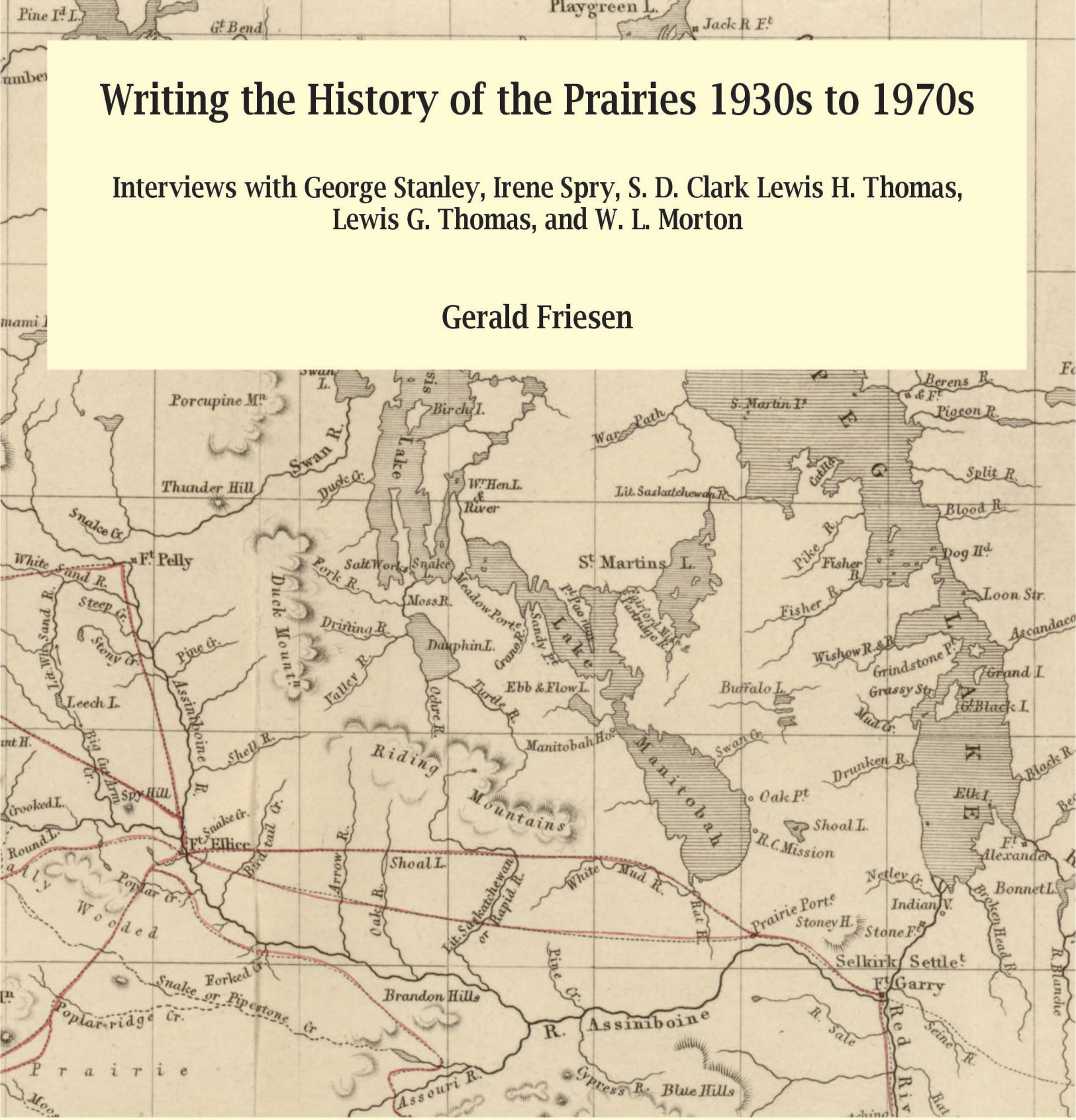
Writing the History of the Prairies 1930s to 1970s

Interviews with George Stanley, Irene Spry, S. D. Clark Lewis H. Thomas, Lewis G. Thomas, and W. L. Morton

Gerald Friesen















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Interviews and transcriptions by

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Preface

These interviews took place between 1979 and 1982. They are discussions about the life, education, influences on, and academic activity of a group of professional scholars who wrote academic studies about the Canadian prairies between the 1930s and the 1970s. The conversations were undertaken in the hope that they might help to place the writing and teaching about the West in context. The texts illustrate the exceptional influence of English politics and letters in the lives of these scholars and, to a lesser degree, the influence of American scholarship on the writing of prairie history.

The six scholars constitute a generational cohort—all were born between 1907 and 1917—and all were shaped by living through the Great Depression and the Second World War. As well, five of the six were born on the prairies: George Stanley in Calgary, Alberta; Del Clark in Lloydminster, near the border of Saskatchewan and Alberta; L.H. Thomas in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; L.G. Thomas near Millarville, Alberta; and W.L. Morton in Gladstone, Manitoba. Only Irene Spry grew up in other parts of the British Empire. The prairie five completed bachelor's degrees in local universities and three of the five completed M.A. degrees in these same institutions. Four of the six scholars undertook graduate studies in England. Four of the six also did graduate studies in the United States.

Gerhard J. Ens

Introduction

This book manuscript began with William L. Morton's return to the University of Manitoba after a decade at Trent University. I had many opportunities to talk with him in informal meetings over lunch and coffee, notably in the new Archives of Manitoba building in the late 1970s. In its centennial year, 1979, the Manitoba Historical Society launched a new print publication, *Manitoba History*, and its editor Jean Friesen (full disclosure – my wife), suggested that an interview with Bill, the preeminent Manitoba historian, would make an interesting article for the first issue. (Coincidentally, the new magazine featured on its cover a photograph of the railway station in Morton's birthplace, the town of Gladstone). I sent Bill a list of questions and, several weeks later, we sat down at the kitchen table in his apartment, a borrowed Dictaphone between us, for our chat. Having enjoyed the process, I invited a few of Bill's contemporaries to participate in interviews about their careers. These conversations took place over the next three years, between 1980 and 1982. All the conversations were transcribed by secretaries at St. Paul's College, University of Manitoba.

I corresponded with several other prairie authors who belonged to the same generation but, for a variety of reasons, they did not take part in the project. Marcel Giraud (1900-1994), who wrote *Le Métis Canadien: Son Role dans l'histoire des provinces de l'ouest* (1945), lived in the south of France, beyond my reach at the time, though he said he would be willing to participate if I ever arrived at his door in Nice. Sinclair Ross (1908-1996), author of several works of fiction, including the influential novel *As For Me and My House* (1941), replied that he had Parkinson's disease and was too weak to undertake a conversation. E.K. Francis (1906-1994), whose *In Search of Utopia: The Mennonites in Manitoba*, was published in 1955, wrote that he had done his research many years before and was not interested in going back to it.

The transcripts languished in a file cabinet for thirty years. Several became the subject of conversation and, at the invitation of editors, were published in abridged form. When I first thought of making them more widely available, I spoke to David Carr, then the executive editor of the University of Manitoba Press. He consulted with a professional historian who thought they would not make a volume of sufficient interest to warrant the expense of a traditional publication. I agreed with this assessment and put the file away.

Recently, having seen the advantages of making such material available in digital format, I asked Gerhard Ens, who has placed a wide range of texts online, if he thought

the interviews might interest some readers of prairie history. He said yes, took on the project, and prepared the transcripts. He also added new material, notably much valuable information on members of the wider academic community who were mentioned by the six scholars.

I would like to thank Gerhard for rescuing these informal memoirs recorded nearly a half-century ago. I believe they provide evidence of the context in which these fine scholars worked and of their own priorities in defining the prairies. As might be expected, the stories they tell are fascinating narratives in themselves.

Gerald Friesen
Winnipeg,
December 2026

Interview with George Francis Gillman Stanley[1]

November 4, 1981



George F.G. Stanley (1907–2002)
Royal Military College 1965

George Stanley's career was marked by service to the Canadian community and a commitment to scholarly writing. The range and volume of his published work is amazing. As he explained to me during one of our conversations, he was determined to publish at least one item per year and he met that quota with room to spare.

I first met George Stanley, then the Lieutenant Governor of New Brunswick, in the Chateau Laurier in Ottawa. Our second conversation took place in a Brandon hotel during a break from conference sessions. He was in his mid-70s and, as will be apparent, his memory was clear as a bell. He recalled his childhood, his teachers, his conversations and his writings with an infectious enthusiasm.

[1] George Stanley has written two autobiographical articles, one in R.C. Macleod, ed., *Swords and Ploughshares: War and Agriculture in Western Canada* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1993), 3-19; and one in Max Foran and Sheilagh Jameson, eds., *Citymakers: Calgarians after the Frontier* (Historical Society of Alberta, Chinook Chapter, 1987), 1-31.

Question: Let's start with you and your family history.

Stanley: I was born on the 6th of July 1907 in Calgary.

Question: What was your family doing in Calgary?

