

A STUDY OF THE UNITED FARMERS OF MANITOBA TO 1928

An Agricultural Association
During A Period Of Transition

Gerald E. Panting, B.A.

Being A Thesis Presented To The University Of Manitoba
In Partial Fulfilment Of The Requirements Leading
To The Degree Of Master Of Arts.

Winnipeg, Manitoba.
August, 1954.



FOREWORD

This study is concerned with the United Farmers of Manitoba during the 1920's with some discussion of its political offshoots, the Manitoba Progressives and the Bracken government. The United Farm Women of Manitoba were not dealt with because of considerations of space and time. The ideas of the U.F.M. on such subjects as international relations were excluded for the same reason.

A word of appreciation is due to Dr. J.L. Johnston, the Provincial Librarian, to Mr. Hartwell Bowsfield, the Provincial Archivist, and to the staff of the Manitoba Legislative Library, for their cooperation and kind assistance in the preparation of this thesis. A similar debt is owing to Professor W.L. Morton for his suggestions and to Dr. K.W.K. McNaught for his wise counsel. I would also like to thank Messrs. John Bracken, R.F. Chapman, H.L. Griffin, D.G. McKenzie, A.J.M. Poole, F.W. Ransom, R. Tolton, and the Hon. D.L. Campbell, as well as others who made their knowledge and experience of the farmers' movement available. However, the opinions and conclusions set out in this dissertation are those of the author and the full responsibility for them is his.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
Introduction	The Problem of the Frontier	iv
I	The Tradition of R _e volt	1
II	Central Marketing 1920-1923	31
III	The Great Crusade 1920-1923	57
IV	The Pooling M _o vement 1923-1927	87
V	Political Withdrawal 1923-1928	113
VI	Persistent Agrarian Issues 1920-1928	128
VII	A Farmers' Association 1920-1928	168
Conclusions	The Passing of the Frontier	200
Notes		212
Bibliography		247
Appendix A	The United Farmers of Manitoba Provincial Platform 1922	258
Appendix B	Politicians Endorsed by The United Farmers of Manitoba 1921 and 1922	261
Appendix C	Leadership of the United Farmers of Manitoba	268
Appendix D	Some Indices of Rural Development in Manitoba 1921-1930	277

INTRODUCTION

THE PROBLEM OF THE FRONTIER

The clearest and most significant uniformity regarding Canadian agriculture for more than three hundred years has been its deliberate and consistent use as a basis for economic and political empire.¹

But such a policy has produced a number of protests because it conceives of one group of people and of certain areas as instruments for the achievement of ends which may not be to the benefit of those instruments. While the farmer may be regarded as a producing unit in the economy, he is also a human being with urges, drives and ideals outside the normal categories of economics. In North American history the main agricultural areas have been on the advancing edge of an expanding society. They have constituted a line of pioneer settlements moving westward.

This moving "frontier" may be considered either as a social process or as the result of certain economic developments. Frederick Jackson Turner conceived of this frontier as a catalyst in the developing life of the United States.

. . . the largest part of what has been distinctive and valuable in America's contribution to the history of the human spirit has been due to this nation's peculiar experience in extending its type of frontier into new regions; and in creating peaceful societies with new ideals in the successive vast and differing geographic provinces which together make up the United States.²

v.

Another American historian has written: "As a process, its most significant meaning is found. . . . Everywhere on the frontier civilization was being manufactured out of raw material and personnel."³ Such definitions look upon the agrarian frontier as a manufactory of social products, differing from the older society behind it because of adjustments necessary in the struggle between the pioneer and a "raw" natural environment.

On the other hand,

A moving frontier is in its essence the reverse side of a developing technique of production and of transportation. Before one can understand the frontier one must have a working knowledge of the industrial order which created it, its trend and its rate of growth.⁴

This definition suggests that the process, which is the frontier, is the result of the development of an industrial community. This economic view of the frontier process can be extended.

The self-sufficient agricultural pioneer who serves as the stereotype in Canadian history of the folk-lore variety would, by definition, possess no economic significance for other segments of the community. But the Canadian agricultural pioneer was by no means self-sufficient. He bought the services of ocean and land transportation companies, of innkeepers, of the legal and medical professions, of the processors of timber, grains, and livestock, and of the credit-granting agencies. He bought equipment, clothing and even provisions sold if not manufactured in the market centres which grew up as the indispensable counterpart of the agricultural frontier.⁵

Because of the investment represented by the establishments

rendering service to aspiring farmers, Professor Fowke has generalized that the frontier is "whatever place and whatever economic activity gives rise to investment opportunities on a substantial scale."⁶ Therefore, the agricultural frontier is linked to the development of a "metropolitan" economy based upon the growth of commerce, industry and finance.

