this game.[37]

Perhaps, as Knappen had stated, the ranchers had waited too long before bringing their case directly to Congress, for they were unsuccessful in their bid. They were left to cultivate friends and hope that a Democratic victory in the autumn would lead to tariff amendments. In the mean-

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[35] Ibid., S.G.P.A. to T. Knappen, 26 July 1922. Statistics supplied by the Bureau of Markets in Washington. The above refers to all cattle; if only grass-fed western animals were included the percentages would be even smaller. The Canadian tactic from the beginning had been to emphasize the very modest percentage of the market that they held and wished to retain, as it was believed that this section of the bill was not particularly aimed at Canada, but was drafted to stop the importation of heavy refrigerated beef from the Argentine and other south American countries. See Cross Papers, B114, F916, A. R. MacInnes, Vice President, Canadian Pacific Railway, to A. E. Cross, 12 December 1921.

[36] S.G.P.A. Papers, B9, F64, T. Knappen to J. Dillon, 10 July 1922.

[37] Ibid., T. Knappen to J. Dillon, 29 July 1922.

time Canadian cattlemen had to seek a more hospitable market. In this regard the Alberta ranchers were not entirely unprepared. While they were disposed to go to great lengths to retain the Chicago market, they were realistic enough to recognize the considerable odds they faced, and, good businessmen that they were, endeavoured to prepare an alternative market should their fight prove unsuccessful. There was thus a second part to the ranchers' campaign which was being fought simultaneously in a more distant quarter and was designed to open the vast British market to Canadian live cattle.

This part of the struggle, which grew in seriousness as the hope of holding the Chicago outlet dimmed, was really the continuation of a controversy that already had a history of nearly thirty years. The British embargo was originally set in November 1892 after two cases of alleged contagious pleuro-pneumonia were discovered in two cattle shipments originating in Canada. The British Board of Agriculture immediately ordered that Canadian cattle be slaughtered at the port of arrival so that contamination would not be spread amongst British herds.[38] The Canadian government promptly organized a thorough investigation, found no evidence of the disease, and requested the order be rescinded. Getting no

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[38]Great Britain, Public Record Office, Colonial Office Confidential Print, Canada, C.O., 880/15, 170 (Papers Relative to the Importation of Canadian Cattle into Great Britain, April, 1894), Report of a Committee of the Privy Council of Canada, 6 February 1894, p. 3.

response, Ottawa continued the investigation and in 1894 presented to the British cabinet the Canadian government's strenuous disagreement with the Board of Agriculture's findings. Canadians were of the opinion that the board's case for continuing the restrictions, based as it was on three alleged new cases found after special examination of sixty-seven cargoes comprising 30,561 head of cattle, demonstrated neither a significant incidence of the disease nor its contagious character. The weight of the government's submission was directed to refute the diagnosis of pleuro-pneumonia made by Professor Brown, Director of the Veterinary Branch of the Board of Agriculture. In his report Brown had insisted that he had found contagious pleuro-pneumonia and noted that while there seemed to be some deviations between the North American and European varieties " . . . the history of pleuro-pneumonia on the North American Continent proves beyond doubt that it is as contagious and fatal as the pleuro-pneumonia of Europe."[39] In the Canadian view this was preposterous. In a stirring rebuttal Canada's High Commissioner, Sir Charles Tupper, argued:

> If the special type of the disease in question is "as contagious and fatal" as pleuro-pneumonia in England, and if such existed in Canada, it would be known by the fact of its spreading among animals, and causing many deaths. It would be something which could not be concealed and which could not remain unknown. But there has been no spreading of any such contagious disease in Canada nor deaths of animals arising therefrom. Not a single case

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[39] Ibid., p. 4.

> has been discovered; and in so far as it is possible to prove a negative, the Minister submits that the report of the investigations of the Veterinary Officers of the Department of Agriculture, aided by numerous veterinary surgeons carried out . . . in all those parts of the Dominion from which the animals shipped . . . were traced, the findings . . . established such proof. No trace of any contagious disease was found in any of the localities throughout the Dominion whence the animals in question came; and it is impossible that such a position could exist if there had been present in any of these localities a type of disease "as contagious and fatal" as pleuro-pneumonia is known to be in Europe and elsewhere where it has existed.[40]

To further support Canada's case detailed evidence drawn from the investigation by Canada's Chief Veterinary Inspector, Dr. D. McEachran, was included in Tupper's memorandum. McEachran also went to great length to explain the procedures taken under the Animal Contagious Diseases Act to ensure the health of animals in Canada, particularly the compulsory ninety day quarantine for all cattle entering from the United States.[41] McEachran also drew attention to the fact that some British veterinarians shared Canada's rejection of Brown's diagnoses.

Canada's evidence, along with its concomitant claim that since a serious error in diagnosis had been made no

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[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid., pp. 8-9. McEachran, who happened also to be president of the Walrond Ranche Co., noted in addition that from 1880 to November 1892, 909,828 live cattle were exported from Canada to Great Britain, that tens of thousands of these had mingled freely with herds of the United Kingdom and only a single case of the alleged contagious disease had come to light during the entire period, and even this case was by no means satisfactorily proven.

cause for continuing the restriction remained, failed to move the British Board of Agriculture. It announced with a tone of finality after assessing the document that "the Veterinary Officers of the Department have fully considered these reports, but their views remain unaltered."[42] The board stated emphatically that its findings were endorsed by "Veterinary Experts of eminence" and dismissed the fact that no case of pleuro-pneumonia had been brought to the notice of Canadian authorities with the explanation that "the disease spreads but very slowly, especially in an open and sparsely populated country . . .", that it could exist in a latent form for a lengthened period and could therefore exist in Canada "to a small extent without the knowledge of the authorities, not withstanding the most strenuous efforts of those authorities. . . ."[43] Thus the Board maintained that it would be premature to say that there was no danger to British herds through the free entry of animals from the Dominion.

The Colonial Office found the board's rarified position unacceptable and appended a memorandum to be sent to the British Cabinet with the papers from the contending parties. In the view of the Colonial Office

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[42] Ibid., Board of Agriculture to Colonial Office, 16 April 1894, p. 14.

[43] Ibid.

> to assume that such a [contagious] disease could exist in so many different parts of Canada, and it should never be possible to detect it until the cattle have crossed the Atlantic, is almost beyond the range of probability.[44]

For the board to establish such a position on the basis of eight debatable cases found among the hundreds of thousands of cattle shipped seemed extreme to the Colonial Office, and if anything seemed to show how healthy Canadian cattle were. Thus, after a rather detailed analysis of the two positions, the Colonial Office recommended that the sanction be lifted.

