THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES 1905-1980

Morris Zaslow

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Cover: Inuit with dog teams, Stefansson-Anderson Expedition, 13 April 1911. Courtesy of the Public Archives of Canada, C-35468.

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THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES, 1905-1980

The Northwest Territories of today are both the residue of a former geographical entity and an integral part of a continuing process that is almost as old as Confederation. The "North-West Territories" that Canada legislated into existence in 1870 included the whole of "Rupert's Land and the North-Western Territory" that Canada had just acquired from Great Britain, except for the then-tiny province of Manitoba that the Red River Uprising had forced on a reluctant Canadian government. Like the United States with its federal territories, Canada intended to use the North-West Territories as a reservoir from which future partners in Confederation would be drawn. But whereas in the United States full and equal statehood was the only road territorial evolution was allowed to follow, in Canada the North-West Territories have evolved in more than one direction. In response to pressures from existing provinces large parts of the original NWT were annexed to the adjoining provinces of Quebec, Ontario, and Manitoba, which thereafter became responsible for their future progress. Another large section — whose southerly location and natural riches readily attracted Euro-Canadian settlers — was allowed to develop into a self-governing region with an elected legislature, cabinet government, and territorial administration, then to become the new provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan in 1905, absorbing the original Territorial legislature in the process. The events of that evolution are the subject of the earlier booklet in this series, "The North-West Territories, 1870-1905" by Lewis H. Thomas. Finally, there is the situation reserved for the sparsely-populated, little developed, largely primitive territories west of Hudson Bay and north of the 60th parallel (including the Yukon Territory which had been given separate existence in 1898): to continue advancing gradually to some goal short of provincehood unless conditions make it desirable (or expedient) for a new province, or provinces, to be created out of them.

Notwithstanding the several reductions in area mentioned above, the "second" Northwest Territories — whose history is the subject of this booklet — still retained an enormous 3,379,000 km^2, 33.9 per cent of Canada's total area, replete with mighty rivers and great lakes, mountains and rolling plains, forests and grassy tundra, and rocky coasts and islands surrounded by ice-covered seas that are navigable only for five months (Hudson Bay) to one month (Arctic island waters) each year. The region was allocated among three huge Districts — Mackenzie, stretching from the mountainous Cordillera across the forested Mackenzie basin to the barren tundra on the east; Keewatin, a wind-blown terrain of "Arctic Prairies" and rocky Precambrian outcrops fronting on Hudson Bay and part of the mainland coast; and Franklin, containing the Arctic and Hudson Bay islands plus the Boothia and Melville peninsulas of the

mainland. Including some of the world's largest islands, in the east Franklin features picturesque mountains, glaciers, and fiords; barren rocky tundra occupies the centre; and in the west expanses of smooth boglike lands slope gradually into shallow seas. While the District of Mackenzie is occupied by the Indians, Métis, and most of the white settlers, Keewatin and Franklin are inhabited almost solely by Inuit except for whites employed there in administration or in the mining industry. All told, however, only one Canadian in six hundred calls the NWT home: the 45,537 inhabitants (1981) including 15,910 Inuit, 6,720 status Indians, 2,595 Métis, 1,205 non-status Indians, and 19,107 whites.

I: *Establishing Canada's Arctic Sovereignty*

The authority of the young Dominion was not firmly established over all parts of the Northwest Territories until the state became capable of exercising control throughout the region and had secured the consent or acquiescence of other interested powers to Canada's sovereignty there. Canada inherited Britain's title which rested mainly on early voyages of discovery by maritime explorers, discoveries and occupations of territory by the Hudson's Bay Company and its servants, and the conquest of France's lands and claims in North America. The land boundaries of British North America also were confirmed by various diplomatic negotiations with the United States, France, Spain, and Russia. These territories Britain transferred to Canada in 1870, with the Arctic Archipelago being added in 1880.

Canada's title to much of the Arctic islands remained clouded, however, because the transfer was based on a simple British Order-in-Council of 31 July 1880, that merely bestowed on Canada "all British Territories and Possessions in North America, not already included within the Dominion of Canada," without anywhere specifying precisely which lands were included. Most of the islands, it was true, had been first discovered by British expeditions in the twenty years after 1815 and in the period 1846-60 in connection with the searches for the lost Franklin expedition. But citizens of other lands continued to explore freely and discovered sections of major islands by their efforts. Over a sixty-year period, a succession of American explorers conducted a series of highly-publicized expeditions to reach the North Pole, a feat accomplished by R.E. Peary only in 1909. More particularly, a sixteen-man Norwegian expedition of 1898-1902 led by Otto Sverdrup explored much of Ellesmere Island and reported hitherto unsuspected large islands farther west, notably Axel Heiberg, Amund Ringnes, and Ellef Ringnes Islands. One Canadian expedition alone — the Canadian Arctic Expedition of 1913-18, organized and led by Vilhjalmur

Stefansson and sponsored by the Canadian government — contributed significantly to the delineation of the Arctic islands through its explorations in the western parts of the archipelago.