Stanley: My great-great-grandfather, whose name was Matthew Wyn Stanley, was born at Winstanley, England, in 1772, and came to Canada in 1790 with a British regiment. He was stationed in Detroit. Then at the time of Jay's Treaty, the British troops moved into Upper Canada and were stationed at various points and on to Nova Scotia. It was in Nova Scotia that my great-great-grandfather was rescued from drowning by Francis Gillman, who was the quartermaster of the Nova Scotia regiment of Fencible infantry. At that point, my great-great-grandfather said that he would name his eldest son after Francis Gillman and as a matter of fact over the successive generations the eldest son in the eldest line has always carried the name of Francis Gillman. That's the explanation for the F.G. in my name—George Francis Gillman Stanley. In 1802, at the time of the Peace of Amiens, the British military authorities, anxious to cut down on expenses, offered land grants to any of the soldiers in British Garrison regiments who would be prepared to take up land and remain in Canada. Matthew Stanley took discharge and settled at Mille Roche on the St. Lawrence in what became Stormont County not far from Cornwall. He married a woman by the name of Elizabeth Barton who was a daughter of a Loyalist. About 1806, the first son was born and he was named George Francis Gillman. They remained at Mille Roche. Great-great-grandfather was automatically a member of the first regiment of the Stormont Militia and took part in the War of 1812. After the war, he took up another land grant, this time in Lanark County on the road between the town of Perth and the village of Lanark, and the family moved there and remained associated with that part of Ontario for the next generation. Now the son, George Francis Gillman, took up a farm on a road between Franktown and Perth at Gillies Corners and it was there that my grandfather was born. Subsequently grandfather moved to Bruce County and set up a business.

Now, both great-great-grandfather and my great-grandfather were really not much interested in farming. They were particularly interested in cutting down trees and were therefore really in the lumber business. The result was that great-great-grandfather obtained another land grant near McDonald's Corners about 1824, I think it was, or thereabouts. In any event, I looked at his application for a land grant in the archives. Apparently, he kept his nose clean because the Lieutenant-Governor, I believe it was Maitland, made a little notation saying that this man had apparently never given the government any trouble so he thought he would be entitled to another land grant. My grandfather, who had been born at Gillies Corners and went to Bruce County, also got into the lumber business. He was in a partnership with a man named McLaggan in Chesley. While there he married a Scotch woman. Her name was Brown, Christina Walker Lamont Brown, (her mother was a Lamont). The Lamonts had come out to Ontario in the early part of the 19th century. The Lamonts were associated with a family by the name of Laurie. In family tradition, the first of the Lauries was a dominie,[2] who was the teacher of David Livingston.

In Chesley, grandfather apparently did reasonably well because he and his brother Matthew built a large brick building which is still standing on the Main Street in Chesley. My father went to public school in Chesley and then had to go to Wiarton to go to high school. He used to tell me about

[2] In Scottish English this is the term for a Scottish Schoolmaster. It comes from the Latin *domine*. When the Church of Scotland began to introduce universal education in Scotland, after it had become the national church in 1560, its aim was to have a university-educated schoolmaster in every parish, and over time the term *dominie* came to be used as a term for a minister, schoolmaster or university student.

playing lacrosse against the Cape Croker Indians at that time. Apparently, they were fast and furious matches.

Then my father moved west and went to British Columbia and joined the Canadian Pacific Steamships. He became purser's mate on the first of the Empress boats—the Empress of Japan had sailed from Vancouver to Yokohama. And then in 1897, he heard about the gold strike in the Yukon so he left the Canadian Pacific and went to the Yukon. They lost their whole outfit in a snow slide in the Chilkoot Pass and my father beat his way back to Vancouver but at this point, the Canadian Pacific were not very enthusiastic about him since he had left them very quickly. And he made his way into Lethbridge. He went to work with a small store, as far as I can remember, run by a Bentley. Bentley not only had a general store but he also sold lumber and this was something my father knew a little about so he began, as it were, in the kind of business that his father and grandfather had been in.

My father was a very strong man and he became captain of the lacrosse team in Lethbridge and he was the captain of the team that won the North-West Territories championship, the Levasseur Trophy, in 1902, I think. Meanwhile, he had met my mother and they were married at Fort Macleod in September 1900. About 1904, my father moved from Lethbridge to Calgary. At that time, he … was travelling for one of the paper companies … In due course, he established his own wholesale paper business with two other people. It was called Edgar, Palmer and Stanley. They had an office in a warehouse on 8th Avenue. Eventually, the firm became my father's and it became known simply as the Stanley Paper Company—in wholesale paper. Sometime in the 1920s, it became tied up with the New Westminster Paper Company because I remember going out to the New Westminster mill with father.

If I can tell a silly little story about this—at that particular time, they were just introducing the new white toilet tissue as against that hard yellow stuff they used to have that scratched. They very proudly showed the new toilet paper and the label which they called the Lions. It had the two lions of the mountains near Vancouver as the trademark and my father remarked, "That's hopeless. You can't sell toilet paper with mountains on it." So they promptly changed and, in due course, they produced a new one … It had a nice flower on it and my father just jumped up and said, "Impossible, impossible! We would be laughed off the market bringing out a toilet paper called Morning Glory!"

In the 1920s, my father was not well. He had a heart condition. He had applied for a commission during the war and was turned down because of his heart condition. My mother always attributed this to his experience in the Gold Rush but he was obliged then to retire from business in 1925. The business was then sold to a Vancouver company by the name of Smith, Davidson and Wright. He died in May 1928 of a coronary.

My mother's family were from Ingersoll, Ontario. The family name was Lillywhite and they were English from Sussex. They belonged to the same family that provided the cricketers who were very famous in English sporting history in the nineteenth century, one of whom began a sporting goods store in London which is still in business. They have branches in various parts of Great Britain known as Lillywhites. My mother's mother, that is my grandmother's name was Pickard, Elizabeth Pickard, and her father was Benjamin Pickard. He came from the United States.

Well, my mother's family was made up largely of girls; I think there were four or five girls and one boy who was the youngest. And my mother was the eldest in the family. She was a musician. The Lillywhites were all very musical. One of them went on the opera circuit in the United States. Her name was Mae Cooper. Ultimately, she was retired in Chatham, Ontario and I remember Victor Lauriston wrote an account of her. Well, my mother was not only a singer but a pianist and she went out west in the late 1890s to Nelson, British Columbia, and then moved to Lethbridge [where] she met my father….

Both my mother and father were very great readers. My father was inclined more towards the adventurous type of reading. When he went west from Chesley to Vancouver, he took with him—he

kept this set of books all his life, I still have it—a set of Fenimore Cooper. His other set of books were novels by Robert Louis Stevenson. My mother on the other hand was always inclined towards reading Dickens and Thackeray and the nineteenth century novelists such as Jane Austen and George Eliot. These books were always a part of my background and I confess that I was more inclined towards the Stevenson and the Fenimore Cooper than I was towards Dickens or Jane Austen. My mother always, I think, would have liked to have been a writer. Her letters were very interesting and people often commented upon the letters that she wrote to them.

I mentioned that my father and mother were both great readers. My father's reading wasn't limited to the books I have mentioned. He was always collecting books and we had quite a library of novels, particularly western novels. He had met Robert Stead and he'd met Robert Service. I think we had everything that Stead wrote and I read all of these things in due course. When other boys were reading Henty, I was reading Stead and Ralph Connor. We had all of Ralph Connor's novels as well. *Glengarry School Days* and *The Man from Glengarry* were set in a part of the country where my great-great-grandfather had originally settled.

I went to Connaught Public School in Calgary. It was only three blocks away but, before going there, I was sent to kindergarten at a place called—I can remember it well, the architecture of it—Unity Hall. I don't know what unity it was referring to but it was built like a great temple with pillars. I think I am right in saying it was on 14th Avenue near 8th Street West. After going to the kindergarten, I started in grade one in Connaught School.

Question: What was the quality of the schooling in the elementary schools?

Stanley: Well, I don't really remember much about it. I can remember several things, the kind of things that interested me most. That is, when I was in grade four, on Friday afternoons, Miss Bruce used to read us stories. She got on to reading us—get a grip on your chair—Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, in English of course. We would get the episodes of this story. This wasn't a condensed version that she was reading but I was fascinated by this and so too were the other children because when we moved into Miss Bennett's class the next year, we hadn't heard the end of Jean Val Jean. We asked Miss Bennett if she could make an arrangement with Miss Bruce on Friday afternoons so that she could come in and give us the tail end of *Les Misérables*.

I remember Miss Bennett went overseas that year. I didn't have her the full year. She went over during the First World War as a VAD.[3] Not long before she was leaving, I committed some misdemeanor in the class, I don't know what it was, but Miss Bennett sent me then to get the strap. I had to walk across the hall to get the strap from Miss Bruce. And then we went out into the hall and Miss Bennett came out. She just looked at me and said, "I never thought you would do anything like that to me just before I leave. I am going over to the war." Well, this hurt worse than the strap would have—she never did strap me on this occasion because I started to cry. I thought what a nasty little beast that I was and when I went into the classroom, the tears running down from my eyes, the other children in the class thought that Miss Bennett must have laid into me pretty strongly. She did—but not with the strap.

Miss Watchorn was the replacement and it always amused me that, when at the graduation dance at the University of Alberta some years later, I had the fun of dancing with Miss Watchorn. The fact was, there wasn't that much difference in age. I think that Miss Watchorn couldn't have been more than about seventeen, at the most eighteen, when she took Miss Bennett's place as teacher in

[3] This was the Voluntary Aid Detachment, a volunteer organization that provided crucial medical and logistical support to military personnel during World War One. It had been formed in 1909 by the British Red Cross at the request of the British War Office.

grade five so that I suppose there wasn't more than about seven or eight years between us. But of course, at that age, the difference is always great—to the child anyway.