The subsequent decision of the British government to uphold the Board's position enraged Canadian beef producers and the issue remained a source of lingering bitterness. It was soon understood, after much debate and several missions to the United Kingdom, that to demonstrate the good health of Canadian cattle was to no avail because this was not the real issue. The situation even moved Senator Cochrane to address his fellow Senators. ". . . I do not know that it has occurred more than once or twice in twenty years that I have risen to speak a word in debate here . . .", Cochrane informed the Chamber, and then he proceeded to accuse Great Britain of using an unfounded charge of pleuro-pneumonia as a guise to protect the English farmer. He urged his English friends to be honest, to state outright that their policy

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[44] Ibid., Confidential Memorandum on the Importation of Canadian Cattle into Great Britain, 19 April 1894, p. 2.

was one of protection and that Canadian animals must consequently be slaughtered at the port of entry " . . . instead of cursing us in the eyes of other nations" and destroying potential markets for Canadian beef elsewhere.[45] Senator Cochrane's anger was hardly surprising for he and his fellow investors in the western beef industry had built their enterprises with an eye to the British market. The restriction was especially burdensome to western producers who contributed about one-half the cattle exported to the United Kingdom,[46] as the bulk of the western export cattle were unfinished feeder stock unsuitable for marketing on arrival. Western ranchers were thus the heaviest losers, and were consequently more interested in the restrictions than beef producers in the east. The government consequently faced persistent appeals from this quarter to take the matter up with the British government. At the founding meeting of the W.S.G.A. removal of the embargo was set as one of the association's major goals and this question was considered at nearly every subsequent annual convention.[47] Though the Canadian government did respond to such appeals from time to time they were able to make no headway. In 1900 when the Canadian Minister

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[45] Debates (Senate), XLVI, (1896), 415.

[46] North West Territories, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1901, p. 72. Of the 115,000 head exported from Canada to Great Britain in 1900 over 48,000 head were from the Territories.

[47] W.S.G.A. Papers, B1, F3, p. 15.

of Agriculture, Sidney Fisher, visited Great Britain to interview the President of the British Board of Agriculture he was confronted with an emphatic refusal to open the question and the matter remained, at least as far as the British were concerned, a non-topic until World War I.[48]

The embargo policy raised equal animosity within Great Britain amongst farmers in the north eastern counties of England and in Scotland who had developed a profitable feeder business based on Canadian imports. Correspondents of the Dundee Courier travelling in the Canadian west a year after the imposition of the restrictions assured their readers after visiting most of the major ranches that pleuropneumonia was unknown, that the restriction was scandalous, and urged readers to employ their utmost influence in getting the embargo removed.[49] When, by 1902, it became clear that the government intended the measure to be permanent, a large delegation of several hundred northern agriculturalists met with the president of the Board of Agriculture in Edinburgh

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[48]North West Territories, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1901, p. 72. In 1907 the matter was brought to the attention of the Imperial Conference by Sir Wilfrid Laurier and was followed by another attempt by the Canadian Minister of Agriculture in 1913. See Borden Papers, MG26, H1(b), 157, Confidential Report Re. Cattle Embargo, 7 February 1917, 83968 and 83969.

[49]GAI, British Artisan Expedition to America, Part II Dundee Courier's Special Agricultural Commissioner's Report, pp. 12-15, 69-70, from Dundee Courier, 7 July 1893; 5 September 1893; 12 September 1893.

and presented a protest brief.[50] The problem faced by those seeking removal is suggested in the comment, "there is no disease at the present moment, I perfectly admit, but we do know that the danger does exist, that it might break out in Canada or the United States at any moment . . ." made as part of the President's reply to those assembled.[51] A second meeting with the new Minister of Agriculture, Lord Onslow, convinced the Scots that it was hopeless to attempt to deal directly with the government department concerned and at an "Indignation Meeting" following Onslow's address they decided to establish a political association in order to exert pressure on local members of parliament.[52] The resultant organization, The Free Importation of Canadian Cattle Association of Great Britain (F.I.C.C.A.), became a powerful regional organization and took an active part in the 1906

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[50] GAI, Canadian Cattle Association of Great Britain, Statement on behalf of Agriculturists and Others in favour of the Removal of the Restrictions on the Importation of Canadian Store Cattle into the United Kingdom, August 1902. Appointed delegates represented the countries of Aberdeenshire, Berwickshire, Edinburghshire, Elginshire, Fifeshire, Forfarshire, Haddingtonshire, Kincardineshire, Perthshire, Renfrewshire, and Roxburghshire.

[51] Ibid., Appendix, Report of Deputation Received by the Right Hon. R. W. Hanbury, M.P. President of the Board of Agriculture . . . , 9 October 1901, p. 19.

[52] Ibid., Report of Deputation of Agriculturists and Others to the President of the Board of Agriculture in Favour of the Removal of the Restrictions on the Importation of Canadian Cattle into the United Kingdom, February 1904, pp. 35-38.

election campaign,[53] but in the end was unable to expand its influence beyond the northern counties. As a political force the association was thus unable to match the entrenched power of the English and Irish landowners who desired retention of the embargo. The Scots therefore met the same obdurate response as the Canadian government and were compelled to wait for a more auspicious time to press their case.

The beef shortage and rising prices that came with World War I created a situation that seemed to favour a renewal of the campaign and in late 1915 the F.I.C.C.A. again began to distribute pamphlets to promote the cause.[54] The moment was also judged auspicious on the other side of the Atlantic and the Canadian government was encouraged to

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[53] Ibid., Canadian Cattle Trade, Memorandum for Conference in Westminster Palace Hotel, November 1905. See also PAC, Borden Papers, MG26, H1(b), Vol. 157, Canadian Cattle Trade: How the Cattle Embargo Affects British Interests, 1906; Report of Deputation Received by the Right Hon. The Earl Carrington, G.C.M.G., President of the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries from The Free Importation of Canadian Cattle Association of Great Britain, January 1906.