The Laurier government was the first to claim and attempt to exercise Canada's sovereignty over the whole archipelago. It began by despatching a fisheries patrol vessel under William Wakeham who formally proclaimed Canada's authority at Kekerten, off Baffin Island, on 17 August 1897. Later a larger expedition, commanded by the geologist, A.P. Low, and including a contingent of Royal North-West Mounted Police (RNWMP), wintered in Hudson Bay in 1903-04, then during the ensuing summer examined the eastern margin of the archipelago almost to 79° North. Still later, the celebrated J.-E. Bernier conducted three major expeditions to the islands in the C.G.S. *Arctic* between 1906 and 1911 that "showed the flag" as far west as Melville Island, and wintered there and at two other locations farther east. Bernier enforced Canadian laws where appropriate and proclaimed Canada's sovereignty over the islands visited and then, on 1 July 1909, over all lands "Lying to the north of America from long. 60°W to 141°W. up to latitude 90°n." In so doing he was adopting a polar "sector" concept that Senator P. Poirier had enunciated in 1907 to settle the question of sovereignty over empty landmasses north of the American and Eurasian continents. Poirier proposed that Canada and the other northern states should take possession of those lands falling within the pie-shaped areas formed by projecting their eastern and western boundaries northward to the pole. As mentioned, the Borden government sustained Canada's interest by taking over the sponsorship of Stefansson's expedition expressly to prevent further discoveries being made under foreign auspices.

Following the Great War of 1914-18, the government embarked on a more vigorous campaign that included sending an annual (from 1922) Eastern Arctic Patrol ship to the islands and stationing Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) detachments at strategic points from which they made occasional wide-ranging patrols, especially over the islands Sverdrup had discovered. The government, besides, proclaimed a game preserve over the entire archipelago, instituted regulations governing foreign visitors, and secured Denmark's acquiescence to Canada's claims. After a somewhat tense confrontation with the United States in 1925, that country also lost interest in challenging Canada's authority, while Norway formally recognized Canada's claims coincident with an *ex gratia* payment by Canada of $67,000 to the aged Otto Sverdrup in 1930. Thus Canada secured unchallenged control over the entire archipelago. The broader claim, based on the polar sector principle, was restated in Parliament in 1925, was officially proclaimed by the USSR for its sector in 1926, and was widely used for many years as a basis for establishing land ownership in

Antarctica, but it has never been accepted as law by the international community. The currently-important issues of Canada's sovereignty over the insular and coastal waters and seabeds have only begun to be addressed in recent years.

II: *Early Beginnings*

Long before the first Europeans made their way to the New World the present-day NWT were sparsely occupied by small nomadic bands of Indians and Eskimos (Inuit) who, at a Stone Age level of development, lived precariously from hunting the wildlife of their region's lands, waters, and skies. The Norsemen who occupied Greenland and adjacent coasts southward to Newfoundland after 1000 A.D. encountered the northern natives under circumstances that modern-day findings of archaeology are beginning to unravel. English seekers for a Northwest Passage to Asia (Frobisher, Davis, Hudson, Baffin, etc.) met Inuit and Indians when they traced the coastlines of the archipelago and Hudson Bay over five hundred years later. Not until the first decade of the nineteenth century, however, did Europeans establish permanent settlements in the NWT.

That step was the direct result of Europeans' eager desire for the fine furs the region was capable of supplying. The Hudson's Bay Company post of Fort Prince of Wales (now Churchill, Man.) began drawing trade from the Keewatin Inuit and from Indians as far distant as the Mackenzie basin by the middle of the eighteenth century, and Samuel Hearne made a notable journey in 1770-72 from Churchill northwest across the Barren Lands to the mouth of the Coppermine River. Before the century ended, fur traders from Montreal began opening posts along the Mackenzie waterway, which Alexander Mackenzie had descended to the Arctic Ocean in 1789. As the posts were spread along the waterways, the Indians were increasingly drawn to the fur trapping way of life, and became dependent on the iron products, textiles, tea, tobacco, and other goods that could be secured in exchange for their furs. In the same period, Inuit groups began exchanging whalebone (baleen), whale oil, hides, and furs for the coveted goods imported to the Eastern Arctic by the British whaling ships that resorted annually to that region. The contact grew stronger when whaling ships (mostly American) began wintering in suitable harbours and Inuit bands regularly settled alongside the frozen-in vessels. By 1870 most of the native inhabitants of the NWT were ceasing to be completely self-sufficient, self-reliant hunters and were becoming integrated into the modern economy as specialized producers of commodities derived from the wildlife of their homelands. The process of acculturation was intensified and broadened after 1850 when Roman Catholic and Anglican missionaries extended their work of evangelization to the far North. As part of their

effort, they established permanent stations, started schools, and erected chapels, churches, and other buildings, including a first convent-school-orphanage opened by the Grey Nuns of Montreal at Providence Mission in 1867.

Intensified competition for furs after 1870 brought many more trading posts and stores to the NWT, introduced steamboats to the northern waterways, and caused certain species of game and fur-bearing animals to be overhunted. The rapid, drastic diminution in numbers of bowhead whales virtually terminated commercial whaling in the Eastern Arctic by 1880, and forced the surviving operators to turn to land-based trading. Faced by a similar depletion of whales in the North Pacific, San Francisco-based whalers extended their hunts into the Beaufort Sea after 1889. The improved water transport service brought greater numbers of sportsmen hunters, prospectors for minerals, scientists, and tourists to the Mackenzie District, and larger, more varied freight cargoes to help meet the mounting deficiencies in local food supplies and satisfy the changing needs of the inhabitants.