Then I moved on into grade eight. The principal, Mr. Luck, was the teacher there. I think he was the best teacher I had in public school. I liked him. He was strict but he had the idea that the attention of people in his class was bound to wander and they'd start looking around at the walls or anything that might be on the walls. So above the blackboard, all around the walls, were huge maps—maps of Canada, maps of Africa, Asia, the Continent and everything. So you couldn't turn and look at anything without receiving some sort of instruction in what, at least, the world looked like on a map. And he laid great emphasis on maps and we had to learn how to draw maps and this stood me in good stead because I've drawn maps when teaching history, free-hand maps that I found always very useful. I think he was perhaps, oh, no question, he was the best teacher I had in public school. I am always glad I had him. Well, that introduced us to our first examinations because in those days you had to write entrance examinations. These were provincial exams and, well, I succeeded in passing the entrance and went into grade nine in Central High School. That was only a block away from home so it was an easy place to reach. I went through the usual four years in high school.

I'll just say a word more about Mr. Crummy. I had pneumonia in grade eleven. I was out for some time. After I went back, Mr. Crummy used to stay after 4:00 and tutor me in Latin and grammar and go through the translation of Virgil's *Aeneid*, which we were doing at that particular time, and I was very grateful to him. The other man who helped me was a man by the name of Zinck who taught arithmetic and he also gave me special tutorials that enabled me to catch up. Now, all of this has a certain interest to me because that year in grade eleven, I played rugby football, on the intermediate team. It was based on weight and size. That year we won the city championship. That was also the year I won the Bennett Scholarship. Now the Bennett Scholarship was offered by R.B. Bennett, (there were four offered to the city of Calgary), to the highest boy and to the highest girl in grade twelve and to the highest boy and girl in grade eleven in the provincial examinations.

It is hard for me to look back and say just what I was like. I liked sports. I played tennis—I liked tennis and I liked playing hockey. I enjoyed playing rugby football in high school. It is the sort of thing that I continued to do for years afterwards. The other thing I was very fond of was horses, and, I suppose, this was another aspect of life that I enjoyed in Calgary. The Shouldices were also from Chesley and were friends of my father. Old Mr. Shouldice—I can remember him when he was alive and living out at the big house that is long since gone in Calgary. The Shouldices had a big farm near Gleichen, and we went out at least once a week. Mrs. Shouldice made butter, the parents used to talk and they used to play cards, and I either wandered along the hills, along the Bow River, or was given a horse and just rode all through that country just where Bowness is, and above, in the region where, now, I think the university is and which was then bare prairie. Riding was something that I enjoyed very much and, in the summers, occasionally we would go down to the Crow's Nest where we had cousins who had a lumber mill near Elcho, at Baynes Lake actually. So I spent some time down there. For two summers, three of us used to go out to camp at Bragg Creek. We would camp on Fullerton's property and do a little fishing and of course ride horses. One time the three of us hiked from Fullerton's up to Elbow Falls on foot and set up a little camp there and caught fish below the Falls. (These were the largest fish you could get in the Elbow River).

I always liked hiking around through the woods and I'd always been interested in Indians, partly because my father, in Lethbridge, when doing business there, had picked up some of the language spoken by the Blood Indians and he had also, when out in the West, acquired a considerable knowledge of Chinook. I remember also that, where we lived on 11th Street, was the route that was followed by the Sarcee into the city. They stayed off the streets where the streetcars were. I used to watch them coming in, usually with some sort of a buckboard with a horse and a number of dogs trailing along behind them. And we were out on the reserve a number of times as my father knew the

agent. Another thing that perhaps I should mention—we had some half-breed children who were at the school when I went there—the families were known to be half-breed—these were people with Hudson's Bay Company backgrounds. I never recall experiencing any kind of racial prejudices one way or the other on this matter. We knew that so-and-so was mixed blood—so what? I gather that things changed later in Calgary. People became rather more aware of their racial backgrounds or more prejudiced about them. I think perhaps those people who had been out in the country earlier didn't quite have the same sort of feelings about race because that was never part of my experience whatsoever.

Question: You seem to have been aware of prairie history at an early age.

Stanley: Well as far as an interest in history was concerned, I got a good deal of it from my father. My father told me stories about the War of 1812, the sort of things he had heard from his grandfather and, also, some of our friends in Lethbridge had been out west in the very early period. As a small boy, I remember old Mrs. Rolls, who had gone to Battleford in 1883, telling me about her experiences in Battleford and the relationship with Poundmaker's Indians and the period of the Northwest Rebellion. I'd met people who had seen Riel and spoke about him. I remember one of them was a law student who had attended the trial in Regina and told me his reaction to Riel, listening to this man give his address to the jury, saying that he had been quite moved, as a very young man listening to this—became somewhat emotional about it when he was telling me about it when I was a boy. I suppose this kind of thing—that is, first-hand—hearing these people—it was touching the hand that touched the hand and so on—combined with the kind of stories Ralph Connor was writing—they were all local. I was very much aware of the history—a lot of it oral history—and some of it I think quite wrong. One of the people whose concept of what happened in 1885 was pretty far awry was old Armstrong, the scout. Now, Armstrong was one of the two scouts who found Riel saddling his horse and Riel gave himself up to Armstrong. Years later, in the 1930s, when I was working on my thesis, I thought, "I'm going to go and have a talk with Armstrong" and he told me—it was the story we had heard before, and which he used to portray in the Stampede Parade—how he had been looking for Riel and found a tepee and there was Riel. He said he went in and said, "Get up, you bastard." And he said, "I had my gun out, you see. I took him in as a prisoner and gave him to Middleton." Well, he didn't mention the fact that Bill Madill, another scout, was also with him and that Riel actually gave himself up. I never told Armstrong that in fact I had read his report and that was in fact what I was relying on. I think he believed everything he was telling me. Another man I recall from this period was W.B. Cameron. I think all history ceased as far as Cameron was concerned after the Frog Lake Affair. He'd tell the same story that he wrote in the *War Trail of Big Bear* and which was reprinted as *Blood Red the Sun* and so on. This sort of thing always interested me, fascinated me, during my earlier school days, and in my high school period.

I was also interested in politics. I became very much interested in politics partly because my father was a great Bennett supporter. I heard politics at the dining table at nights and listened to my father talking with other people about politics. It was all fixed, for instance, that I was to go into R.B. Bennett's office on graduation—I was to be a lawyer—after leaving high school…. [In actual fact, I think I gave an account of this in Calgary at one time at the Calgary Conference—about working in the election in 1925 or 1926 in Calgary, so I don't want to bother repeating that. That was part of it.] And I liked history. I suppose when I read novels I liked reading historical novels. And I suppose I liked writing. My mother, as I mentioned, was disposed that way.

Question: Was your family prosperous?

Stanley: …. Well, I think my father did very well in his business. In any event, he left my mother enough to look after her for the rest of her days.

Question: The social circle in which you travelled—was it a prosperous circle?

Stanley: Comparatively, yes. I think that would be a fair statement. I know perhaps people might have thought that we were wealthier than we were because this was in an era when to have two motor cars was certainly putting it on and we had two cars—but one of them belonged to the firm. My father always used that one to go to work in and come back in. The car was used during the day by the city traveler. Then we had another car—I suppose it was a nice car in those days—it was a Studebaker.

You asked about my father, what sort of group in society he belonged to. Well, may I just change it by saying what societies he belonged to. He was a charter member of the Calgary Rotary Club, and he was very active in the Masonic Order, and in the Shriners. Among his friends, I recall Cecil Stanley, who was, I think, the general manager of the National Drug Company in Calgary, and Major H.J. Robie who was a great militia man and was in the 137th Battalion CEF. Some of his other friends were people by the name of Griffiths, with whom they played bridge; Mr. McGill, who had a drugstore on 17th Avenue and 7th Street; Dr. McGill, who later became the Deputy Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs in Ottawa; and Fred Shouldice, the lawyer; and the Hallidays—they were from Chesley and one of the younger men, a contemporary of father's had a store in Crossfield.

Question: Were these business leaders?

Stanley: Oh yes. I should remember Dr. G.D. Stanley, the physician; and Dr. Lincoln another medical man; one name I have not mentioned was Dr. Estey who was the first family doctor after my parents moved to Calgary; and the Southards—Southard was in the car dealer business and subsequently went to live in Victoria. The names begin to come to me as I look back and try to recall them. May I just go back and mention that several of my father's other interests included the Bruce Old Boys' Association, in which he was very active, and he was a member of the St. Andrew's and Caledonian Society of Calgary, and the local historical society. Apparently, there had been quite a migration to western Canada, to Alberta, from Bruce County, just as, at an earlier period, there had been quite a migration from Lanark to Bruce, of which my grandfather had been one, and then my father was part of this western migration from Bruce County.

Question: Were these people part of the richest set in Calgary?

Stanley: No, we were not part of the Senator Lougheed and P. Burns group. Outside of the Collicuts and Fullertons out at Bragg Creek, I don't remember that there were any other people who were in the ranching business. My father was not a member of the Ranchmen's Club. I recall that his interests seemed to be with the business group. I remember that he was a member of the Board of Trade. They used to have a restaurant and my father took me several times to the Board of Trade dining room, and it was there that I was introduced to Buffalo Child Long Lance. At that particular time, what I remember about Buffalo Child was the fact that he was wearing plus fours.