[54] Borden Papers, MG26, H1(b), Vol. 157, 83867, A Plea For the Development of the Agricultural Resources of the Empire: The Present and Future Meat Supply and the Question of Free Importation of Canadian Cattle, December 1915, pp. 15, 22. The main argument was to reduce beef prices and, for those who still accepted the disease allegation, the tract pointed out that between 1912 and 1914 there had been 144 outbreaks of foot and mouth disease in Ireland and yet hundreds of thousands of animals had still been shipped to England from that country, whereas the disease has not been found anywhere in Canada since 1870.

reopen the matter with the British government.[55] Some form of common action or understanding between the two like-minded parties at once seemed obvious. Thus, having been briefed fully on the history of the issue by his Minister of Agriculture, the Canadian Prime Minister arranged to meet with representatives of the F.I.C.C.A. during his planned visit to Great Britain during March and April.[56] At the subsequent meeting held in Edinburgh on 11 April 1917, both groups seem to have agreed that the Irish cattle interest was the main block in their path.[57] Armed with additional information supplied by the Scottish farmers, Borden requested that the question of the admission of Canadian

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[55] Ibid., 83894-83898, Memorandum, "Canadian Cattle Trade", Col. H. A. Mullins M.P. to Sir Robert Borden, 26 January 1917; 83899, 83968, M. Burrell, Minister of Agriculture to Sir Robert Borden, 7 February 1917. "The question is a very important one and I think that both economically and politically it would have a most excellent effect if you can persuade them to accede to this, and in view of what Canada has done in the last two or three years I really think they ought to waive any minor objections and do it graciously."

[56] Ibid., 83911, Sir Edward Watson, Chairman F.I.C.C.A., to Sir Robert Borden, 17 March 1917; 83914, F. M. Batchelor to Sir Robert Borden, 6 April 1917. The arrangements for the meeting on 11 April at the North British Station Hotel in Edinburgh were made through Col. H. A. Mullins, a Conservative M.P. from Winnipeg and former western rancher.

[57] Ibid., 83922, W. Henderson to Sir Robert Borden, 16 April 1917, Memorandum of Scottish position as requested by Borden at the meeting. See also, accompanying documents 83924 and 83926 regarding information received from the F.I.C.C.A. before Borden opened the matter at the Imperial War Conference.

cattle into the United Kingdom be placed on the agenda of the Imperial War Conference then underway. Borden was then able, on April 26, to present Canada's case at a special meeting chaired by the Colonial Secretary, W. H. Long, and attended by the President of the Board of Agriculture, R. E. Prothero.

In Borden's view the meeting was a complete success and he believed that he had secured the promise that the restrictions on Canadian cattle would be lifted at war's end.[58] Borden informed his office in Ottawa of the good news, but added: "Do not on any account make announcement as it might upset the whole arrangement. The matter is strictly confidential until the British Government makes the decision public."[59] A short time later the Canadian Prime Minister was assured by the Colonial Secretary that an announcement regarding the embargo would be made in the British House of Commons on May 17.[60] When the announcement

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[58]Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Imperial War Conference, 1917, "Extracts from Discussions at the Imperial War Conference on the Admission of Canadian Cattle into the United Kingdom", Cd. 8673, September 1917, pp. 2, 6. Borden's conviction was in part based on Prothero's statement: " . . . I can assure you that so far as the English Board of Agriculture is concerned, we are in favour of the removal of the embargo. We do not believe that there is now, or has been for a good many years past, the slightest ground to exclude Canadian cattle on the score of disease". At another point he stated that the change should come when the war was concluded. See also Borden Papers, MG26, H1(b), Vol. 157, 83928, Sir Robert Borden to W. H. Long, Colonial Secretary, 27 April 1917.

[59]Borden Papers, MG26, H1(b), Vol. 157, 83931, Sir Robert Borden to Blount, 27 April 1917.

[60]Ibid., 83935, W. H. Long to Sir Robert Borden, 9 May 1917.

was finally made and turned out to be entirely non-committal about lifting the restrictions, Borden was profoundly disappointed and felt that Britain had backed out of a definite agreement. A few weeks later Borden was informed by R. Rogers, his Minister of Public Works, who had attended the special meeting with the Prime Minister, that the minutes of the discussion regarding the cattle embargo had not been included in the official extracts of the "Minutes of Proceedings of the Imperial War Conference."[61] An indignant Borden requested the Canadian High Commissioner in London to see the Colonial Secretary regarding the omission and to find out why " . . . Prothero's statement in the House of Commons was not in accordance with the distinct understanding reached at the conference."[62] The British government did eventually agree to issue a revised publication containing the proceedings but refused, despite Prothero's words at the conference, to make any further statement regarding the embargo.[63] For the next two years the question became, as

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[61] Ibid., 83956, R. Rogers to Sir Robert Borden, 16 June 1917. "I note, with regret, that everything in respect to the cattle embargo has been dropped, and I am sure you will agree with me that we cannot afford to allow this to pass unnoticed and we should insist on it becoming part of the record."

[62] Ibid., 83957, Sir Robert Borden to G. H. Perley, 18 June 1917.

[63] Ibid., 83973, W. H. Long to Lord Devonshire, Governor General of Canada, 28 June 1917. The original exclusion of the minutes was justified on the grounds that the discussion was intermingled with the question of meat supplies and

it had been in the past as far as the British were concerned, a non-topic, while the Canadians were left with a bitter feeling of foul play.

When the issue was again broached in 1919 by a deputation from the Canadian Peace Conference Mission, they found that the President of the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries, R. E. Prothero (now Lord Ernle) had no intention of lifting the embargo. In statements to the public through the press and in the House of Lords, the British for the first time publicly admitted that the restriction could not be justified on the ground of protection from disease, but now stated that it had to be maintained " . . . to protect the breeder of cattle from the effects of overseas competition."[64]

Witnessing the Canadian government's continuing failure, though unaware of the full extent of Sir Robert's efforts on their behalf, and increasingly apprehensive of

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therefore had to remain confidential. At the same time Prothero informed the Scots that the present was not a good time to introduce the embargo question in Parliament as it would be strongly opposed by many members and in any case, " . . . there certainly would be no tonnage available for carrying the animals." See 83975, Board of Agriculture and Fisheries to Gentlemen [F.I.C.C.A.], 28 June 1917.

[64]Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Royal Commission on the Importation of Store Cattle, Cmd. 1139, August 1921, "Report of His Majesty's Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the United Kingdom of Livestock for Purposes Other Than Immediate Slaughter at the Ports," p. 4. The statement was issued to the press by Lord Ernle on 26 July 1919. See also Borden Papers, MG26, H1C(c), Vol. 98, 52547-52550, Dr. J. W. M. Robertson, Canadian Commissioner of Agriculture, to Lord Ernle, 10 March 1919, "Cattle Embargo"; 1(b), Vol. 157, 83996, Memorandum, "British Embargo on Canadian Cattle", prepared for the Minister of Agriculture, 1919.

the rising protectionist tide in the United States, western ranchers decided for the first time to enter the contest directly. The coordination of the ranchers' endeavours in this direction was left in the hands of S.G.P.A.'s manager W. F. Stevens, whose Scottish background and former experience as Alberta's Livestock Commissioner particularly suited him to the task. Steven's plans to achieve the association's objective were worked out during the summer of 1920 in cooperation with James Lennox, a prominent Scottish farmer and spokesman for the National Farmers' Union of Scotland, who had visited Alberta during the early part of summer, and a long-time friend of Stevens', W. T. Ritch. The latter was also a Scotsman and at the time was employed by a large American wool brokerage firm, but had formerly worked for the Canadian Department of Agriculture. It was decided that the main part of the campaign would be directed towards the British public through the press. The idea, as Ritch explained to Stevens was

> to educate the favourably disposed but indifferently informed factory people in the large cities, who know nothing about agriculture but, want cheap food and free imports, but you do not require to educate the British farmers beyond getting the backing of the Liberals among them. The north of England and Scotch farmers are nearly all Liberals and free traders and always have been, while the south of England farmers are blind, bigoted tories and always will be. It is useless to waste time and energy where votes cannot be changed,[65]

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[65] S.G.P.A. Papers, B12, F100, W. T. Ritch to W. F. Stevens, 5 November 1920.