The impacts of the faraway federal government also began to be felt in the NWT in the form of a three-year inquiry into the navigability of Hudson Strait, ongoing scientific studies by the versatile Geological Survey and other land surveying branches, and a gradual extension of postal service, weather-observing, and statistics-gathering activities to a few District of Mackenzie centres. The agencies that best typified the Canadian system of frontier administration appeared in the early 1900s. RNWMP detachments were opened in 1903-04 in the Western Arctic and Hudson Bay sectors to oversee American whalers' whaling and trading operations and their relations with local Inuit bands, and also to administer and enforce Canadian laws from these and later posts. The Indian Affairs Department brought the Indians and Métis south of Great Slave Lake into formal treaty relationship with the Crown in 1899 (Treaty No. 8). Mounting concern over the continuing threats to the region's wildlife also brought measures to protect wood-buffalo, musk-oxen, caribou, and the migratory wildfowl, culminating in the enactment by Parliament of the Northwest Game Act (1916) and the Migratory Birds Convention Act (1917).

III: *Establishing an Administration for the Northwest Territories*

The Great War years coincided with a sudden increase in uncontrolled trapping and trading activities in the Arctic mainland and Baffin Island that introduced greater numbers of modern rifles to primitive Inuit, further depleting the musk-oxen and caribou, and contributing to several murders. The federal government, apprized of the state of affairs by its agents,

sensing challenges to its sovereignty from these and other actions by foreigners (notably Knud Rasmussen of Denmark and D.B. MacMillan of the United States), and goaded by Stefansson to become more active in the Arctic, turned its attention after the war to the problems of northern administration. A different sort of prod was the revival of petroleum development in the Mackenzie valley, notably test-drilling ground that an Imperial Oil subsidiary had staked north of Fort Norman before the war. Reports of a significant oil strike in 1920 touched off a rush to stake more claims in the region, caused frequent revisions of the oil-staking regulations in Ottawa, and inspired ambitious plans to stampede the region in 1921.

These considerations finally led the federal government to end the unsatisfactory situation that had prevailed since 1905 when the legislative and administrative functions of the original Regina-based NWT government had been assigned to the new provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan, and to institute proper arrangements for administering the surviving parts of the NWT. Under the Northwest Territories Amendment Act of 1905, these had been given a federally-appointed commissioner with powers to enact new ordinances with the aid of an appointed four-member territorial council. Lieutenant-Colonel Fred White, the elderly Ottawa-based comptroller of the RNWMP, was made commissioner, but no council was appointed, no new ordinances were promulgated, and White's executive acts were limited to such routine matters as licensing justices of the peace, issuing liquor permits, and making small grants to schools. White retired in 1912, but retained the commissionership until his death in 1918, and W.W. Cory, the deputy minister of the Department of the Interior, was appointed to the position in 1919.

Now in 1921 the federal government established a Northwest Territories Branch within the Department of the Interior to oversee and administer the NWT, and appointed a four-member council (soon enlarged to six) that met in Ottawa on 28 April 1921 to plan the season's programme of government activities in the Territories. These included opening a permanent branch headquarters at Fort Smith, the entry point to the Mackenzie District, and appointing residents in other centres as its local agents; stationing RCMP detachments along the waterway to issue licences and direct traffic; and arranging for an expanded programme of surveys with other agencies. The Indian Affairs Department negotiated and signed Treaty No. 11 with the Indians and Métis north of Great Slave Lake. Police activity also was stepped up along the Arctic coast and on Baffin Island in connection with the violent crimes and the enforcement of the game protection regulations, while plans proceeded to institute the annual Eastern Arctic Patrol in order to extend Canada's administrative control into the Arctic Archipelago. These changes were to prove long-lasting, even though the "oil rush" speedily came to naught.

IV: *The Interwar Decades*

The beginnings of modern-day mining in the Northwest Territories were delayed for a few years until economic and technological conditions became suitable. In the meantime, the new NWT administration directed its main attention to the problems of the traditional society and economy. The Council met rarely between 1921 and 1929 and few ordinances were passed. The police, the Indian Affairs Department, and other agencies expanded their operations, while the missionary societies added to their schools and hospitals. As control was extended farther into the Arctic, jurisdiction over the Inuit came in question. The federal government attempted to bring them under the Indian administration, but was unable to enact that into law, with the result that Inuit, like other non-Indian residents of the NWT, became a direct responsibility of the territorial administration. Hence, the Northwest Territories and Yukon Branch (as it became in 1923) offered aid to the institutions the missions opened in the Inuit country, notably their hospitals at Pangnirtung and Chesterfield Inlet, and in addition hired a few doctors to supply medical and administrative services at these and other centres. Game regulations that sought to protect the wildlife and to assure the primacy of the native to utilize this resource were instituted. Non-natives were required to take out licences to hunt or trap in the NWT and by the end of the 1930s only children of such licence-holders remained eligible for licences. A large fraction of the total area of the NWT was enclosed in enormous game preserves within which hunting and trapping were restricted to the inhabitants of those areas and from which white competitors were excluded. Two other preserves — Wood Buffalo National Park and Thelon Game Sanctuary — were created expressly to protect threatened wildlife species. Thousands of reindeer from Alaska and plains buffalo from Alberta were introduced in hopes of supplementing the food resources of the country. The fur trade also was taken in hand. From 1927 all trading posts were to be licensed and in specified locations (a big help to the established companies), and records of all transactions were to be kept for possible future examination. A royalty tax was imposed on traded furs, and the police were given extraordinary powers to curb the smuggling of furs out of the NWT.