I think the Club Rooms that my father visited most frequently … must have belonged to the Masonic Order because they were up in the Alexander Corner and they had billiard tables up there and my father played billiards. And rather, I think, than use baby sitters, something completely unknown when I was a child, I was taken off to watch my father play billiards under the strictest of injunctions to sit still and watch but never to interfere or to be heard. It was a case of to be seen but not heard.

…. I made a trip with my father down the Peace River… either 1917 or 1918. We travelled by train on what was called the Edmonton, Dunvegan and British Columbia Railway to Peace River Landing or Peace River Crossing, and then we travelled on the "D.A. Thomas," an old stern wheeler, down the Peace as far as Fort Vermillion and while we were there, my father paid a visit to the Experimental Farm. And I remember also, probably the most vivid recollections of Fort Vermillion, included, first, the smell of raw furs all stacked up in the warehouse of Revillon Frères,[4] and the other was watching two men set out with their canoes—including dogs, each one had a dog—all stacked. They were trappers and they were going off down the Peace. Just how far they were going I don't recall at this moment. I also remember being somewhat fascinated by the sight of the coffins sticking out of the edge of the river bank at Carcajou Point where the river had cut its way into the cemetery. To a small boy, this was a rather interesting and fascinating sight.

The other thing was … that we stopped at Sheridan Lawrence's ranch. They loaded cattle on the boat there and I remained outside watching the men loading the cattle. My father simply told me to stay there because he had some business to transact with Sheridan Lawrence. Now what it was I don't know. I wasn't interested in business. I was much more interested in the cattle and the boat.

After I completed grade twelve in Central High School in 1924, (I remember the date) I was thinking of going to university and I wanted to go into—I shouldn't say wanted to, I didn't know what I wanted to do but my parents had decided—that I was to go into law but the university looked with a certain ill favour on my attending university at that age [he was seventeen years old]. Besides, I had been rather badly advised and I was short one mathematics course. And so, instead, I went to the Normal School in Calgary. Now, I was under age but my father was friendly with the principal of the Normal School, Dr. Coffin, and I was the same size, pretty well, in build, (well I was a bit thinner, but the same height as I am today), so I went to the Normal School and qualified for a first-class license in teaching in the public school system. At the same time, I underwent the physical training course conducted by the Strathcona Trust so I emerged also as a qualified PT instructor. There was no problem. I think in many ways that experience of going to Normal School was a good one, as far as I was concerned, because I learned to stand up in front of a class. I had to try and teach these little brats everything from grade one up to grade eight and it made it possible for me, when I went to university, not to be tongue-tied the moment I arrived standing up in a classroom.

After that … I went up to the university … and registered in the combined Arts and Law course.

At this stage, I think perhaps I should mention another point about school. I'd always been interested in the fact that my father had a certain fluency with Indian languages. I liked languages; at high school I had always liked French. Two of my father's sisters married French Canadians. Well, by this time, I had decided that I liked French and I wanted to carry it on and my father had always impressed on me that if I ever wanted to go into politics, this was going to be a necessity. I had mentioned, I think, earlier, that he was interested in politics and this was driven home to me.

When I registered at the University of Alberta [1925], instead of following the regular courses in Arts that were to precede Law, I made arrangements whereby I could take some Arts courses and some Law courses at the same time. That meant I was going to take history, English and French, three things I liked. That lasted only for one year because during that particular year, while I found the law interesting, I found that I liked literature, language and history better. And it became a toss-up as to

[4] Revillon Frères (Revillon Brothers) was a French fur company founded in Paris in 1723. Purchased by Louis-Victor Revillon in 1839, it became known as Revillon Frères. By the twentieth century the company had posts in Siberia, Mongolia, Turkestan, and Canada. In 1899, Revillon Frères opened a wholesale warehouse in Edmonton, Alberta, and the Company set up a network of fur-trading posts in northern Canada in direct competition with the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC). This network included posts in northern Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

whether I would go into history or whether I would go into French. But, in those days, you couldn't take an honours course in French. It had to be in French and Latin or French and German. I hadn't had any German in high school. I hadn't taken advantage of the opportunity and I had had no particular desire to carry on Latin so the result was I opted for history.

I was very much taken with A.L. Burt.[5] He was really a very interesting person as a lecturer. I had never heard history presented in this way before—quite as fascinating—because we were getting into the details. The kind of history we'd had, well I enjoyed the history in high school but the kind of history we had was world history—I think just about the worst possible thing for the high school student who finds it extremely difficult to relate to events that went on in different parts of the world in the nineteenth, eighteenth, seventeenth and sixteenth centuries. This seemed to me to really have little bearing on my life. But with A.L. Burt, somehow or other, by getting into the details, I found that historical characters really were human beings, and they acted like human beings. They seemed to think like human beings. Up to that time they were little figures, stiff little figures that moved on the stage. You sort of manipulated them. So it was really, in many ways, A.L. Burt that settled the issue as far as I was concerned. The first year when I went to university, I had had a little car accident, I'd injured my right hand. Not very much, but enough that I had to wear a splint. That rather handicapped me to some extent, but I found that it didn't handicap me when it came to playing the trumpet. In addition to playing the piano, I had also learned to play the trumpet and had played the trumpet in a school orchestra, and I had a small little dance group in my last year at high school. We even did a couple of little broadcasts over the Calgary radio station at the time, CFAC. Incidentally, we were not paid for that. They seemed to be glad to get anybody who would volunteer to do this. When I went to university, I joined the symphony orchestra and played the trumpet. I learned to play with my left hand. This business of the injured hand, however, did mean that in my first year at the university, I did not play football. However, I joined the COTC.[6] I think it's only fair to explain, that this wasn't because I had any great feeling for military life. I had had school cadets from grade five on to grade twelve in school in Calgary. This was compulsory. So I'd gone through all of the basic drill, arms drill and shooting on the range—this type of thing. Well, I joined the COTC simply because we were paid. It meant that, if I gave up so many hours a week, come April, just before the summer holidays when I might be looking for a job, I could draw my COTC pay, which would at least give me a start. When I set off to university, my parents had worked it out all very carefully. And I was told I would have $600 to finance the year. This meant paying the fees. I think, if I remember correctly, the tuition fee was eighty-five dollars for the year in Arts. But there were the other expenses and, of course, board and room expenses as well. But I was very careful, I noted down every penny that I spent. When I bought a postage stamp, I noted it down. And I managed to clear the year in slightly under $400. Now I did this by cheating slightly, by packing up my laundry and sending it home. It was cheaper to send the laundry home than it was to have the laundry done in Edmonton.

The University of Alberta, at that time, was about 1400 students. It had all of the faculties, from medicine, dentistry, law, engineering, agriculture, arts, commerce, science, home economics, and nursing. That meant that the classes, the arts classes, on the whole were pretty small. And, I think I profited from that because even though the instruction tended to be the lecture system (except in the

[5] Alfred Leroy Burt (1888–1971) was born in Listowel, Ontario, and received a B.A. from the University of Toronto (1910) before going on to Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar. He received an Oxford B.Litt. in 1912 and an M.A. in 1916. Burt's career with the University of Alberta began in 1913, when he joined as lecturer of history and economics, a position he held until he was made an associate professor of history in 1916. After serving in the First World War, he returned to his position as associate professor of history at the University of Alberta and became professor and department head in 1921, positions he held until 1930 when he joined the University of Minnesota as a professor of history.

[6] The COTC (Canadian Officers' Training Corps) was a university military training program that operated from 1912 to 1968.

honours courses), even in small classes, there was an intimacy that you got to know your professors. Now we only had two full-time professors, that was A.L. Burt in history, and Morden Long,[7] and a man by the name of Burgess, who was the professor of architecture, who gave a course in the Renaissance. That course, I don't think, was quite appreciated by a good many of the students who took it. But it gave me an inkling of the history of architecture and the history of art. Well, I didn't care too much for it then but I looked back at it later with great appreciation. The other people who were really interesting and stimulating were E.K. Broadus[8] in English and, of course, I followed French all the way through. I enjoyed the French; the senior French professor, Edouard Sonnerre, was essentially a sergeant-major—he believed in a drill-system—but he was lively and active and strong in promoting French plays, so I took part in several of them at the university.

I took economics from John Cassells.[9] He was the one person—he'd been a Rhodes Scholar from Calgary—who interested me in the possibilities of doing graduate work. The other man who was interesting was Dr. McGibbon,[10] an economist, who was interested in the grain trade. And looking back at it, the thing that impresses me is that all of these men, or most of them, were scholars themselves. They were producing scholars, particularly of course, A.L. Burt. And in one year that I took Canadian history from A.L. Burt—I suppose one could say that it was a poorly organized course—but it was one of these broad general courses from Cartier to Mackenzie King—but when we got to the period of Carleton and the Quebec Act, we spent six weeks out of the whole year on Carleton. Burt would read us excerpts from some of Carleton's correspondence—some of the material that he was gathering at that time for his book on *The Old Province of Quebec*. It was at that point that I made up my mind that I wanted to be a professor of history. Up to that point I didn't really know what it was going to lead to, but I thought, "This is interesting. This is the kind of thing that I want to do."

After that, Burt had an attack of appendicitis and was absent for some time. Then he came back and said, "well, you'll be responsible for everything from Carleton up to Confederation." Then we started in on Confederation. So that particular period of nineteenth-century Canadian history was something of a blank in my experience as far as a formal course at the university was concerned. Incidentally, that was the only course in Canadian history that was available at the time. Burt had to lecture in other fields of history as well. But, looking back at it, as I say, these were all very stimulating and interesting people.