. . . the rise of metropolitanism is the other side of the coin to frontier expansion. One may speak of the constant expansion of the frontier or of the constant extension of the metropolitan power that is pushing out the frontier.⁷

It is out of the interaction between the old society and the new one being created by the process of the frontier that farmers organizations have arisen as protests against the use of agriculture as "a basis for political and economic empire."

Western Canada provides conditions peculiarly adapted to the formation of such organizations. The growth of an agricultural economy on the Canadian prairies was made possible by the growth of an industrial economy in need of markets; by the construction of railway lines to act as arteries of trade between the older portions of Canada and the West; by the existence of agricultural machinery and techniques suited to western conditions; and by the development of grain storage facilities. Large-scale farming for export created a pattern of trade relations by which the farmers were brought into contact with grain dealers, railway

representatives, implement dealers, general merchants and bankers. The international market situation also made itself felt through the pricing system. Caught up in this complex web of economic associations, the western farmers drew together for mutual support in dealing with their problems.

They did not always see their circumstances as the result of impersonal forces but rather inclined to the view that human cupidity and deceit were involved. This tendency to view the economic status of the farmers in moral and/or social terms led to the rise of an occupational or "class" attitude when the agrarians stood together in the struggle for the wealth of society. The industrial and financial groups, and more particularly, those which constituted the "big interests" of the East, were defined as the enemy. The regional specialization of Canada provided an atmosphere in which a sectional outlook could be developed. From this consciousness of common interests and problems have arisen agricultural societies, economic associations, pressure groups, and political parties. Out of these protest movements have arisen positive ideas and creative activities.

In summary, the agrarian frontier may be defined as a process whereby the ideas, institutions, and technology of

an expanding and maturing metropolitan society are adapted to a new situation represented by an agricultural area undergoing economic development. This process generates protest movements among the farmers which are aimed at fashioning a society more nearly suited to the needs of agricultural producers than the society which they have inherited. In addition, this frontier radicalism is the result, in part, of the vagaries of the international situation, because of the link between the exporting economy of the agricultural areas and the world markets.⁸

CHAPTER I

THE TRADITION OF REVOLT

As the agrarian frontier moved from the Atlantic seaboard and the St. Lawrence Valley, it was closely followed by the advance guard of the metropolitan economy--the banks, the railways, mercantile establishments, and dealers in farm implements and produce. This process generated a series of protests among the farmers who attacked these outposts of the capitalistic metropolitan economy as symbols of attempted domination. However, these institutions were also reminders to the farmers of their dependence upon the forces outside the agricultural frontier that helped to form it. The sturdy husbandmen were made aware that while the farmer might be a workingman he was also an entrepreneur. It was this dual relationship of the farmer to the developing economy that prevented him from breaking completely with the metropolitan society.¹ "Class war" was not as effective a rallying cry among agrarians as among laborers in the cities. But as corporate enterprise came to dominate the metropolitan economy, the farmers as individual enterprisers were placed in a poor competitive position. Out of this situation arose the strong cooperative undertakings by which the farmers pooled their resources.

In the period between 1840 and Confederation, Canada

experienced the growth of a metropolitan economy based upon the existence of a rural frontier. Immigration from Britain swelled the farming population of Canada West while the rise of manufacturing contributed to the decay of the primitive economy of the pioneer farmers.² The farmer exporting his products to the United States under the reciprocity agreement of 1854 or to England during the Crimean War found himself opposed to the commercial interests of Montreal. As the incipient manufacturing industry took up the cause of protective tariffs, so the frontier farmers became free traders.

In general, as in the case of Winnipeg and the prairie west in a later age, the farming populace and the local business community that lived by its trade shared many important points of view, particularly in opposition to outside metropolitan forces which sought to dominate the whole region.³

The businessmen of Toronto agreed with their agrarian allies about free trade. The two groups stood together against Montreal and ^{the} Liberal-Conservatives representing an alliance of Conservatism and Catholicism.

The convention of the Reform Party in 1859 was largely representative of the Clear Grits or frontier radicals, who made themselves heard.

Here we listen to the farmer of Canada West voicing his suspicions of merchants, bankers, and politicians who fattened themselves at the expense of the honest toilers of the frontier. There was a sturdy belief in the essential virtue of a free and enfranchised citizenry.⁴