All these measures, however, could not shield the native population against harmful white hunter and trapper competition for the wildlife that provided their sustenance, nor from the adverse effects on their physical and mental health, lifestyle, and morals arising through increasing contacts with white undesirables. Thus, while good hunts and high fur prices during most of the 1920s brought prosperity to many trappers, who spent their

earnings on food, clothing, machinery, and new sorts of equipment (for instance, gasoline motors for their boats), even then native health was deteriorating as tuberculosis and other diseases made inroads among the settled natives, with those on the land being exposed increasingly to highly fatal epidemic diseases. The 1930s became a time of unparalleled hardships because of drastically-reduced fur and game catches and disastrously low fur prices. The resulting hunger and malnutrition greatly intensified the ravages of diseases and raised the native death rate to intolerable levels. In the meantime, the NWT administration and the other agencies involved with the North were faced during the Depression with greatly-reduced budgets that rendered them almost helpless to ease the sufferings of the native society.

By then the administration also was feeling pressure from a new, modern, white, industrial society like that of southern Canada which had few contacts with the native society and whose needs differed sharply from theirs. Improvements in aviation during the 1920s at last made it feasible to conduct prospecting, claim staking, and mine development on a large scale in remote districts. Major well-financed aerial prospecting and mining organizations began investigating the margins of the Precambrian Shield for base metal prospects, even the historic low-grade copper occurrences that had given the Coppermine River its name. The important first discovery that "made a mine" — Gilbert LaBine's find of silver-radium-uranium ores on the eastern shores of Great Bear Lake — occurred in 1930, just as deep economic depression was setting in around the world. However, the silver-radium mine went into production at Port Radium and Imperial Oil reopened its operation at Norman Wells to supply the mine's energy requirements. Other uranium and gold occurrences were discovered in the country north of Great Slave Lake, and a gold mining boom, strenuously promoted in Toronto and other mining exchanges, soon was underway in the Yellowknife Bay sector. Five gold mines were in operation by 1941, three of them in the new town of Yellowknife, the industrial and commercial community that had sprung up on the banks of Great Slave Lake and was to provide the impetus for modernizing the institutions and society of the NWT. For the arrival of the mining industry brought the needs of the developing industrial society prominently before the authorities, chief among them being financial assistance to improve transportation facilities and supply hydro-electric power and other infrastructures and, on the other side, progressive legislation to facilitate the establishment of such institutions as public schools and municipal governments, and to meet demands for such familiar services as government liquor stores and public beer parlours that were common to all new societies emerging on the frontier.

V: *The Northwest Territories and North American Defence*

The political-administrative situation still was unresolved when the Second World War broke out and the Canadian North was caught up in the ambitious war plans of the United States and speedily was transformed in line with that country's military objectives. Canadian nationalists saw economic and scientific opportunities ensuing from the resulting improved access to, and knowledge of, the North, but governmental authorities, fearful for their future control over the region, took care to arrange for all the wartime American facilities to be evacuated and transferred to Canada after the war. Most of the United States' efforts in the northwest were directed at building up Alaskan defence, and neither the Northwest Staging Route nor the Alaska Highway programmes concerned the NWT. The Canol Project, the plan to supply the northwest theatre with oil from Norman Wells, was a different story, for it profoundly affected the Mackenzie District. A widespread hunt for more oilfields was undertaken, some forty wells were drilled at the one producing field, a large refinery complex and pumping stations were installed at Norman Wells, and a 450-mile oil pipeline was pushed southwest through the mountains to Whitehorse in the Yukon Territory. Nor was that all. The contractor built a series of gravel and dirt airstrips at major points along the route to Norman Wells, greatly expanded the wintertime tractor-train supply system, and introduced many improvements to the river transport service. Though the pipeline and some of the equipment were removed after the war, transportation and communications facilities were vastly improved and equipped to cope with the much heavier postwar traffic requirements.

It was the same in the Eastern Arctic, where the need to improve weather forecasting for the North Atlantic region and to transfer planes, men, and supplies to Europe *via* a Northeast Staging Route led the United States to build airfields and weather stations on Southampton Island (Coral Harbour), Fort Chimo in Arctic Quebec, and at Padloping Island and Frobisher Bay, Baffin Island. Hundreds of workmen with masses of expensive, sophisticated modern equipment were landed among still primitive Inuit bands, giving them a taste of wage employment at the stations and exposing them to an entirely different way of life, fascinating, highly attractive, but ultimately harmful. Canada had scarcely begun maintaining these facilities after the war when the American military returned in force, this time because of the Cold War. In the age of the manned bombers, the Canadian Arctic became vital for North American defence, as affording the most direct and shortest air route between the two protagonists, the USSR and the United States. Thus the scale of American involvement increased rapidly during the 1950s. Joint Air Weather Stations (JAWS) were opened at the strategic locations of Mould Bay,

Resolute Bay, Isachsen, Eureka Sound, and Alert in the still-remote Queen Elizabeth Islands, while Frobisher Bay was developed into an important Strategic Air Command (SAC) base with a large airport, communications and other facilities, housing, and the whole range of amenities befitting a large American military establishment. Then a great chain of forty-one Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line radar stations was strung across the entire Northwest Territories from Alaska to Baffin Island at or near the 69th parallel, and remained in full operation for nearly a decade. Surging Canadian nationalism and the Kennedy-Khruschev detente brought phased reductions in the Americans' NWT operations and withdrawals of their troops, the closing of most of the smaller DEW Line stations, and the handing over to Canada of the abandoned facilities, together with the responsibilities for supplying, maintaining, and operating them thereafter.