However, there was one very great drawback and that is that the university library was pitiful

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[7] Morden Long (1886–1965) was born in Brantford, Ontario, and he attended McMaster University earning a B.A. in 1908. He attended Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar in 1909 and was awarded a B.Litt. in 1912. Beginning in 1913, Long taught at Victoria Composite High School in Edmonton before joining the University of Alberta in 1918. Long served the university as a lecturer of history (1918–1920), assistant professor of history (1920–1924), associate professor of history (1924–1935), and professor and head of the Department of History (1935–1952).

[8] Edmund Kemper Broadus (1876–1936) was born in the United States and received his Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1908. In that year, he was recruited by Henry Marshall Tory to head up the English Department in the newly established University of Alberta. He was an outstanding teacher and well-published scholar.

[9] John MacIntyre Cassels (1901–1978) was born in Scotland and moved to Canada (Calgary) in 1908. He received his B.A. at the University of Alberta in 1924, and attended Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar receiving a B.Litt. there in 1927. He taught at the University of Alberta until he attended Harvard University, receiving his doctorate there in 1934. Thereafter, he held a fellowship at the London School of Economics before returning to Harvard as an assistant professor of economics. His book, *A Study of Fluid Milk Prices*, was published by Harvard University Press in 1937. He continued teaching at Harvard until 1939, after which he taught at other universities in the United States.

[10] Duncan Alexander MacGibbon (1882–1969) was born in Quebec, and received his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in 1915. After serving in the First World War, he joined the University of Alberta as professor and head of the Department of Political Economy. He left the University in 1929 to become a member of the Canadian Board of Grain Commissioners based in Winnipeg. He held this post until he retired in 1949. He wrote two books on the Canadian grain trade: *The Canadian Grain Trade* (1932) and *The Canadian Grain Trade, 1931-1951* (1952).

at that time. We had always had books at home—I think this is almost essential in a family. If you want your children to become readers, they have to have books there. And they have to see people reading and get accustomed to the idea of using them. When I went to university, and was getting interested in the details of history, I was really quite disappointed in the library at the University of Alberta. I thought it was very limited, and looking back at it now, it was a pitifully poor library. I don't think the university could have spent much on their materials for history. The end of my third year—as I mentioned, I had been talking with Johnny Cassells. He asked me if I thought I could manage one year at an American university. And I said I thought probably my parents could manage this. He urged me then, in my fourth year, to apply to go to Yale. He said if I could spend one year at Yale, and work hard, that I would probably be able to get a Sterling Fellowship and that sort of thing would carry me through the rest of my formal academic training at the graduate level. So this is really what I planned on doing. Well, my father died at the end of my second year at university. My mother was well enough off but I really never knew what her resources were—I never inquired. But I'd worked teaching school in the summers in Alberta—it was possible to get a school teaching job in the ranching areas. And I had a teacher certificate from the normal schools, so I taught for a couple of years and then, the year that my father died, I got a job with the Canadian Bakeries in the summer, first driving a horse and wagon, delivering bread, and then graduating to driving a truck.

When I went back to the university in the autumn of 1928, I went to see A.L. Burt and he said he was delighted that I was prepared to apply for the Rhodes scholarship. So I asked him for a letter of recommendation. He said, "I'm sorry. I can't give you a letter of recommendation because I happen to be the secretary of the selection committee." So, I did the usual, I found people to write the letters and put in my application. I can remember quite vividly that on the final day that this application was to be in, —5:00 o'clock on a certain date—at about half past four, Tom Stanley caught me, and said, "A.L. Burt is tearing what little hair he has out. Would you get that application in." I said, "What time is it?" He said "It's four-thirty." "Well," I said, "he told me I had until five o'clock. I still have another half hour." In any event, I walked over with him and gave A.L. Burt the application with all its supporting documents. Well, in due course, we were up before the selection committee. The other candidates, as I remember, included a man by the name of Bob Hill, who had been the football hero at the university, but whose academic record was modest. And the other candidate was a man I've always felt should have got the scholarship. He was George Field. He was in science. I had great respect for Field and I thought that he would really be a shoo-in for the scholarship. I had a very interesting experience years later with George Field. He and I were both given honorary doctorates at Royal Military College, Kingston, in the same year. The year—it would be about 1971 or 1972, sometime in there, we chatted and talked. I knew he'd gone on into the Research Council. I always felt that he had a better record than I had. But there it was. During the interview, which was held over at Government House, (Dr. Egbert was the Lt. Governor at the time), I was asked a number of pretty stiff questions. One of the questions put to me was—I had come out with some phrase as to what the government should do or ought to have done in the field of education—and Perrin Baker, the minister of education, who was a member of the selection committee, came right back at me about this. I was puzzled as to how on earth to answer it without being just too flip or smart. I was rescued by the Bishop of Calgary, Bishop Sherman, who turned on Baker and said "Look Baker, you couldn't possibly answer that question yourself." That took me off the hook. When we were all called in, and the verdict was announced I was delighted, but very much surprised.

Well, subsequently, I entertained the other two candidates and their lady friends at dinner at the Macdonald Hotel. Actually, I wasn't still on the $600 budget. What had happened is that, by this time, I was doing special tutoring for a blind student at the university in history. I know in my final year I ran through $1000 and used all of it. The extra $400 had come from the university for the tutoring. I had a good year. I might perhaps mention that that year, or the year before, I had won a

medal from the French Government, le Département des Affaires Ētrangères, for French, and in my final year, the year I got the Rhodes scholarship, I was also awarded a French government scholarship to go to France for one year. Well, of course, given a choice of going to Oxford for three years and going to France for one year, I took the three-year scholarship. I've often wondered since, whether I might have persuaded the Rhodes trustees to postpone my scholarship for one year to allow me to go to France. Instead of that, I did it the other way. I asked the French Government if they wouldn't mind postponing the scholarship for three years and they said no. So the result was that, right after graduation in 1929, I went over to France and did a summer semester at the Université de Grenoble. That was all to the good. I began to travel around after the semester was over; I went off to Rome and then back up to Geneva to listen to the sessions of the League of Nations and then I began my Oxford career in the autumn term.

I went to Keble College. Now there were no other Canadians there. I remember there were some American Rhodes scholars at Keble at the time, but I was there a year or so before any Canadians appeared on the scene. Before I went to Oxford, I had been carefully briefed by A.L. Burt who told me that I should take the undergraduate work at Oxford, that this was perhaps the best thing that Oxford had to offer. And although it meant taking another B.A., that I would profit from it in the end. This I agree with now.

I could take the B.A. in two years or in three as I saw fit. Well, I aimed at two years and felt that I could use that third year on the Rhodes scholarship and do a B. Litt. So I did it as quickly as I could. I had some very good tutors. I liked the tutorial. It was one on one. After all, the college that I went to had, I think, about 175 students at the college. This made it one of the larger colleges at Oxford and, I suppose, that of that 175, there must have been 30 or more who were graduate students. So the undergraduate body was small. I lived in the college. I liked the life. It was a very comfortable existence, being waited on by one's scout! In contrast to what it was like in Athabasca Hall at the University of Alberta—the tiny little cubbyholes that we had at Athabasca Hall—and here I suddenly found myself in two rooms, the bedroom and the sitting room. Well, I look back on the life itself with very happy memories.

My principal tutor was a man by the name of Jolliffe[11] whose field of interest was English constitutional history. But I also chose as a special subject, what they called British Colonial Policy between 1830 and 1860. And my tutor for that was Vincent Harlow.[12] At the time, I thought it was a kind of meaningless thing, this thirty-year period. But it turned out to be very useful to me, simply because I was obliged to read something of Australian and South African and New Zealand history. And I found when I came to work on *les métis* that I had some knowledge of what had gone on in South Africa in the relations between the whites and the Bantus, and the same thing with the Maoris and the immigrants coming in to New Zealand. There are a few references in *The Birth of Western Canada*[13]—comparisons that were drawn simply because of the kind of work I had to do at the undergraduate level at Oxford.

Meanwhile, I played hockey and tennis and I rowed. In fact, I did everything. I found out that,

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[11] John Edward Austin Jolliffe (1891–1964) served as a tutor and fellow at Keble College, Oxford from 1919 to 1954.

[12] Vincent Todd Harlow (1898–1961) was a prominent English historian of the British Empire. From 1928 to 1938 he was at Oxford University, and served as keeper of the Rhodes House library, Beit lecturer in colonial history, and lecturer in British empire history. From 1938 to 1948, he was the Rhodes Professor of Imperial History at King's College London, and, in 1948, he returned to Oxford as the Beit Professor of the British Empire. He held this post until his death in 1961. During the time that George Stanley was at Oxford, Harlow was researching and writing about the origins of empire in the Caribbean.

