

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF HEALTH IN NORTHERN MANITOBA

by

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the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
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## Abstract

The thesis explores the relationship between ill health and underdevelopment in northern remote Manitoba. Developmental indicators are detailed which illustrate clearly that northern remote Manitoba is an underdeveloped region. In order to explain the origins and continuing existence of this underdevelopment, Latin American dependency theory and Canadian staple theory are employed. The health problems of the remote northern population are then exposed using mortality and morbidity indicators, which clearly illustrate two basic types of health problems: those typical of the third world, and accidents, suicide, and violence. Basic deficiencies in living conditions are then shown to be directly related to the third world problems, while the accidents, suicide, and violence are shown to stem from much more complex causes based on the historical experience of the native people, and their present situation of marginalization on the fringe of a very affluent society. The investigation of policy reveals that principles of health care from the third world could be very useful in this region with respect to the third world type problems - these principles are recognized by policy makers, but there exist many obstacles to their implementation. With respect to the problems of accidents, suicide, and violence, Indian Affairs policy is examined which indicates that the government has exacerbated the problems of its

native people. The thesis concludes with a discussion of political mobilization among Manitoba's native people, which may be the only solution to the problems of accidents, suicide and violence.

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## Glossary of Medical Terms

- Ambulatory - able to walk eg. outpatients, patients of a private physician.
- Congenital Anomalies - inherited abnormality i.e. existing prior to birth.
- Endocrine - pertaining to the thyroid pituitary, and suprarenal glands, whose secretions have important effects on the body's physiological processes.
- Gastro-intestinal Disease - for example, tapeworm, hookworm (intestinal parasitic diseases) or various diarrheal diseases such as cholera or typhus (intestinal infectious diseases).
- Infectious and Parasitic Diseases - for example, hookworm, tapeworm, cholera, typhus.
- Infirmity - weakness.
- Metabolic - pertaining to the chemical process taking place in the body.
- Morbidity - sickness.
- Mortality - death.
- Neonatal Mortality - infant deaths under 28 days of age excluding still-births.
- Neoplasms - Cancer.
- Newborn Mortality - infant deaths from birth to 7 days of age excluding still-births.
- Perinatal - related to birth.
- Post Neonatal Mortality - infant deaths from 28 days to under 1 year of age.

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the relationship between ill health and underdevelopment in northern remote Manitoba in order to contribute concretely to the solutions of these problems.

The original motivations behind this research stem from personal interest in the political economy of underdevelopment, and the political economy of health care. As a student from a developed country studying the problems of underdeveloped countries, one is initially struck by the apparent total irrelevance of such study. However the relevance of such investigation becomes increasingly obvious as one examines the economic structure, and the pattern of growth and "development" in Canada, and in Manitoba. There do in fact exist significant areas of underdevelopment in the midst of our so-called developed country, the populations of which must exist in conditions of poverty and deprivation. It is fundamentally the poverty, low living standards, the lack of self-determination, and the intimately related health problems of northern Manitoba's native people which provide the most pressing justification for this piece of research.

B. Working Assumptions

There are several basic working assumptions which underly the analysis. First it is assumed that the residents of northern remote

Manitoba constitute a unique population, that is, that the degree of disaggregation employed below is meaningful. It is also assumed that there exist significant direct and indirect links between the level of development and the health of a population. Economic conditions are assumed to be the most important determinant of social and political conditions. Furthermore history is assumed to provide the most useful approach to the explanation of a particular economic system. Rational policy making is assumed to be impeded in part by a lack of data and an incorrect formulation of the problems. Finally, it is assumed that the native people of northern Manitoba are dissatisfied with their position in this society.

### C. Literature Review

#### 1. Northern Manitoba

Existing literature on the subject of underdevelopment in northern Manitoba, although hardly profuse, is available in a small number of excellent sources. These include: "Mercantile Capital and the Livelihood of the Residents of the Hudson's Bay Basin" by Russel Rothney; "A Brief History of Northern Manitoba" by Russel Rothney and Steve Watson; "Metropolis and Hinterland in Northern Manitoba" by Peter Douglas Elias; and "The Indian in the Fur Trade" by Arthur Ray. From these accounts it is possible to gain a clear understanding of the history of northern Manitoba, and an analysis of its present day economy. These sources are utilized heavily in chapter two. The major

problem which does exist however is the paucity of recent employment, or income information to serve as development indicators. Some effort has therefore been made to update such indicators in the following chapter.