Air transport and travel, radio and radar communications, and large-scale ocean shipping became infinitely easier in the Arctic islands and adjacent mainland as a result of the Cold War. Soon these regions became centres for extensive surveying and mapping activities, of all manner of scientific investigations, and of elaborate, very costly exploratory and test-drilling operations by the oil industry. Several communities were established, including the first permanent Inuit settlements in the Queen Elizabeth Islands at Grise Fiord and Resolute Bay, which last also acquired a considerable white community in connection with the commercial and supply functions that located at this convenient central point. Thanks to the many facilities the Americans had left behind, Frobisher Bay became the largest settlement in the Eastern Arctic with a sizeable white population (mainly government employees) as well as increasing numbers of Inuit attracted by the employment opportunities, educational facilities, and social services available there.

Since the 1960s the federal government has been fitfully concerned with the problems of Arctic defence in the light of the constantly-shifting East-West relations, its main priority apparently being less to mount a force capable of deterring possible aggression than to satisfy United States' apprehensions and head off that country's more direct involvement. Small forces are maintained at various Arctic bases, military training exercises were conducted in the NWT, military and naval units patrol the surface of the region, and United States and Soviet submarines carry out their secret activities under the ice cover without interruption. The question of the extent of Canada's territorial waters was raised in 1969-72 by an international oil companies' experiment to transport the oil from the recently-discovered field at Prudhoe Bay, Alaska to world markets by reinforced oil tankers moving through the channels among the Arctic islands. The programme was tested in 1969-70 by a specially-modified

tanker *Manhattan* in two experimental voyages. In the first, assistance was required from Canadian government icebreakers to enable the ship to traverse the route even in midsummer, while the second, in a less favourable season, was quickly terminated because of damages to the ship.

The federal government, in line with widespread international sentiment that the traditional three-mile limit for territorial waters was inadequate, extended Canada's territorial waters' limits to twelve miles, a step that would completely close certain key sections of Arctic navigation channels and give Canada full control over ships travelling those waters. The outcome of the *Manhattan* voyages also strengthened Canada's position that new laws of the sea were needed to deal with waters that are ice-covered for most of the year and always infested with ice floes, placing any ship attempting to traverse such waters at great risk. The government accordingly passed legislation and proclaimed a one-hundred-mile pollution control zone that completely encircled the archipelago and asserted the right to regulate all ships operating within the Arctic waters to prevent their inadvertently polluting the environment (1971). The United States rejected these positions as interfering with its traditional "freedom of the seas" policy and President Nixon ordered retaliatory administrative action against Canadian trade with the United States. The oil companies, having learned their lesson however, gave up the programme and turned instead to moving the oil across Alaska by pipeline to an ice-free port on the south coast. The Canadian claim, therefore, remains unaccepted and unsettled, though the trend to enlarge states' rights over adjoining waters operates in Canada's favour. Other contemporary sovereignty concerns include control over persons travelling over the permanent ice pack or on floating ice stations that drift into waters Canada claims to control, over overflying aircraft, and over the underlying continental shelf including its extensions along the great undersea mountain chains.

VI: *Arrival of the Welfare State*

While the Second World War continued, Canadian government planners prepared for the return to peacetime conditions, and the federal government determined to play a far stronger nationwide role in the fields of social services and economic development, and particularly in managing the future progress of the territories north of the 60th parallel that were its direct responsibility. A comprehensive social services programme was instituted following the war that applied in the NWT as in the rest of Canada. Family allowances, old age and infirmity pensions, and mothers' allowances were introduced, and the very inadequate health service by the Indian Affairs Branch was replaced, beginning in 1946, by modern, specialized, nearly universally available care by doctors, nurses, and

nursing assistants of the Northern Health Service of the Department of National Health and Welfare. A massive campaign also was undertaken to stamp out tuberculosis by removing thousands of northern natives to the south for treatment. The deplorably high native mortality rate was greatly reduced; coupled with a very high birth rate, it brought rapid increases in the native populations of the NWT.

Education also was reformed by replacing missionary control with a system of state schools, but these followed the highly-inappropriate provincial curricula and were staffed by certified teachers lured to the unfamiliar northern situation by higher salaries and the challenges of the work. Noteworthy features of the new system were the efforts to provide formal schooling for every native child no matter how isolated, and the establishment of kindergartens, secondary schools, industrial and commercial institutes, and adult education programmes. Hundreds of bewildered children were flown from remote camps to strange, large, centralized residential schools and hostels each year. Then, when that policy was found to have undesirable effects on the children, the emphasis was shifted to opening more day schools in smaller centres. For too long, also, no effort was made to offer instruction in the native languages or in traditional ways. The administration was convinced instilling the English language and white attitudes in the children offered the surest road to economic success and financial independence, and in any event that was the easiest course of action to pursue.