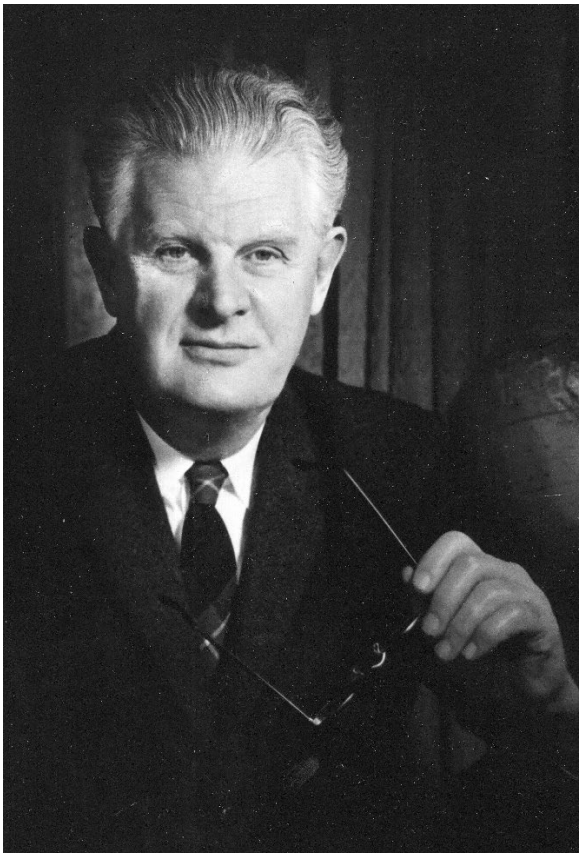
[13] This was Stanley's first major publication: *The Birth of Western Canada: A History of the Riel Rebellions* (Toronto, London & New York: Longmans, Green, 1936). It was based on his doctoral thesis at Oxford, "The Second Riel Rebellion in Canada, 1870-1886" (1935).

at least as far as I was concerned, life at Oxford meant working in the holidays, academically, and when I was up during the term taking part in all of these activities every afternoon. The Rhodes Secretary, Sir Frances Wylie, was very keen on people rowing, so of course I rowed. I rowed for the college, and I don't think I was ever a very good oarsman, but I took part in torpids and then in eights. I rowed for the third Eight one year, and then I rowed for the second eight another year. Oh, these were the periods … one's glory—you know, in the summer term—was to be able to take part in Eights week, to be one of the oarsmen. I also played tennis for the college.

I kept myself very busy but, in my first summer, I bought a car, a small baby car, and went to Devonshire, and spent virtually the whole summer in a farmhouse. I had a nice room to work in and I took books along, and did a lot of work preparing for the next term and of course thinking of the examinations. We didn't do yearly examinations; we only did the examination at the end of two years for the degree. The same thing in my second year: when it came to the Easter term, I asked permission to continue to live in the college during the vacation period. Nobody had ever asked for that before; it kind of threw them for a loop. But the warden of the college said he couldn't see any objection to it, provided I was always in college before the gates closed because there wasn't going to be any opening of the gates to allow me to come in. This suited me admirably because all I wanted to do was to prepare for my final examinations, to do my reading. So I spent that period, the whole of the six weeks, working very hard reading all the material that was required for my final examination.

Then, one thing that struck me at the time and has struck me since, about a week before the finals came, my tutor, Mr. Jolliffe, called me in and told me to pack up and leave. He said "Go down to the seaside, go someplace, and don't take a blessed book with you." Well, I didn't go to the seaside, but I went up into the Cotswolds where I could ride a horse and play tennis. I found a very nice little hotel and I rode horseback and played tennis and cheated by taking one book. I might as well have left it behind—it didn't do me any good anyway—I read it, but I didn't take it too seriously. Well, all of this was because the examinations—of which I had eleven. We wrote them two a day and the final one on Saturday morning, so there was no possibility of cramming for the papers the next day. If you were going to get through this particular ordeal, you went to bed and got some sleep so that you could stay awake the next day. Then, six weeks after I had written the examinations, I had the oral exam. That was quite an ordeal. It has always been one of my regrets. My oral was apparently not sufficient to give me the mark I wanted. It used to be said that a very short oral meant that you were neither near the bottom nor were you near the top. I think there's some truth in it. But in any event, I had a devil of an oral. It seemed to me to go on and on and on. But there it was.

Second Interview of George F.G. Stanley, June 1982



George F.G. Stanley in the 1960s
U of A Archives 1972-108-355

Question: You did a B.Litt. (now called an M.Litt.) after your B.A.?

Stanley: Correct. Then after that I went after the D.Phil. I did that B.Litt.—I think it took me a year and three months.

Question: What was it on?

Stanley: Oh, that was actually the start of my work on the West. It was on Manitoba…. the reason for the choosing of Riel was that when I went to see the people in the committee for advanced studies, they said "What do you want to do?" I said, "I'd like to do a thesis on François Bigot," and they said "Well, there's nothing here that you can do. There's no material at Oxford, there's no material in England, you're going to spend all your time in France. But you've got to put in a certain amount of residence here." And then the Rhodes Librarian, Vincent Harlow, said to me, "You know, we've been collecting stuff on a fellow by the name of Riel, if you want to use your knowledge of French, why don't you write on this man. We've got a number of things." And I said "That, of course, would be number one priority" because I had been brought up on stories about Riel, and various members of the family had been living in the West, up in Battleford … I said that I had just never thought about Riel—it had never dawned on me.

So then, the question was to take a look around and see what materials were available. Well, I very quickly found that the Colonial Office had all the reports that went into Ottawa—they were sent on to London, and so the PRO had a very considerable amount of material. And I think, one of the great coups was—the Hudson's Bay Company annually gave a dinner to Rhodes scholars and I happened to be sitting next to the man who was the deputy governor. His name was Sir Alexander Murray. He said, "What are you doing?" So I told him: "Well I was going on into research and I was really going to be doing some work on the history of western Canada." "Well," he said, "our papers would be very useful to you." And I said, "Yes, indeed, they would." But you couldn't get into them—oh, it was quite a job. The only person around that time working there was A.S. Morton.[14] But, Murray said, "You know, we've been discussing adopting a different policy with regard to our records." And he said, "If you're anxious to work with them, I'll speak to the Governor." (His name was Ashley Cooper.) And he was as good as his word.

It wasn't very long before I received a note from the Hudson's Bay Company, saying that I would have permission to use their records. So I went into the HBC records—old Dr. Morton was working there—so the two of us worked several years in the Hudson's Bay Company records. Because they hadn't really quite settled their policy, and because the archivist had been given instructions that I was to have access to them, I had them up to 1885. And when they did finally settle on a policy, they closed them at 1870! But I had material after 1870, and I pointed out to them while I was writing the biography[15] I was going to use some of it because I had had permission to take it at that time.

There was only one thing they did ask: before I published anything, that they read it. The only thing that the archivist boggled at was one document which he allowed me to read, but not to copy. I think he was unduly sensitive about it—it was actually Big Bear McLean—his account of the surrender of Fort Pitt—McLean was known as Big Bear—now I think it's probably been published since but at that time—McLean was very critical of the Company, and things that he said were not what the Company would really like to see. Interestingly enough, when the book came out and I had it in galleys; the only thing that they wanted me to delete was a quotation from a letter of Sir Stafford Northcote. But let me tell you the joke about it. I pointed out that I didn't get that in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives—I got that from Sir Stafford Northcote's memoirs! And they said, "Oh well!" There was nothing they could do to stop it. It was there, but they didn't like what he had said. The other stuffy people were at the State Department in Washington and they wouldn't let me take a thing out of there until they had read it all—every note that I made.

Question: They had someone sitting there reading your notes?

Stanley: When I went to leave the room (I had to get permission to leave the room), there was a guard at the door. Then a man came in, he sat down and read all my notes. They asked me to delete some stuff there. I was a little annoyed about that because I didn't think it was that serious. And I memorized both the reference and the contents and wrote it down as soon as I got out. But then I thought about it afterwards. I thought, "You know, I may want to come back here again. I don't want to have this door slammed in my face just because I'm going to be stubborn about this." And so I didn't use it in

[14] Arthur Silver Morton (1870–1945) was born in Trinidad, and was educated at the University of Edinburgh before moving to Canada to become a Presbyterian minister. In 1914, he moved to Saskatoon to become the chief librarian and head of the Department of History at the University of Saskatchewan (1914–1940). He was one of the first historians to do extensive research in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives in London. On the basis of this research, he would publish *A History of The Canadian West to 1870–71* (London, Edinburgh, Paris, Melbourne, Toronto, and New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1939).

[15] This refers to the biography of Louis Riel that he would publish in 1963. George F.G. Stanley, *Louis Riel* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1963).

The Birth of Western Canada. Well, somebody, working later, did publish the quotation that they had deleted and so it appears in my *Riel* book now, but not under the State Department. It was just the suggestion put forward by J.W. Taylor, or Malmros, to the State Department, that they provide Riel with $25,000 to keep the pot boiling because he was working for annexation. Actually, Taylor was a spy, and Malmros was an agent working to promote annexation. They didn't want that published.

Question: You began this in 1931, and then finished the first portion of it in 1932?

Stanley: That's right. I started in the autumn of 1931 and wrote a B.Litt. thesis and finished that in about November 1932.

Question: You then moved directly on to the D.Phil.?

Stanley: Yes, I started right in. This had whetted my appetite and I was going to make it a full job.

Question: You had done your research in London and in Oxford?

Stanley: That's right. For the B.Litt. It isn't anything more than an exercise in research.

Question: Who was supervising you?

Stanley: Harlow—who didn't really know anything about it.

Question: So really, you were on your own?