In Ritch's view there were four main themes upon which the newspaper propaganda should rest, namely:

> the unpopularity of protection in the British Isles, the dislike of the high cost of living among the laborites, the tory slogan of preferential trade within the Empire and the liberal policy of free trade and a closer bond . . . of mutual interests with the Dominions, in addition to the Lloyd George promise [made at the Imperial War Conference].66

It was felt that a persistent and well organized propaganda campaign emphasizing these issues would catch either of the major parties whatever direction they moved.

In essence the anti-embargo forces directed their efforts along these lines. As the end of September Lennox reported to Stevens that the Dundee Advertiser had agreed to give the whole weight of its influence to the campaign, that the London Daily Herald, the most influential Labour paper, would use their material, and that he hoped to persuade the Glasgow Herald and Manchester Guardian also to assist. He added that the Scottish Cooperative Societies were behind them and that a meeting was set with the Master Butchers' Association.[67] The initial work of the S.G.P.A. was mainly to supply the necessary press material on the

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[66] Ibid., See also W. T. Ritch to W. F. Stevens, 25 August 1920; W. T. Ritch to W. F. Stevens, 20 October 1920; W. F. Stevens to W. T. Ritch, 29 October 1920; B8, F45, W. F. Stevens to W. T. Ritch, 30 August 1920; W. T. Ritch to W. F. Stevens, 8 October 1920.

[67] Ibid., B8, F45, J. Lennox to W. F. Stevens, 30 September 1920. The local Scottish press for the most part could also be relied upon. See for example, B12, F95, "Press Clippings," The Penrith Observer, 12 April 1921; The Scottish Farmer, 25 April 1921.

Canadian position to be distributed to the British papers by Lennox.[68] The real burden of the campaign was left to Lennox and the Scottish farm associations. The F.I.C.C.A. which had carried on the struggle for the preceding twenty years at first did not become actively involved. Having failed for so long the association had resigned itself to defeat and while prepared to distribute printed matter, the chairman frankly informed Stevens, " . . . I have no hope of success to our cause."[69]

The corner in the struggle seems to have been turned in March 1921 with a notable bye-election success. Early in the year the S.G.P.A. had made contact with a former Calgarian, the now powerful newspaper publisher, Lord Beaverbrook.[70] The Beaverbrook press subsequently turned the cattle embargo question into the major issue in the Dudley bye-election where Sir Arthur Griffith-Boscawen, the newly appointed

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[68] Ibid., W. F. Stevens to J. Lennox, 29 October 1920; W. F. Stevens to J. Lennox, 1 November 1920; W. F. Stevens to J. Lennox, 5 November 1920.

[69] Ibid., E. Watson, Chairman, F.I.C.C.A., to W. F. Stevens, 15 November 1920.

[70] Ibid., W. F. Stevens to J. Lennox, 10 February 1921; R. B. Bennett to W. F. Stevens, 31 May 1921. Bennett speaks of his most recent discussions with Beaverbrook on the embargo question. Evidence seems to suggest that it was Bennett who originally approached Beaverbrook on the ranchers' behalf. Bennett and Beaverbrook had been close business associates when the latter lived in Calgary.

President of the Board of Agriculture, was facing the electorate. The message in Beaverbrook's Daily Express was simple: "A vote for Boscawen is a vote for dear meat."[71] Boscawen's counter that the campaign was inspired by " . . . a prominent Canadian, who, with his friends, will profit by sending Canadian cattle here," and that "the first duty of the British minister of agriculture is to see that British herds are preserved and immune from disease" proved to no avail, and Sir Arthur lost the seat he had held since 1910 to the Labour candidate.[72]

From this point the pace quickened; the question had at last become, as the S.G.P.A. and the Scottish farmers had endeavoured to make it, a national issue. Impressed by their success in the working-class constituency of Dudley in the Birmingham area, the Labour party adopted the removal of the cattle embargo as a plank in their national platform.[73] Less than a week after the election, at a conference held at the London Guildhall, on the invitation of the Corporation of London, and attended by representatives from a great number of urban councils and other public bodies, a resolution calling for the removal of the restriction on the importation

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[71] Ibid., B12, F95, "Press Clippings", Herald, 24 February 1921.

[72] Ibid., Herald, 3 March 1921.

[73] Ibid., B8, F45, J. Lennox to W. F. Stevens, 7 March 1921.

of Canadian cattle was carried by seventy-two votes to forty-four.[74] The press campaign was intensified[75] and by April even the long-despairing chairman of the F.I.C.C.A. began to speculate that the embargo might be removed and proceded to bestir his organization.[76] Finally, in May, in response to rising public pressure, the British government called a Commission to investigate the whole question.

At the Commission's hearings evidence was collected from all the vested interests, including the Canadian government. The commissioners noted that the balance of opinion among farmers in England appeared to be strongly against admission. Resolutions in favour of retaining the embargo were passed by all branches of the National Farmers' Union with the exception of the Northumberland branch. Elsewhere in England, in London and the towns, sentiment favoured admission and was based on the expectation that this would lower the price of meat. The commission also reported that this with the exception of the smaller farmers in the Scottish Highlands who feared Canadian competition, Scottish

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[74]Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Royal Commission on the Importation of Store Cattle, p. 5; S.G.P.A. Papers, B8, F45, W. F. Stevens to Lennox, 12 March 1921. Lennox arranged for a representative of his group to speak at the meeting.

[75]S.G.P.A. Papers, B8, F45, "Press Clippings," see for example The Glasgow Herald, 15 March 1921; The Meat Trades Journal, 24 March 1921.