## 2. Health Care in Northern Manitoba

To date there have only been two pieces of analysis which gave significant attention to the health care system in Northern Manitoba: "Patterns of Medical and Hospital Care in Manitoba, 1972 by Eckstrand, Volume II of the 1972 provincial White Paper on Health Care Policy and "Northern Health Status and Health Services" from the 1975 provincial Northern Planning Exercise. The Eckstrand piece was an analysis of regional patterns of health care utilization, which was accomplished through an examination of the records of hospitals and fee for service medical care. Strong indications emerged from this analysis that medical and hospital utilization patterns have a strong inverse relationship to the availability of local ambulatory care, and that there was a real disparity in terms of physician and hospital utilization between regions. Notably, Northern Manitoba had particularly low levels of physician and hospital service utilization. The health care system was seen to have been guided not by the needs of the population but through the forces of physician preference for location and community pressure for hospital beds. Since health services had been seen to be utilized most heavily by those in close proximity to their source, it was recommended that they must be

relocated in relation to need. Thus important areas of unequal access were identified, and some recommendations were made to alleviate these problems. However, this study did not make sufficient distinction between the urban and the remote north, although indeed suggestions were made that further disaggregation of the data would be necessary. In addition, the study did not clearly outline any of the specific health problems of each region. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this study did not explore the relationship between ill health and different levels of development evident throughout the province.

The 1975 piece on Health Status and Health Services in contrast, addressed all of these questions. Specific morbidity and mortality data was outlined for residents of the remote north, the manpower services and types of facilities were detailed and criticized, and the overall trend and effectiveness of policy was analyzed. Important links were drawn between pattern of health in the remote north and the level of development in the region. Significant data problems were obvious throughout the piece for example, most morbidity and mortality indicators were not available for the precise population under study, and various proxy populations had therefore to be employed. Today, the most important problem with this particular analysis, and with the Eckstrand piece is that they are dated, and thus a clear need exists in the area today.

#### D. The Hypotheses

Two basic hypotheses will be examined in the course of this work:

first, that dependency theory and Canadian staple theory provide useful explanatory tools regarding the origins and continuing existence of underdevelopment in northern remote Manitoba; and secondly, that neither a third world preventative health care model nor a developed world curative health care model is sufficient to cope with the health problems of northern remote Manitoba.

#### E. Chapter Content

The body of the thesis is laid out in the next three chapters. Chapter II begins with a description of the region and its population. The symptoms of underdevelopment are then detailed in terms of employment, income, educational and transportation indicators. The remainder of the chapter constitutes an attempt to apply dependency theory to Canada and to Northern Manitoba, in order to validate the first hypothesis.

Chapter III focuses upon the health problems of the remote Northern population and their probable causes. The conceptual and practical difficulties involved in measuring health are discussed, and the health status indicators - both mortality and morbidity indicators - are presented in detail. Two basic types of unusual health problems are isolated from this data - those typical of the third world; and accidents, suicide, and violence. The possible causes of these problems are examined, and some empirical data on living conditions is presented.

Chapter IV which addresses the second hypothesis begins with an

examination of health care delivery in some progressive third world countries. An extensive review of federal and provincial health care policies follows, with specific attention paid to the determination of responsibility, and a review of policy statements. Reality is then compared to these statements and to the third world principles. As however such policies only address part of the health problem in the remote north, the final part of the chapter focuses upon the policy relevant to the second type of problems - accidents, suicide and violence. Indian affairs policy is examined in an effort to determine the role of the government in contributing to these problems, and some of the obstacles which stand in the way of their solution.