But modern industry held few employment opportunities for natives. Some Inuit did find work for a time in a small nickel mine at Rankin Inlet that operated mainly with Inuit labour; others in the Yellowknife gold mines, on the Great Slave Lake Railway, on river shipping, and elsewhere. The total amount of such employment barely scratched the surface of the need, however. Greater success was achieved with schemes that put the traditional skills to more effective uses, as by promoting and marketing carvings, artifacts, and other *objets d'art*, organizing the production of surpluses of fish and game for export or to store for future consumption, involving natives in the tourist industry and especially establishing cooperative societies to carry out these and other enterprises and train natives how to participate in, and how to manage, such concerns. The educational programme gradually began to reflect the changing economic reality; natives were brought into the teaching side of the process, with beneficial results in terms of pupil and community morale, and the schools began to be turned into centres for cultural enhancement as well as academic instruction.

Native needs and government policies since 1945 have combined to draw most of the native population off the land and into forty or more

settlements. On the one hand, the rapidly-increasing population found it more difficult to subsist off the depleted wildlife and the poor returns from fur, so many resorted to the settlements in search of wage work or relief assistance. On the other hand, families also were drawn to the settlements by the increasing number and variety of government services and aids available there — pensions and allowances, schools, medical aid, modern housing (including fuel), and, above all, welfare assistance when all else failed. The proliferating government activities also created considerable employment. While most positions went to white newcomers, some natives also found work there thanks to their higher levels of education and training, the large native clientele to be served, and government "hire native" programmes. Relocation has exacted heavy human costs, however — frustrations and tensions from unemployment and loss of function, the clash of values with the traditional life on the land and with the spendthrift and confusing ways of the government's agents, and generational conflicts accentuated by schooling — which are reflected in increased alcohol consumption and in alcohol-related crimes.

VII: *The State and Economic Development*

The economic breakthrough, of which so much was expected, has not been realized to any great extent, and the transformation of the NWT into a northern offshoot of Canada's industrial society has been delayed accordingly. A series of federal government departments — Mines and Resources (1936-49), Resources and Development (1949-53), Northern Affairs and National Resources (1953-66), and Indian Affairs and Northern Development (1966-) — struggled with varying success to reconcile increasingly contradictory goals of fostering economic development by promoting modern industries and white settlement, and maintaining the native peoples by social programmes while attempting to elevate their economic position. A third objective has been added in recent years — protecting the fragile northern environment, a task assigned in 1970 to a new Department of the Environment — which adds to the administrative confusion that characterizes much of the federal management of NWT development.

Economic development was assisted first and foremost by adding to the transportation facilities to and within the North. Water transport on the Mackenzie waterway, supplied mainly by the powerful Crown-owned Northern Transportation Company, has been continually improved, while shipping in Arctic waters benefits from an expanded government ice-breaking fleet and navigation aids. Major highways were built from Alberta to Great Slave Lake and Yellowknife, down the Mackenzie to Fort Simpson, and from Dawson in the Yukon via the Dempster Highway to Inuvik (the town the government built in the 1950s to improve living

facilities in the Mackenzie delta area and provide a centre for educational, scientific, and administrative activities in that district). New airports were built and equipped, airstrips have been installed latterly at every settlement of consequence, and telephone, CBC radio and television, and satellite communications services have been made widely available. The Northern Canada Power Commission, another Crown corporation, develops and provides electric power at moderate cost in every community, while Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) assists with financing housing facilities in new communities. Resource developers are aided by very extensive topographical, geological, and geodetic surveys, by meteorological programmes, and still more by generous resource-granting and taxation policies that give miners and oil companies easy access to, and control over, potentially-valuable natural resources. Even then, when corporate funding for oil and gas development flagged, the federal government (impelled also by considerations of economic nationalism) came to the rescue with large investments in a new company, Panarctic Oils, created expressly to take the lead in High Arctic operations.

Notwithstanding all these aids, however, industrial development still lagged. Gold mining, held back for many years by the very low fixed price for the product, has only limped along since 1945, while the uranium mine on Great Bear Lake (nationalized during the war) soon was worked out. A tungsten mine and community were opened in the southwestern corner of the NWT, and a large lead-zinc open pit mining and concentrating operation and town sprang up at Pine Point, south of Great Slave Lake, as soon as that area was connected with the south by the government-subsidized Great Slave Lake Railway — which also provided direct connection with Mackenzie River navigation at the town of Hay River. A base metal mine was opened at Nanasivik in western Baffin Island, and Cominco, the operator at Pine Point, developed another at Little Cornwallis Island near Resolute Bay. This last utilized a revolutionary technique of importing a complete mining plant mounted on a barge right to the site — which can be relocated when the Polaris deposit is exhausted or becomes uneconomic to work. All these are capital-intensive, large-scale operations, requiring quite small, specialized, highly-skilled work forces that must be recruited outside, and they offer few employment opportunities for native workers. In general, locational and climatic factors tend to make mining industries in the North marginal producers and thus highly sensitive to market conditions. Furthermore, the industries usually are based in single-enterprise communities with no alternative function should the mines close. Hence mining also holds out rather uncertain long-term employment prospects for white labourers, accentuating the footlooseness of the group and inhibiting the growth of a substantial and permanent industrial society in the NWT.