[76]Ibid., E. Watson to W. F. Stevens, 1 April 1921.

farmers desired the removal of the embargo. In Ireland the feeling in favour of the maintainance of the restriction was reported to be unanimous. Here farmers were of the opinion Canadian competition would be disastrous and would drive them from the market. Opposition was also tendered by Lord Ernle, the former President of the Board of Agriculture. Ernle attempted to make the case that the real question was "what the farmer would think" if the embargo was removed. He explained that the farmer was very cautious and conservative and if he was at all apprehensive about Canadian importation he would not rear stock which in turn would leave Great Britain ever more dependent on outside supply.[77]

After assessing the evidence the Commissioners finally presented their report on August 30, 1921. Lord Ernle's concern about "what the farmer would think" was, "with most unfeigned respect", dismissed. The true question, in the commission's view was "what the facts really are."

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[77]Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Royal Commission on the Importation of Store Cattle, pp. 5-10. Among others the National Farmers' Union of Scotland, the Scottish Chamber of Agriculture, the Free Importation of Canadian Cattle Association of Great Britain, and the Corporations of London, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Birmingham and Manchester, Dr. S. Tolmie, Canadian Minister of Agriculture, and D. Marshall, Minister of Agriculture for Alberta, spoke for removal of the embargo. The main groups presenting evidence of opposition were the National Farmers' Union of England, the Royal Agricultural Society of England, the Live Stock Defence Committee which was comprised of a large number of Agricultural and Breeding Societies, Agricultural Societies in the West and Central Highlands, the Irish Farmers' Union, the Munster Agricultural Society, the Royal Ulster Agricultural Society, the Irish Cattle Traders' and Stockowners' Association, and Lord Ernle.

Thus on the basis of the data collected the conclusions drawn were that the cost of shipping cattle all the way from western Canada would always ensure against undue competition, that the fear of disease was unfounded, and that, while the admission of Canadian cattle might to some extent deprive Irish farmers of their present market, it would in the long run tend to lower meat prices. It was therefore concluded that the importation of Canadian store cattle was advisable.[78]

From this point the issue carried itself and Canadian ranchers watched with careful interest as the matter moved gradually towards a parliamentary decision. In the interval as the public grew impatient with the government's delay in acting on the Commission's recommendations the matter was taken up by the London Times. Hoping finally to press the government to action municipal authorities gathered in convention at the London Guildhall on June 15, 1922 and with but a single dissenting vote approved a resolution calling upon

> . . . his Majesty's Government forthwith to honour the unqualified undertaking given to the Prime Minister of the Dominion of Canada by the President of the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries at the Imperial War Conference in April 1917, and to act upon the unanimous conclusions of the Royal Commission on the Importation of the Store Cattle in favour of the admission into this country of Canadian stores.[79]

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[78] Ibid., pp. 14-15.

[79] The Times (London), 15 June 1922; see also 3 May 1922, regarding Sir Robert Borden's views on the history of the pledge; 6 May 1922, a letter to the editor from Lord Ernle justifying his position.

The Times noted that the delegates assembled at the convention represented nearly three-fourths of the population of Great Britain and, in an editorial directed to the government, warned that the people's will was clear, "it now only remains for [their] representatives at Westminster to carry its expressed wishes into effect." In the debate that shortly followed in the Commons the English squirearchy stood squarely opposed, as they had done before the Commission the year before, but while their parliamentary strength was still formidable the urban members and their northern allies were still more numerous, and when the division was called the vote was 247 to 171 in favour of removal.[80] In the Lords the entrenched power of the landed interests was even greater, but under pressure from the anti-embargo forces to restore the government's integrity in the eyes of the senior Dominion and honour the 1917 pledge, the Upper House also approved the measure.[81]

In the end the strategy of the S.G.P.A. and the Scottish National Farmers' Union had been sound. The battle was really won in the urban centres, and perhaps the real key to the eventual success had been the ability of the Calgary ranchmen to draft Lord Beaverbrook to their cause.

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[80] Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates 5th ser. (Commons), CLVII (1922), 63-178.

[81] Ibid., 5th ser. (Lords), LI (1922), 354-404.

Another factor that assisted the endeavours of the anti-embargo forces was the declining influence of Irish landowners after the First World War. The Anglo-Irish Treaty signed in London on December 6, 1921 and ratified a month later in Dublin greatly weakened the Irish appeal for preferential treatment. The access thus gained to the British market in the autumn of 1922 in part compensated for the loss of the American market suffered some months previous. But the new outlet, when at last obtained, was not as profitable as the one lost. While the big ranchers were saved from serious economic dislocation, margins were drastically trimmed.[82] For the small producer the distant British market was less accessible and he became even more dependent on the less competitive Calgary and Winnipeg markets. Though unrestricted access to a new market saved the big exporters from despair, the beef industry in the west remained on an uncertain economic footing for the next five years.

While the stock growers' attention was mainly occupied after 1919 with the campaign to maintain a satisfactory market, the old lease question also returned to plague them

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[82] S.G.P.A. Papers, B8, F50, "Cattle Shipment, September 1921." An experimental shipment by the S.G.P.A. to Great Britain in September 1921 accumulated total expenses of $77.65 per head, leaving a total net return per head of $82.99, or an average price of 5.84 cents per 100 pounds. This return was slightly less than would have been gained in Calgary. Returns improved after the embargo was lifted. When cattle did not have to be slaughtered on arrival the price was bid higher by farmers anxious to feed the animal over the winter months.

once more. In July 1920 Senator James Lougheed was transferred from the Ministry of Soldier Re-establishment to the Interior Ministry and almost immediately sought to amend the lease legislation. Despite the cautions of the head of the timber and grazing section that permanency of the leasehold was essential to the industry's well-being, Lougheed decided that all new leases would have a three year cancellation clause and secured an Order-in-Council to this effect.[83] There had been no warning of such a move and the ranchers were instantly alarmed. The ten year closed leases that they had eventually secured several years after the Conservatives had come to power in 1911 were now half gone and the prospect of having to return to the old system added a new factor of uncertainty to a problem that cattlemen thought had been solved. Ranchers were especially puzzled that such a measure should be proposed by Senator Lougheed, who had been a political friend for many years and whose legal firm had traditionally handled most of the big ranchers' business. A clue as to the government's intent was provided a short time later in a speech made by the Prime Minister, Arthur Meighen, in Medicine Hat, in which he announced that the federal government was considering turning over to the prairie provinces

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[83] RG15, B2a, Vol. 175, 145330, pt. 9, W. W. Cory to B. L. York, 22 October 1920; Copy of Order-in-Council, 4 November 1920. Notice was changed to four years in October 1921.

the natural resources (including Crown lands) that the federal government had withheld in 1905. While the proposal could be expected to win western friends for the government in many quarters their old supporters, the ranchers, were less than pleased.[84] The S.P.G.A. responded by sending a delegation to Ottawa to determine the government's full intent. On return the delegation informed their fellow ranchers that nothing further had been said about the resource question but that they had encountered serious opposition from the Minister of the Interior, " . . . who was strongly in favour of cancelling all leases and utilizing them as public grazing lands or commons by farmers in the vicinity."[85] Before the year was out Lougheed was being labeled by the ranchers as a new "Frank Oliver."[86]

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[84]Cross Papers, B113, F908, A. E. Cross to A. Meighen, 11 November 1920.