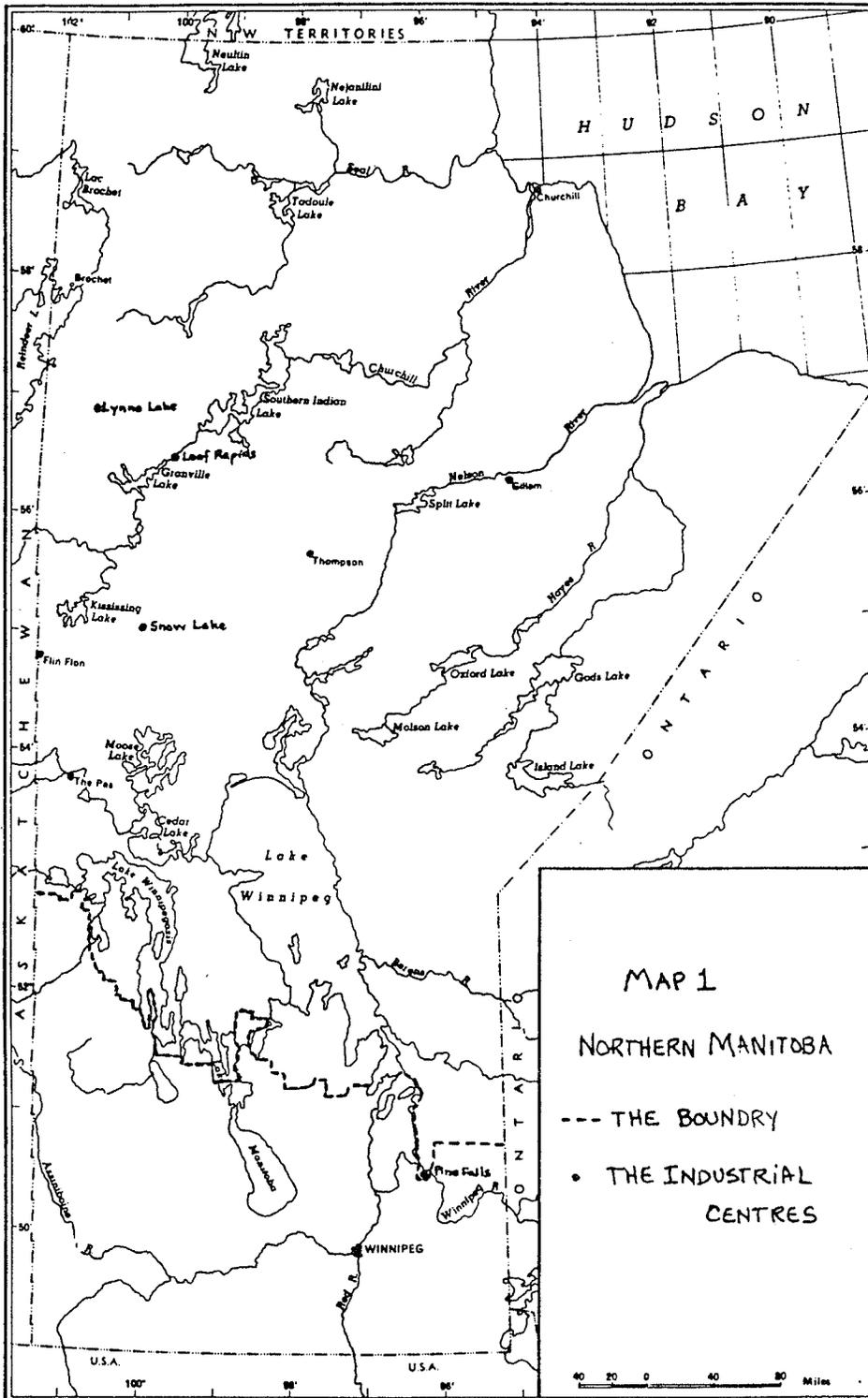
Chapter V, the conclusion, summarizes the findings of the preceding chapters, in terms of the validation of the hypotheses, and the determination of concrete data gaps. Finally, this chapter explores the issue of native self-determination, and the reasons for the apparent lack of political mobilization among northern Manitoba's native people.

## CHAPTER TWO: NORTHERN MANITOBA - AN UNDERDEVELOPED REGION

This chapter attempts to provide a clear description and analysis of the economy of northern Manitoba. The region will first be described in geographic and demographic terms. Then the two distinct sub-regions, the urban north and the remote north, will be described and compared in terms of developmental indicators. Finally, an attempt will be made to validate the first hypothesis: that dependency theory and Canadian staple theory are useful explanatory tools concerning the origins and continuing existence of underdevelopment in northern Manitoba.

### A. The Region

Northern Manitoba stretches from the northern boundary of the province at latitude 60° all the way down to the 53rd and 52nd parallels between the lakes, and east of Lake Winnipeg dipping down to include Pine Falls and the Fort Alexander Reserve, and then extending just parallel to, and below the 51st parallel to the Ontario border. (See Map No. 1) This area constitutes about two-thirds of the province, yet its population is relatively small - 91,711 as of 1978<sup>1</sup>, only 9% of the provincial total of 1,032,400.<sup>2</sup> Although the boundary is admittedly arbitrary, it can be shown that the economy of the North as defined above is based on the extraction of raw



resources such as minerals, hydro-electricity, lumber, and fish, while the economy of the south, where most of the land suitable for agriculture is located, is based on agriculture.