The largest, most important industrial development of all has been the search for oil and gas resources, first in the lower Mackenzie area, then since 1960 especially in the Arctic Archipelago, where almost the entire land surface and seabeds in the western half of the islands have been staked and test-drilled by private and public companies at a cost of over $800 million to date. Many gas and oil discoveries have been made, but they still are too small in total and insufficiently concentrated to justify building the massive facilities and systems required to deliver the products to distant markets. More millions were spent investigating the various transportation modes and routes, and preparing applications to present to the appropriate regulatory boards. Currently, the most promising method of delivering natural gas from the Queen Elizabeth Islands seems to be by large, specially-strengthened tankers following liquefaction of the gas at a plant on Melville Island.

The efforts to exploit fossil fuel resources encountered strong opposition from environmentalist and native organizations which came to flower during the early 1970s. These groups found an ideal forum at the highly-publicized hearings of the Berger Commission, appointed by the federal government to investigate the potential environmental and social effects of a proposed pipeline designed to deliver natural gas from sources in northern Alaska, the Mackenzie delta, and the western islands, up the Mackenzie valley to connect with the pipeline network of northern Alberta. The commissioner recommended against building any pipeline across northern Yukon on environmental grounds, and suggested a ten-year delay for the Mackenzie valley portion to give the builders more time to perfect their techniques for constructing and operating pipelines in the sensitive northern terrain, and especially to allow the native peoples time to adjust to the socio-cultural changes such a project would inevitably entail. The Berger recommendations were criticized on sociological and scientific grounds, but the consortium withdrew its application mainly because of the currently difficult economic situation. A subsequent plan of using the route of the Alaska Highway for a pipeline to carry Alaskan and some Canadian natural gas to Alberta was approved, but is stalled by economic conditions. Imperial Oil also has proposed building an oil pipeline from its Norman Wells oilfield to Alberta, which would bring a pipeline most of the way to the main centres under development in the Mackenzie delta and the adjoining shallow Beaufort Sea.

VIII: *The Drive for Territorial Home Rule*

Before 1945 all residents of the NWT were disfranchised at the federal and territorial levels of government, and only those in Yellowknife enjoyed the municipal franchise. This situation could not be maintained in defiance of

the democratic ideals of the postwar world, so changes were not long in coming and have continued ever since. The reforms tended to parallel the political evolution of the first North-West Territories, while their timing may be related to the ideological predispositions of the ministers in charge of the NWT and the pressures that confronted them.

The most important advances were those achieved at the territorial level, where a piecemeal evolution was set in motion by the appointment of a Yellowknife resident to the Ottawa-based NWT Council in 1946. The voters of the Mackenzie District were allowed to elect three members to the Council (against five appointed) in 1951, and Council also began holding two sessions a year, one of them at a location in the Territories. A fourth elected member was added in 1954, and in 1956 the Council was made representative of the entire NWT, with three more elected members being provided for the remaining territories. The Council now had a majority of elected members for the first time, seven, against the five appointees. After 1960, the appointed members began to be drawn from outside the federal civil service, until soon only the commissioner and his deputy still were in that category. Extension of the federal franchise followed a similar course. Non-native residents of the District of Mackenzie received the federal franchise in 1947 to help choose the MP for a newly created constituency of Yukon-Mackenzie. The combination proved unsatisfactory, so a new constituency of Mackenzie River was established for 1952 (the vote had been extended to the native inhabitants in 1950), which was enlarged to include the entire NWT in 1958 and renamed accordingly. Much later, in 1979, a separate constituency — Nunatsiaq — was provided for the Eastern Arctic, besides which two northerners were appointed to the Senate, giving the NWT's 45,000 inhabitants a small voice in both Houses of Parliament.

The enlarged Council studied the constitutional future of the NWT and concluded that the best solution would be to divide the Territories into a primarily self-governing Mackenzie Territory with a possibility of eventually evolving into a province, and a mainly-Inuit Nunnassiaq Territory that would continue to be administrated from Ottawa. Two bills were introduced in Parliament in 1963 to put this recommendation into effect. But after complaints were raised in the NWT and passage of the legislation was blocked in Parliament, the federal government abandoned the programme. Instead, in 1965 it appointed an Advisory Commission with A.W.R. Carrothers as chairman, to investigate and report on the constitutional development of the NWT. Following an extensive opinion-gathering tour of the settlements, the Carrothers Commission recommended against dividing the NWT, suggested that the territorial government should be transferred to a permanent northern capital and be given greater

responsibility for local administration, and that the Council should evolve into an elected legislature with powers analogous with those of the pre-1905 Regina legislature, that is, local autonomy but without control of the natural resources or power to borrow money on its own account.