[85]S.G.P.A. Papers, B11, F84, W. F. Stevens to J. Mitchell, 26 February 1921. Lougheed's intent is also revealed in an internal departmental memorandum from the Deputy Minister to the head of the timber and grazing section. "The Minister explains that with the possibility before us of a transfer of the natural resources to the Province, it is not desirable to tie up in closed leases for ten years any large tracts of lands like this, and he thinks that we [should] issue from now on a clause that will enable us to cancel on two years notice." See RG15, B2a, Vol. 175, 145330, pt. 9, 7 October 1920. A. E. Cross suggested more deep seated reasons for the Senator's hostility. "I have known for a long time" Cross informed one of the delegates "that the Minister of the Interior is not favourable to the lease holders from early impressions of the old cattle men which I feel were quite wrong, but hard to change." Cross Papers, B113, F911, A. E. Cross to D. Hardwick, 27 April 1921.

[86]S.G.P.A. Papers, B11, F84, W. F. Stevens to A. M. Firth, Secretary, Edmonton Board of Trade, 27 June 1921.

It was apparent that the Conservative government was anxiously casting about for policies that would improve its position amongst the farm population for the coming federal election. The community pasture idea was known to be popular and was believed by many to be a necessary measure of assistance to drought ridden farmers in the south. Since it had been proven that the area could not be relied upon to produce grain crops, unfortunate farmers who remained there were encouraged to assist their well-being through the purchase of a few head of cattle. The problem however was that most farmers had insufficient land to keep more than a few head, especially in very dry years. The solution according to a brief sent to the Department of the Interior by the United Farmers of Alberta was community grazing. The U.F.A. proposed that no leases be renewed until the surrounding settlers had an opportunity to organize and make joint application.[87] The well-known and highly respected southern Conservative, C. A. Magrath, in a report of the Survey Board of Southern Alberta, also recommended that the big leases should be allowed to lapse in favour of community pasture.[88] G. Hoadley, another prominent Conservative turned United Farmer, was also an outspoken champion of the idea.

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[87]RG15, B2a, Vol. 175, 145330, pt. 9, Resolution regarding Grazing Leases, U.F.A. executive, fall 1921.

[88]Cross Papers, B113, F911, A. E. Cross to C. A. Magrath, 11 February 1922; C. A. Magrath to A. E. Cross, 15 February 1922. C. A. Magrath was elected the first mayor

In practice the community grazing idea differed little from the old "free" range system that organized Canadian cattlemen had opposed at various times since the 1880's. In its counter publicity against community grazing the S.G.P.A. therefore called attention to the dangers that cattlemen had identified in the past. Presenting their case in the farmers' journal, the Grain Growers' Guide, the S.G.P.A. informed farmers that the principal counts against the system were the inferior animals it produced and the inevitability of overgrazing. Beyond this the association insisted that there was the matter of morality and justice.

> It involves the displacing of those who are now in possession of the lands. . . . This raises the question of justice and of public policy that does not [apply] to lands that have been unused and are now unproductive. It implies that land that is now yielding to the Dominion revenue in the form of rentals, and to the Province revenue in the form of taxes that is being utilized by men, who know their business, and who after years of experimenting have developed a class of animals that have reflected much credit and brought much wealth to the Province, is to be taken out of the hands of those who have been in possession of them in the past, and set aside for the use of another class of men who came to the Province without any intention of engaging in the cattle business; men who had so little knowledge of the business they did propose carrying on, namely, grain growing, that they took land unsuited to their purpose and failed in their undertaking. . . . In other words a body of men who have made a success of their business is to be dispossessed at the demand of another but larger body that has failed, and a system of cattle raising that has been identified with the growing of the best that Western

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of Lethbridge in 1891. He served in the North West Assembly from 1891 to 1898 and in 1908 was elected to the House of Commons as a Conservative for Medicine Hat. From 1914 to 1936 he was Canadian Chairman of the International Joint Commission.

> Canada produces is asked to give way to a system that has been associated with the production of that which is common and in many instances inferior.[89]

While it is doubtful that the charge of replacing the successful with failures won too many converts amongst the farm community, the essence of the ranchers' argument was sound. Cattlemen with quality herds did not look forward to having their farm neighbours grazing their inferior bulls in the same pasture. There was little question that if this came to pass the cattle export industry would suffer.[90] To ensure that this did not happen the S.G.P.A. passed a resolution calling on the federal government to guarantee renewal of ranchers' grazing privileges and then went about collecting the traditional sources of complementary support for their position. To this end they secured the favour of the Lethbridge, Calgary and Edmonton Boards of Trade and the very prestigious Canadian Bankers' Association.[91] The S.G.P.A. also coordinated the efforts of other like-minded associations,

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[89] S.G.P.A. Papers, B11, F84, W. F. Stevens to D. Hardwick, 25 May 1921, enclosed article for the Grain Growers' Guide.

[90] For discussion of this problem see Cross Papers, B113, F911, A. E. Cross to C. A. Magrath, 11 February 1922.

[91] S.G.P.A. Papers, B11, F84, Dennis Riley, Canadian Bank of Commerce, Calgary to W. F. Stevens. "We are now informed that representations have been made by the Canadian Bankers' Association to the Minister of the Interior urging the Government to give careful consideration to the question of retaining for ranching purposes lands which are unsuitable for farming and requesting that an early announcement should be made of their decision." The banker's interest also might have had something to do with the large loans carried by

including the Interior Stock Association of British Columbia and the Saskatchewan Stock Growers' Association.[92] A special brief was sent by the association to the Prime Minister, Arthur Meighen, and R. B. Bennett was directed to use what influence he could.[93]

At the same time a supporting operation was being conducted at the provincial level. During the previous several years the cattlemen's relations with the provincial government had improved greatly. Several stockmen, including D. E. Riley (later Senator Riley) the president of the S.G.P.A. had become prominent in provincial Liberal circles. Another, A. J. Maclean had risen to cabinet rank, and the Minister of Finance C. J. Mitchell was considered by ranchers to be a friend of their interests. Most important of all was the goodwill of the new Premier, Charles Stewart. The

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some of the bigger ranchers. See also A. T. Lyster to W. F. Stevens, 1 March 1921. Stevens made arrangements for the lease question to be put on the agenda of the Convention of Municipalities to meet later in Regina. S.G.P.A. to D. Riley, 9 September 1921, "Mr. Dillon attended the office of the Secretary of the Board of Trade and asked that he, on behalf of the Board of Trade of Calgary, send telegrams to Sir James Lougheed, Mr. Tweedie, M.P., and R. B. Bennett regarding the matter, but not mentioning the name of the Association. The Secretary of the Board of Trade agreed to do so. Mr. Dillon also got the Secretary of the Board of Trade of Edmonton and Lethbridge on the long distance phone and asked that they take similar action which they also agreed to do."