Approximately 55,200 people live in the nine large industrial centres of the north: Thompson; Flin Flon; Churchill; Lynne Lake; Leaf Rapids; Gillam; Snow Lake; and Pine Falls.<sup>3</sup> These centres are based on mining, forestry, hydro, and government administration. The majority of people living in these centres are white and many are recent migrants from the south, though in all these centres there are people of native ancestry.<sup>4</sup> The remaining 36,500 live in the 89 smaller communities.<sup>5</sup> Most of these people are Indian or Metis, and it is the delivery of health care to these people which is the primary focus of this study.

#### B. The Symptoms of Underdevelopment

The economy of Northern Manitoba is an underdeveloped one. However the task of measuring development is extremely difficult. Dudley Seers in "What are We Trying to Measure?"<sup>6</sup> suggests that in an ideal sense one must try to discover whether the conditions are present for the full realization of the human potential. As a pragmatic step in this direction, Seers quite correctly acknowledges the primacy of food and work as basic minimums for human development. Thus this chapter will begin with an examination of employment and income statistics. An important point, which Seers makes, and which must be stressed, is that these figures are only rough proxies for a variety of

human developmental necessities, most of which are extremely difficult to quantify, yet which cannot be ignored, for example - inequality and access to political power.

### 1. Employment

TABLE 17 - 1976 Participation and Unemployment Rates

	Northern Remote Manitoba	Northern Urban Manitoba	Manitoba
Participation Rate	38%	66%	61%
Unemployment Rate	12%	5%	7%

Employment opportunities are concentrated in the urban centres. In fact, in 1973, 80% of Northern employment was located in the ten centres<sup>8</sup> (Manibridge was included in this total but the mine has now ceased operation). A more recent figure is unavailable. This ready availability of employment can be seen from the table above in the high participation rate, and low unemployment rate. The participation rate in these industrial centres is well above the provincial rate, and the unemployment rate is below the provincial rate.

In stark contrast, the labor force participation in the remote communities was well below the provincial rate, and the unemployment

rate almost twice that of the province. This reflects the lack of employment opportunities in the remote north. The official unemployment rate is defined as "the percentage which the unemployed form of the labor force." The official definition of the labor force excludes people over 15 who are in schools, colleges, institutions, or the armed forces, those in manpower training programs, those who do unpaid household work or act as volunteers, those who are not working because of long term disability or old age, and those who are capable of working but who have given up looking. Thus official employment figures tend to be consistently understated.<sup>9</sup> It is the group known as discouraged workers, that is those who did not look for work one week prior to enumeration because they knew there was little hope of finding it, and those who are chronically underemployed, that are very significant here, given the lack of employment opportunities in the remote north. To gain some idea of the real level of unemployment in these areas, we can use the crude unemployment rate (those not working as a percentage of those over 15 years of age) which is approximately 66%<sup>10</sup> in Northern remote Manitoba.

## 2. Income

TABLE 2 - 1977 Total Personal Income and Per Capital Income<sup>11</sup>

	N. Remote Manitoba	N. Urban Manitoba	N. Man.	Man.	Canada
Total Personal Income	\$ 46.5	295	341		
	million	million	million		
Personal Per Capita Income	\$ 1,292	5,837		4,080	5,978

As we can see from the table above, the distribution of income in Northern Manitoba is highly skewed. The total personal income in Northern Manitoba in 1977 was 341 million, 84% of which accrued to 60% of the population (the residents of the industrial north), leaving only 14% of the total personal income for the remaining 40% of the population (the residents of the remote north). When translated into per capita figures, the inequalities appear very intense. Personal per capita incomes of the residents of the remote north are only 25% of those in the industrial north and Canada, and are only 32% of those in Manitoba. Thus in relative terms, the residents of Manitoba's remote North are very poor. To put these figures somewhat into perspective, the per capita income of the remote communities, would yield family incomes considerably lower than the statistics Canada low income line (poverty line) for 1977.<sup>12</sup>

It must be stressed that such income figures can only be regarded as very rough proxies which lend us some idea of the living standards of the population. Per capita income figures for a country or region as a whole do not take account of distributional differences between communities, or within communities. The breakdown employed above, between the industrial or developed north; and the remote north begins to deal with the first problem of differences between communities, however the second one - distributional differences within communities, must still be recognized as an important problem within the communities under question. To deal with these problems, one would require a great deal more detailed information than is presently available. Such data

is collected by Revenue Canada, however this department is extremely reluctant to release data in small "pieces" where there exists some possibility of the violation of tax return confidentiality. In addition to this basic data problem, when interpreting the data that does exist, one must take account of relative food prices, which are significantly higher in the north, and would thus indicate a further deterioration in the living standards of all the northern residents, relative to those of the south (See Table 3 below). In addition, income in kind can be noted, which would to some extent act to increase living standards, however the importance of this portion of the income of northern residents is very small (5% in 1973)<sup>13</sup> and is decreasing over time.