Stanley: Yes. The one thing that … In many ways I have no objection to a person who isn't an authority supervise a thesis, provided that the professor who is supervising has a good knowledge of how to write a book and to do research … I might understand what I was driving at, but if he couldn't make any sense of it then I had to go back and make sense out of it. And Harlow, because of his very extensive knowledge of colonial history—that was his field—was the one who drew parallels to me about the South African Boers and the whole concept of the, what is really the basic thesis, the conflict of cultures. This is the influence that Harlow had on the thesis.

Question: I wondered about that; there is evidence, in *The Birth of Western Canada*, of an imperial context....

Stanley: You see, all the people with whom I did any work and from whom I obtained any help were Harlow, Morrell,[16] who was a New Zealander, and Sir Reginald Coupland,[17] all of whom were imperial historians, if you want to put it that way. In the B.A. course, we had to write two examinations on what was called a special subject. You had a choice of special subjects. And I chose colonial policy between 1830 and 1860. And that—there wasn't anything written on it—there were a lot of books on aspects of it—but there was a set of documents involving the material that was prepared by

[16] William Parker Morrell (1899–1986) was a prominent New Zealand historian who studied at Balliol College, Oxford, on a postgraduate scholarship. His D.Phil., on British colonial policy, was published in 1930. This established him as an expert in the field of imperial history. He would serve as the Beit Lecturer in Colonial History at Oxford, followed by a readership in history at Birkbeck College, University of London.

[17] Sir Reginald Coupland (1884–1952) was born in London, graduating from the University of Oxford in 1907. He initially lectured in ancient history, but moved to colonial history under the influence of Lionel Curtis. He became Oxford's Beit Professor of Colonial history in 1920, and stayed in that position until 1948. His specialty was African history.

contemporaries. I'm thinking of Gibbon Wakefield's book on systematic colonization and Buller's book on responsible government, and then Merivale's lectures on colonial policy and Sir James Stephen, who was in the Colonial Office, and his account. Plus, the debates in the British Parliament. So that the two examinations—one was on what you might call the history, the other paper was on the documents, which meant you were being examined on the documents you were supposed to have read and studied. My tutor for that was Harlow. So the influence of the imperial historians was bound to make itself felt. I don't think it could have been otherwise.

Question: One thing that Canadian scholars have always picked up in reading *The Birth of Western Canada* is the frontier thesis …

Stanley: They keep on doing that although I deny that it's a frontier interpretation. Now it's interesting, this, because Burt[18] was a frontier historian, very much for the frontier thesis, and right after I came back, one of the first papers that I read was one that Burt never liked very much—because he felt that I had departed from the fold and was abandoning the frontier idea but then I never had, to my mind, I had never accepted the frontier thesis, in all its aspects, at least not the literal interpretation that was given to Turner's[19] ideas. And when I'm called the frontier historian, I always find that—well, it doesn't rankle, it just simply … I feel it is a misinterpretation of what I was driving at. I was driving at really more the concept of conflict of culture rather than the idea of the last best West … you know, the free land that was the source of democracy, which I've always thought was rather far-fetched. It suited the Americans, I think—Turner's ideas suited the attempt that the Americans were making to emphasize the national idea of the United States, to give it a certain unity of thought. They wanted to break and cut the ties with Europe. Therefore, everything that was good in the United States—freedom and democracy—had developed from within, and were products of their environment, not inherited things…. I hope that I'm not stepping on any toes, but I've often wondered whether the development of Mormonism wasn't really part of the whole same thing, that is, here in the United States, you have an indigenous religion, and you have the books of Mormon which were discovered in the United States. This gave the Americans not only something that was essentially their own politically, their own from the standpoint of religion, and this is the way I thought and perhaps why I reacted against the frontier thesis.

Question: Did you talk to A.S. Morton much? Did his views influence you as you were doing your own thesis?

Stanley: No. We talked, but … Morton put me on to certain things which he had come across. He didn't talk about his work much … But in the details of going about it, and I know that he was one who told me … He said, "Don't forget that, in Saskatchewan, there were a lot of whites involved who were pro-Riel; and they've done their best to cover their tracks for years." But he said, "You can uncover them. You go ahead and do that; because this is the case." Now this fascinated me. And so I did try to find out something more about these people. I was there when Leveson Gower came one day and said—we were talking about explorers—and he said, "You people are familiar with Alexander Hendry." And we said yes. "Well," he said, "I want you to take a good look at that man's signature

[18] This was A.L. Burt, his professor at the University of Alberta.

[19] Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis argues that westward expansion and the availability of free land shaped the distinct democratic character, individualism, and inventiveness of the United States. This thesis was first elaborated by Turner in 1893, in a paper entitled "Significance of the Frontier in American History." It was delivered to the American Historical Association, and was first published in the *Proceedings of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, December 14, 1893.

and tell me what his name is." And there was no doubt, both Morton and I looked at it and we both agreed that it said Henday, not Hendry. Leveson Gower said, "You know how that RY got started? That was Beckles Willson. He started that." And, he said, "I don't know whether it was just a typographical error that he never picked up or what, but everybody who has written about him since has called him Hendry." And so he said, "I want both of you, if you publish anything, to make sure it goes in AY." And so you'll find that *The Birth of Western Canada*, which only uses his name once or twice, I think, has the name as AY, and Morton's *History of the Canadian West* has it as AY. It was Leveson Gower who drew that to the attention of both of us while we were working at the HBC archives. Just one of the silly little episodes of history.

Question: Tell me, when did you come back to Canada to do research? Would it be in the early 1930s?

Stanley: Yes. I have to try to remember that date. I think it was 1933.

Question: You came to Ottawa?

Stanley: Yes. What happened was that they had what was called a Beit Senior Research Scholarship in colonial history. My education I owe to South Africans, to gold and diamonds. It was for research in what they called colonial history. And it had a very handsome travel allowance.

So I put in for permission to travel to Canada to do research, and worked in Ottawa all that summer and went down to Washington to work in the State Department. And I worked in Quebec and Montreal.

Question: You didn't go west at that point to do research for *The Birth of Western Canada*?

Stanley: Well, I did go west, but I didn't do any work in the Manitoba archives and so, as far as research is concerned, it was very little. In Ottawa, I worked in the Department of Indian Affairs and in the RCMP papers. Now, again, how did I gain access to this? It was because the … Deputy Superintendent-General, Dr. McGill, was an old friend of my father's. And so he gave me access to anything I wanted in the Department of Indian Affairs. There were two people who were helping me there, a man by the name of Matheson, and a man by the name of Saint-Louis, both of whom were employed in the Department of Indian Affairs. I went through, well, I suppose it would be the daily journal of incoming and outgoing letters, and it indicated the ones that I wanted to see. And I want to mention this point. In picking out a number of letters, I was told that those letters were all down in a shed near the river where they were putting the documents that were going to be destroyed. So I went down there with Saint-Louis and he dusted these things off, and I worked down there with these documents. Now, a number of the quotations dealing with the Indians in *The Birth of Western Canada* were taken from documents that were destroyed subsequently. The only place that you will ever find those quotations or the material is in those quotations. And in that book. I know people have told me they have looked for those papers and they just keep telling them at Indian Affairs that they're not to be found. Well, the fact is, they were destroyed. I know that.

Another thing was … the Deputy Commissioner of the Mounted Police was a man by the name of Spalding, who had been a friend of my father's in the days that they were in Lethbridge. Spalding gave me access to RCMP material and that first article that I ever published afterwards, which was called—something about "The Second Halfbreed Rising"—the threatened one, with this long account by André, who was the missionary, that, I found in the RCMP papers. I obtained certain stuff from them and that—there was no place for it in *The Birth of Western Canada*—I kept all that material,

and then proceeded to write an article for the *CHR*.[20]

Question: You went to Montreal on that research trip, I gather?

Stanley: On that trip, I went down to the old library, the Bibliothèque Municipale, and later—it was the Riel book—I did some work in the Archevêché. The ecclesiastical stuff that you find in the Riel book was obtained later. I didn't really go into that. Oh, I came here, to the University of Ottawa, to use Oblate records. While I was working in Indian Affairs and in the RCMP I could go and work in the University of Ottawa at night.

Question: How long were you here?

Stanley: I came over at the beginning of March. And I went back to England about the end of November. And it wasn't a holiday. I did a lot of working, and everything was transcribed by hand.

Question: You then returned to Oxford?

Stanley: Oh, I took all the notes back. One of the interesting things was the discovery of Riel's petition—the one in December, 1884. I couldn't find that in the Colonial Office—in the PRO's collection of Colonial Office records. I couldn't find it in Ottawa. There were always references to it but I never could find it. I'm not sure if it was Harlow or not—but I think Harlow said, "You know, they have a certain number of these things in the Colonial Office, not in the PRO." And he gave me the name and a letter of introduction to Sir John somebody, who was the Deputy, and I went there and found it in one day. So I did get the document and this was the original that had gone back and was being held in one of the buildings on Whitehall, where the Colonial Office was located. I don't know why it wasn't in the PRO. That's just one of the little things that rather pleased me—to discover that.

Question: You wrote, then, in 1934–1935?

Stanley: Well, the doctoral thesis was examined and approved in 1935. Convocation was going to be held in the Divinity School, which was part of the Bodleian, and which I thought was one of the most beautiful buildings, the interior of it, in Oxford. It was here, I think, that Charles II held his parliament when they had left London at the time of the plague. I was very much under the influence of the historical surroundings all the time I was there. History was looking at you from walls, as people say. And, I thought, well rather than wait for the regular Convocation in the Sheldonian, I think I'd like to take the degree here. Something to remember.