A new phase in the political evolution of the NWT thus began when the territorial government moved to Yellowknife in 1967. Within a few years, the city was transformed into a northern metropolis as more and more functions were handed over by Ottawa and a territorial civil service came into being. Departments were organized to deal with education, economic development, tourism and renewable resources, local government, and other fields. By 1979 the territorial bureaucracy totalled 3,132 civil servants in eleven departments — comprising with the over 1,000 federal government employees by far the most important occupational group in the NWT. In 1974 the Council became a wholly-elected fifteen-member body, choosing its own speaker, and the commissioner withdrew from the law-making process apart from signing the ordinances to give them the force of law. Gradually, too, members of Council began to be admitted to the commissioner's executive and to head specific departments — two members in 1974, five in 1976, and seven in 1979, besides which members served on the important financial and legislative committees. To handle the expanded duties, the Council was enlarged to twenty-two elected members. Thus the Council has moved far towards becoming the controlling power in the NWT government, headed by an incipient cabinet and styling itself a legislative assembly. Its relations with the appointed commissioner and the federal minister responsible for the NWT — which provoked the main constitutional clashes in the old Regina-based NWT legislature — are quite harmonious. J.H. Parker, the present commissioner, allows the Council to make most of the decisions and functions like a constitutional executive under responsible government. Parliament can change the NWT constitution unilaterally and the minister can disallow territorial ordinances, but at present neither is likely to act without a good deal of consultation at the local level. A more frequent area of conflicts are the financial arrangements, for the great bulk of NWT revenues are furnished by Ottawa under federal-territorial tax-sharing agreements, transfer payments, special subsidies, and loans on capital account.

The constitutional evolution of the second NWT faces more serious challenges inside the NWT. To provide for the widely-differing, scattered, isolated communities and groups, the Council created a variety of regional and municipal organizations with differing responsibilities and taxing powers — cities, towns, and villages to serve the predominantly white settlers, and hamlets, local improvement districts, development areas, and unorganized settlements to suit the varying circumstances of the native

groups. Faced with constant pressures for greater "home rule," the NWT government has gone far in relocating administrative positions in the communities and making more funding with fewer strings attached available to the local councils. These institutions are a major training ground for native leaders, giving them invaluable experience in directing the affairs of their settlements, operating local services, handling public funds, and dealing with other political and administrative bodies.

Such leaders are emerging from among the educated younger generation at a time when the long-standing dissatisfaction with local conditions has become linked with the heady, inflammatory, emotion-laden issue of native rights. Under that impetus, territorial Indian, Inuit, and Métis organizations were formed and campaigns were launched for fuller cultural autonomy, greater tribal self-government, and favourable settlement of their land claims. The Indians proclaimed themselves a Dene Nation and demanded creation of a Dene-controlled state within the District of Mackenzie. A Committee for Original Peoples' Entitlement (COPE) inhabiting the Mackenzie delta district promulgated another land claim in that sector. The very effective Inuit Tapirisat organization commissioned extensive land-use studies and then put forth a demand for partitioning the NWT diagonally along the treeline and creating the 2 million km^2 area (over 20 per cent of Canada's total) on the north as a Nunavut Territory that the 18,000 or so Inuit residents expected to control by virtue of their overwhelming numbers in that almost completely unpopulated land. Such challenges polarize the Council increasingly into ethnically-based groups, making it all the more difficult for the territorial government to function effectively. Thus the NWT seems to be heading for major geographical and political changes, though it is problematical how much these alone can alter the economic and socio-cultural realities of the present-day Northwest Territories.

IX: *Conclusions*

Though the evolution of the Northwest Territories is still proceeding, a number of conclusions may be drawn from their history to date. Their economic beginnings followed the classic pattern of small-scale resource extraction controlled by and for outside interests while industrialization since 1945 entailed such gigantic capital investments (including supporting government outlays) that a long time may be required for the outlays to be recovered. Even then the industrial development was insufficient to transform the NWT into a modern economy. A large segment of its population, as always, must depend on the traditional economy whose poor returns condemn it to an unacceptably low standard of living. Not until recently did government begin addressing the needs of the small producers as well as the interests of the megaprojects.

The onward march of "civilization" that subdued most of North America has been arrested in the NWT by a native sector that enjoys a small numerical majority and has learned to mobilize to avoid the fate native groups experienced elsewhere. Its success owes much to the times: colonizing adventures are out of fashion and native Canadians have the support of powerful humanitarian and libertarian elements in the general population. Native society seems likely to move towards voluntary accommodation with the majority society, however, the efforts of its cultural directors notwithstanding.

On the political side, the NWT followed the usual course of advancing towards responsible government in the name of majority rule. Lately, though, this has been challenged by native leaders' desires to experiment with ethnically-based regional jurisdictions in which democratic ideals run second to the interests of the group. In keeping with tradition, too, NWT politicians strove to enlarge local autonomy towards the ultimate goal of provincehood. That outcome is inhibited by the small population (reflecting location and resource configuration); the high level of federal subsidization of the NWT government; the inability to develop a self-sustaining NWT and the overwhelming dependence of the people and the economy on government employment and aid; and, finally, deflection of a large part of the population away from the autonomist drive, thus reconciling all groups a little more to a continuing strong federal presence in the NWT.

The Northwest Territories at present are experiencing a state of suspended development that contrasts sharply with the earlier North-West Territories that achieved their goal of provincial status during the buoyant, dynamic early years of "Canada's Century." Because of important unresolved clashes of interest, a very uncertain future confronts the second NWT: How may the conflicting interests of government and those of private business be reconciled? The purposes of the developers with the fragility of the environment? The aspirations of business and the fears of the native population? The cultural and land claims goals of the native peoples and the equalitarian philosophies of the territorial and federal governments? The interests of individual settlements and those of the NWT community — and of the NWT with those of Canada at large?

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