### 3. Education

These severe employment and income inequalities reinforce low educational attainments, and are reinforced by the educational services available. Only eight communities outside the urban centres had facilities offering education beyond grade 10, while all the urban centres had facilities to grade 12. Teacher turnover rates and student drop-out rates are high throughout the North, but especially in the remote communities.<sup>15</sup> According to Statistics Canada in 1976, 48% of the residents of the remote northern communities had less than a grade nine education, while comparable figures for the industrial north and for Manitoba are 27% and 21% respectively.<sup>16</sup> Further data from 1976 indicates that only 10% of native children in Manitoba graduate

TABLE 3

Food Price<sup>a</sup> Index for Selected Mid North Communities<sup>14</sup>

	1976		1977		Annual Average	
	June	Dec.	June	Dec.	1976	1977
	Cross Lake	N/A	N/A	128.3	N/A	N/A
Flin Flon	109.5	110.9	111.8	111.8	103.2	112.0
Gillam	120.6	123.7	113.9	119.6	103.2	111.9
Grand Rapids	N/A	N/A	114.1	116.2	N/A	N/A
Leaf Rapids	115.1	117.5	112.9	114.0	104.8	113.9
Lynn Lake	112.6	115.7	110.5	114.4	102.3	109.6
Norway House	132.1	132.2	126.7	118.4	N/A	N/A
Snow Lake	108.1	N/A	109.7	113.4	N/A	N/A
Split Lake	133.2	107.0	134.7	138.9	N/A	N/A
The Pas	106.4	106.3	102.9	106.6	102.7	107.7
Thompson	104.8	116.2	104.7	104.5	102.7	110.7
Wabowden	115.8	105.4	112.9	115.6	N/A	N/A

<sup>a</sup>Food for home consumption, Winnipeg = 100

Note - Food Price Indices are unavailable for any of the smaller northern communities.

from grade 12, which can be compared to 90% for the typical white middle class children. In fact, among native children, drop-outs begin at the age of 12 and few continue to attend school to the age of 16.<sup>17</sup> As native people make up the majority of the population of the northern remote communities, these statistics which focus only upon native people are relevant to this study, although obviously not ideal.

The Statistics Canada figures referred to above, unemployment rates, participation rates and educational levels achieved, were obtained from the raw data of the 1976 Statistics Canada Labor Force Census. It is impossible to obtain such data broken down between the industrial and the remote north so as to enable distributional analysis, from any other source. The data was transcribed by enumeration area, then manually aggregated to form the totals of Northern Manitoba, northern urban Manitoba, and finally, northern remote Manitoba. All the figures available from the raw data had been randomly rounded to the nearest multiple of 5 in order to provide protection against accidental disclosures.<sup>18</sup> This technique should not have added significant error to the data as the rounding will be self-cancelling in the aggregate. Furthermore the information was collected on a 33.33% sample basis and was weighted to population totals. There is a basic downward bias in the census data due to undercoverage error, that is, whenever a person or household is missed completely.<sup>19</sup> This type of error is likely fairly high in an area such as northern remote Manitoba, due to its geographical

inaccessability and the somewhat transitory habits of segments of its population. This is no doubt an important contributor to the fact that the population total appears to be 20% too low for the whole of northern Manitoba,<sup>20</sup> yet this cannot totally or even largely explain this discrepancy. The known variations in economic activity can also not explain such a large discrepancy. And finally of course, this information is quite dated.

#### 4. Transportation

Transportation access also reinforces and reflects the "dual" nature of the northern economy. All of the urban centres have air, rail and road connections with the exception of Churchill and Gillam, both with no road access. Outside these centres, 30 communities with 13,000 people have access only by air and winter road. Eleven communities with 3,292 people have access only by rail and air. Thirty-eight communities with 13,500 people have access by road<sup>21</sup> (See Map 2). As mentioned above, retail prices reflect differential access. Food prices are at least 25 to 32% higher than Winnipeg in more isolated areas and 10% higher in Thompson (see Table 3).

Thus the economy of Northern Manitoba displays a dual face - of both development (in the industrial centres) and underdevelopment (in the remote areas). There appear to be serious problems of poverty in the remote communities, and inequality between the remote and the urban communities. These problems are not confined to native people, or to the residents of the remote communities, but these are the segments of