[92] Ibid., D. Hardwick, S.G.P.A. to Interior Stock Association of British Columbia, 1 March 1921.

[93] Ibid., S.G.P.A. to Rt. Hon. Arthur Meighen, n.d.; S.G.P.A. to R. B. Bennett, 7 September 1921.

ranchers' new party contacts turned out to be especially useful at this juncture. In a complete reversal of the situation in past struggles the stockmen now turned to the provincial government to assist them thwart the policy proposed by the federal authorities. The stockmen's immediate wish of the Alberta government was that it refuse to be party to the commission Lougheed proposed to investigate the community grazing question.[94] Lougheed's commission was to include representatives from Alberta, Saskatchewan, and the federal government, and it appeared that only one rancher would be appointed thereby assuring that the farm interest would prevail. Taking the easiest political response the Alberta government simply put off a decision one way or the other, which stalled the creation of the commission and satisfied the ranchers. Premier Stewart was later persuaded by the ranchers to take a definite stand on their behalf and inform Lougheed that he preferred a renewal of the closed lease system.[95]

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[94] Ibid., W. F. Stevens to D. E. Riley, 4 May 1921. Riley was asked to " . . . write a personal letter to the Hon. Duncan Marshall and suggest to him that he and his Government would have more to gain in a political way by keeping out of this inquiry entirely and by letting the Dominion Government deal with it."

[95] Ibid., W. F. Stevens to D. Hardwick, 30 July 1921; D. E. Riley to W. F. Stevens, 4 August 1921; J. A. Lougheed to C. Stewart, 25 July 1921. Copy of Lougheed's acknowledgement of receipt of Stewart's letter.

The ranchers' influence within the Alberta government through 1921 was also enhanced by an impending provincial election and the fact that the Liberals were most apprehensive as to the amount of the farm vote that the United Farmers of Alberta would capture in their first provincial election campaign. The S.G.P.A. understood the situation perfectly. In the words of their secretary, W. F. Stevens " . . . politically speaking they have not as much to gain by courting the farmers because the farmers are dead sure to oppose them in the next election,"[96] and consequently the stockmen were not reticent about asking for favours. Ironically, during the same period the ranchers' influence in Ottawa seems to have declined somewhat in face of another shaky government's attempt to improve its popularity amongst western farmers. In the end however the results of the provincial and then the federal election turned the cattlemen's world back to its traditional form. In July 1921 Albertans called upon the United Farmers of Alberta to form their new government, thus restoring the old relationship between the cattlemen and their provincial government. The victory of the federal Liberals in December further restored the past character of the ranchers' world. The prospect of a new

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[96] Ibid., W. F. Stevens to D. E. Riley, 4 May 1921.

Liberal government in Ottawa was well received in ranch circles for it meant they were finished with Senator Lougheed. Their satisfaction was even more complete when the new Prime Minister, William Lyon Mackenzie King, announced that the new Minister of the Interior would be none other than Charles Stewart, the stockmen's friend and the lately departed Premier of Alberta. A short time later it was announced that Duncan Marshall, the former Alberta Minister of Agriculture, would become the new federal Commissioner of Agriculture.

The ranchers' relief proved well founded. In the late winter Stewart sent his Deputy Minister to meet with the ranchmen in Medicine Hat.[97] The S.G.P.A. in turn sent to the Department of the Interior a list of the alterations it desired in the regulations governing grazing leases, and on April 25, 1922 was informed by the department that most of the requested alterations had been approved.[98] The new provisions essentially brought the system back to what it had been before Lougheed's amendments. The cancellation clause was dropped and provision was made for lessees with leases having less than five years to run to make application for renewal. The stockmen officially recorded their approval of the changes in a letter to the Minister thanking him for

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[97] RG15, B2a, Vol. 176, 145330, pt. 10, "Synopsis of Meeting Held at Medicine Hat With Ranchmen and Grazing Lessees, Saturday March 4th, 1922."

[98] S.G.P.A. Papers, B11, F84, proposed alteration, n.d.; B. Y. York, Controller, Timber and Grazing Branch to W. F. Stevens, 25 April 1922, lists the changes that have been made.

" . . . the prompt action your department has taken in revising the regulations governing grazing leases" and assuring him that the industry could return again to a proper business basis.[99] The ranchers' gratitude was genuine for they well understood that they had gained their end despite the fact that the governments of Saskatchewan and Alberta had made known their preference for lease cancellation and community grazing.[100] The S.G.P.A.'s appraisal of the attitude of the Alberta government is suggested in its advice to members to act quickly now that lease renewal was possible.

> . . . not renewing them until [they] expire is more or less a gamble in view of the fact that the Province is likely to get its Natural Resources and if it does, the matter of leases will be taken over by it. The Provincial Government is none too friendly toward the matter of releasing this land, but desires rather to turn [it] over to Community Grazing. . . .[101]

As ranchers hurried to renew their leases they were further reminded that " . . . no publicity regarding these regulations is needed."[102] With their lease problems again resolved the

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[99] Ibid., D. Hardwick, Chairman S.G.P.A., Grazing Committee to C. Stewart, 5 May 1922; see also S.G.P.A. to E. Stewart, 13 April 1922; D. Hardwick to W. W. Cory, 10 May 1922, "The Grazing Committee of the [S.G.P.A.] wish to thank you in the name of Our Association for your sympathetic support which we fully realize was a very strong factor in obtaining . . . such prompt recognition."

[100] RG15, B2a, Vol. 176, 145330, pt. 10, B. L. York to L. Ripon, 21 February 1922, enclosing submission regarding Community Grazing from U.F.A.; Hamilton, Saskatchewan Minister of Agriculture to W. W. Cory, 23 February 1922.

[101] S.G.P.A. Papers, S.G.P.A. to C. G. Dunning, 23 May 1922.

[102] Ibid., D. Hardwick to S.G.P.A., 10 May 1922.

ranchers could return to devote their full energies to seeking means to relieve the depressed market situation that had faced the industry since 1920.

In all, the S.G.P.A. had served the ranchers well since it was founded in 1919. During the subsequent three years the association had fought simultaneously three major campaigns on the stockmen's behalf. Though it had met failure in Chicago, it had succeeded in gaining access to the British market and at the same time was able to protect the big ranchers' leases, which, after markets, were their major concern. The organized activities of the cattlemen during the first years of the third decade of the twentieth century reveal that the rancher still retained much of the influence and power that had marked his presence in the southwest since the arrival of the ranch companies forty years before. Though greatly reduced as a social unit the ranch community remained an aggressive political force outside the farmers' political movement, as is shown in their determined and increasingly sophisticated struggle to maintain their markets and their lands. Careful attention to both these factors was essential to the cattlemen's survival and both were problems they had faced since the 1880's. The S.G.P.A.'s confrontation with the community grazing idea in 1921 was but the latest episode in a continuing struggle for control of southwestern land that had begun with the coming of settlement, and the ranchers' continued success in meeting this challenge is testimony to the effectiveness of their political and economic organization.

# CONCLUSION

After the departure of the trader and buffalo hunter and before the coming of the farmer to the dry southwestern plains, the region was the preserve of the rancher. For the twenty-five year period preceding the last great advance of the farming frontier on the North American continent that came after the turn of the century, the ascendant cattlemen developed and conducted their industry in relative harmony, but always with a watchful eye on agrarian interlopers. The years of the big ranchers' hegemony in fact represents a distinct stage in the development and settlement of the Canadian west, and in this regard the occupation of the Canadian semi-arid region seems to follow the pattern manifest in the western United States, Argentina, Australia and South Africa. In each region, before general farm settlement occurred, there was an interval that Australian historians have called "the Pastoral Ascendancy."

The paramount threat to this ascendancy, wherever it was achieved, was settlement. There was consequently one part of the Canadian plains where the farm settler was unwelcome and where there existed a powerfully entrenched group determined to restrict his access. Control of the land was the key to the cattlemen's empire. This control was at first maintained through a system of closed leases that from

the beginning set the evolution of the ranching frontier in Canada along a different path than that south of the border. This legal advantage along with the cattle compact's intimate connections with the governing Conservative party permitted the cattlemen to have things very much their own way during their first fifteen years in the west. In the early period squatters were simply evicted and later, when the great reservations within the cattle kingdom became too much of a political liability in face of the Conservative party's public commitment to open settlement, the cattlemen were successful in exchanging their closed leases for a system of water reserves which stayed general settlement for some years further.

By the turn of the century it was apparent that despite the vast network of water reservations, homesteaders were still prepared to settle, even at a distance from water. Cattlemen consequently began individually to purchase as much land as they could afford and the powerful ranch lobby began to campaign for renewed long-term closed leases. Apart from momentary success in 1905, it was not until the return to power of the Conservatives in 1911 that this goal was finally achieved. During Frank Oliver's administration of the Department of the Interior from 1905 to 1911 the cattle industry suffered a serious decline. Before and after Oliver's term of office the cattlemen were able to operate as a reasonably effective political pressure group

at both the national and local levels through the individual influence of the industry's leaders and the collective weight of their stock association. While the ranchers' energies were directed mainly to the land question, their successful exertions in other areas such as the quarantine and stock inspection issues, the proposed police withdrawal in 1905, and the cattle embargo question, also attest to the influence they were able to exert. The direction of the ranchers' organized activities shows that through the entire period the weight of their endeavours was directed against the grain grower.

In the contest for control of the southwest that continued until the First Great War, the ranchers, despite their disproportionate political strength, suffered a critical handicap. The stockmen and informed technical experts like William Pearce persistently argued that the region was not suitable for grain farming, but their warnings went unheard. Between 1896 and 1914 thousands of settlers were led by uncaring or uninformed immigration agents, by their own over-confidence in new farming techniques, and by several years of above average rainfall to homestead in parts of the southwest that should never have been opened. Initial settlement in any region is difficult and the failure rate is always high, but in the southwest much of the tragedy could have been avoided and many a homesteader might have been saved from disaster if the Laurier government had followed

the advice of informed people within its service and recognized the elementary facts of the region's physiography. Unfortunately for the unwary settler the unwarranted optimism born of the prosperity of the first decade of the twentieth century and the overwhelming popular sympathy for the thousands of homesteaders who lined up at western land offices as settlement gained momentum, overrode all official restraint.

That the persistent opposition to the "sod-busters'" advance never took a violent turn is to be explained by the presence of an efficient federal police force, the existence of the lease and water reserve systems that were in force through much of the period, as well as the cultural composition of the Canadian ranch community. It was the peculiar social background of the Canadian ranch establishment that gave the Canadian ranching frontier its special character, and to some degree, coloured what was essentially an economic struggle between ranchers and farmers for control of the southwest. The fact that greater capital resources were required to establish a cattle ranch tended immediately to impose a class difference between the ranch community and most of the farm population. Complementing this division was the different national origin of the majority of either group. Composed mainly of ex-policemen, Canadians from stock raising regions in the Eastern Townships and rural Ontario, Englishmen, Anglo-Irish and Scots, the ranch community possessed a cultural heritage that contrasted sharply

with that of the expanding American farm population. The society thus established on this social base reached the peak of its development shortly after the turn of the century and then began gradually to decline. The ranchers' society in the foothills none the less remained a viable social unit until World War I and then the pace of atrophy accelerated. As this group became more of a remnant in an increasingly "American" west the resultant social tension in some quarters added an element of anti-Americanism to the traditional farm-ranch feud. The divergence of this community from the social and political norm of the general farm population, along with the economic incompatibility inherent in the industry which the rancher pursued, gave the Canadian ranching frontier its special character and set it apart from the general pattern of settlement to be observed elsewhere in the prairie west.

Beyond their failure to recognize the essentially separate development of the ranching frontier in Canada and to appreciate the nature and degree of the rancher's opposition to the homesteader, histories of the Canadian west have been deficient on another important count. In the story of the opening and development of the prairie west the cattlemen seem to have fallen a victim of numbers and become lost in the mass of settlement statistics. In short it must be said that it was the rancher who opened the southwest almost three decades before the farmer arrived. Through his

prolonged and indomitable efforts a large and profitable enterprise particularly suited to the semi-arid southwestern environment was pioneered and developed, and in this regard the rancher has far more to his credit than has hitherto been acknowledged.

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PAC, Public Archives of Canada

PAS, Public Archives of Saskatchewan

PMAA, Provincial Museum and Archives of Alberta

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