Question: Was there a committee examination of the thesis itself?

Stanley: Oh, yes, I had the oral examination. It took about three hours …—as it went on, I became more and more reassured. There was no question that it was going to be accepted. Particularly when Coupland, who was one of the examiners, started in to tell me what I should do about getting it published. He thought that perhaps, with a little bit of pruning and a little bit of polishing, that it should be, and therefore I set out right afterwards to see about getting it published.

I sent it first to Macmillan's and they weren't interested. Then I sent it to Longmans, Green,

[20] *Canadian Historical Review*

and they were. But they wanted a subsidy—it was a rather lengthy book. I said, "Well, no problem about that. I'll find a subsidy." But there was a problem and I was very worried about it. Where on earth was the money going to come from? Well, everybody was most helpful. I remember Coupland had spoken to Sir Maurice Powicke, who was the Regius Professor of History. I've forgotten what fund it was, but he had some control of that. And I was out at a party and Powicke came to me and told me that Coupland had spoken to him about it and said, "You don't need to worry about it, there'll be some money coming from that." And to make sure that I would have enough to cover the rest, because—I've forgotten the amounts—but in any event it wasn't going to be quite enough to cover the subsidy that Longmans, Green, wanted, so I went to Sir Carleton Allen, who was then the secretary of the Rhodes Trust in Oxford, and Allen said, "Well, this has never happened"—nobody had ever applied to the trustees for a grant to subsidize publication—but he would be willing to put it up to the trustees and he wanted some references, so I gave him Harlow, Coupland, and Powicke. And it wasn't very long afterwards that he told me that the trustees would cover the rest. So that's how *The Birth of Western Canada* came out. And I know it was setting a precedent and I have no doubt that the Rhodes trustees have subsidized books since, but I believe that was the first for which they had ever provided a grant for publication.

Question: I wondered if you had run into Marcel Giraud at that time?[21]

Stanley: No, I didn't. I didn't meet Marcel Giraud until after the war, in Ottawa. And his book, you know, was not written at that time. It was written during the war. And Giraud, during the period of the German Occupation, spent the time writing the book, but he had done a great deal of work over here earlier. But I think that work was done after. You'll notice he uses *The Birth of Western Canada* quite frequently as a reference. And I think he did the work after that book came out. I met him here at the archives in 1948.

Question: What was your impression of that book when it came out?

Stanley: Well, I think I had virtually the first copy when it came out. It came over, I was told, by diplomatic bag and it was sent to me for a review. I wrote the first review of it in the *CHR*. I was at UBC when I wrote the review, and I was trying to make up for the seven years that I had lost in terms of reading and getting abreast of the new publications. And then I had this 1100-to-1200-page book dumped on my lap. And I read it through. Well, this was, of course, the most thorough piece of research—oh, it exceeded anything I had ever attempted. But I still had some things that he didn't have. However, this is not the point. His prose is difficult reading. Giraud does not write a good easy flowing style. In view of the fact that it is now being translated, I'm wondering about how closely the translator will attempt to follow Giraud's style. For the sake of the reader, I think perhaps a translator will be obliged to give fairly free translations in places. Oh, it's a convoluted style to read. I think that it's really quite a magnificent work that will be a source of reference for scholars for years and years and years. I still use Giraud as a reference if there's anything that I want to look up. If I want details on western Canada, I look into A.S. Morton and into Giraud and into E.E. Rich.

[21] Marcel Giraud (1900–1994) was a historian/ethnologist and professor at the Collège de France from 1947 to 1971, holding the chair of History of North American Civilization. After spending several years in British archives and the United States (thanks to two Rockefeller Foundation fellowships in 1934 and 1937), he wrote his doctoral thesis at the Sorbonne on "Canadian métissage," which was published in 1945. Marcel Giraud, *Le Métis canadien : son rôle dans l'histoire des provinces de l'Ouest* (Paris : Institut d'Ethnologie, Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle, 1945). It was translated in two volumes by George Woodcock as *The Métis in the Canadian West* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1986).

Question: Bill Morton was in Oxford about the time that you were there. Did you have much contact with him?

Stanley: No. Not really. I'm not sure how much we overlapped. In that last period that I was there, I was busy finishing up the thesis, preparing for the oral, and then revising it. And very anxious to try to find a job. I wasn't really in contact with the Rhodes scholars as I was in the earlier period when I was much more active in College and University activities. But at this point, I was really getting quite alarmed about what I was going to do. Because I had continued to live on scholarships. I got another one, you see, after the Beit ran out. This was what they called the Royal Society of Canada Scholarship—one of the American foundations gave the Royal Society funds for ten research fellowships per year for ten years. But I was very concerned because, in that last period on that scholarship, I was trying to save money, and keep all my expenses to a minimum. I had written to every Canadian university. The response was not, in 1935, very favourable. However, things perked up in February of 1936, when I had a letter from Mount Allison, offering me a job for one year, but saying that if I liked them and they liked me, it could be renewed. I accepted it immediately, and then went out to see if I couldn't find a Rhodes scholar from Mount A. to tell me what the place was like and where it was. I knew it was in Sackville, New Brunswick, but where on earth was that? Then, later, I had an offer from UBC. One of their people had obtained a Guggenheim and was going away for a year. It was a one-year appointment. UBC offered me $1,600 a year and Mount Allison had offered me $1,500. I saw no future in spending that extra $100 that I would get going all the way out to B.C. to be left stranded. But, if I did reasonably well, then I might get a re-appointment at Mount Allison so that is why I stayed there.

Question: There are two other things that I want to ask you about your work on Riel: first, the interpretation you started to work out in 1930–1936; and, second, concerning the biography [published in 1963], when did you decide to go back to Riel?

Stanley: Well, the fact is I wanted to, after I finished *The Birth of Western Canada*, I wanted to write a biography. The question was, just when? There was no question of my starting on it after I went to Mount Allison. I was too busy trying to work up courses. Well, I had made up my mind that I wouldn't let a year go by without writing something. That was really the one thing that I held to pretty well all my life. That is, each year, I would write something for publication, an article or a book review. I just didn't have the time to do anything more than keep it in the back of my mind. Then, you see, I'd become involved in the Sackville militia and—the whole world situation was moving in a direction that was not really conducive to my starting on a biography. However, it was always there. After I had settled down at R[oyal] M[ilitary] C[ollege][22] and written that book on *Canada's Soldiers*,[23] which I wrote simply because I was teaching Canadian military history and there weren't any books available. So I decided that I'd write one for the students to have. Well, after that, I started to think about the biography. By that time, Bill Morton was really the leading figure, I suppose, in writing western Canadian history. I wondered just how this would work out, if I started in on a biography of Riel. I didn't want to go stepping on Bill's toes, if he had it in mind. And so, just when this happened, I don't know, but I saw him one time, and I said, "I've heard rumours that you're going to write a biography of Louis Riel. If you are, then I won't. But if you aren't, I think I'd just like to give notice that I would

[22] Stanley began teaching at the Royal Military College in 1949, and he remained there for twenty years, becoming head of the History Department, and the first dean of arts.
[23] George F. G. Stanley, *Canada's Soldiers, 1604–1954: The Military History of An Unmilitary People* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1954).

like to." And Bill said to me, "I always thought you were going to write the biography of Riel." I said, "All right, that means you're not doing it." He said, "No," and I said, "in that case, I am." And that's how it was. I wanted to try my hand at a biography and I thought by this time that I had a little better knowledge of Riel, than I had when I was writing the other; that is, not so much knowledge, as perhaps understanding, the understanding of people. This is what I have always claimed that I got from the army. I have always felt that it was the best graduate school I attended. Because I had worked with people and found how people reacted, that nothing was ever quite as simple as it sometimes appears to young historians. That was how I got started on Riel. There were places I wanted … I knew there were other sources I wanted to consult.

Question: But then you travelled to the archives in Manitoba?

Stanley: Oh yes. I spent some time in Manitoba. I spent some time in Montana. I did quite a lot of wandering around New England at that time, to try to get information and then I went to ecclesiastical archives in Quebec and Montreal.

Question: J.K. Howard published his book in that period.

Stanley: Yes.

Question: It was published after his death … But you weren't satisfied that that answered many of the questions you wanted to raise?

Stanley: No, I didn't really think that was quite thorough enough. I think the trouble with Howard's book was the fact that he died before it was finished. I found that some of the references, I mean by that, in the bibliography, just didn't exist. And I don't think that he would have made the error. I think it was probably made by Bernard DeVoto, his editor.

Question: Why did you return to the subject of Riel and write a full-scale biography?

Stanley: I still had that little comment that A.S. Morton had made—to try to find out a little bit more about the white supporters of Riel in Saskatchewan. I was really interested in the Montana period and tried to trace his movements. The one thing, I suppose, that I really didn't fully appreciate—and yet I had looked at this stuff at an earlier period—was Riel's religious writings. I recall pasting together a lot of loose pieces of paper in the federal archives. It was like doing a jigsaw puzzle. There were a lot of things, various religious references. I never really paid much attention to them. And I don't think that I quite fully appreciated the full significance historically—or usefulness—of Riel's poetry. These were two things that, in working, I tended to neglect. So that, when Flanagan came along with his emphasis upon this business of his messianic writings,[24] I felt, well this is something that I didn't explore. And more strength to him. And the same thing with Glen Campbell[25] and his poetry. This is

[24] Thomas Flanagan was a professor of political science, University of Calgary. In the 1970s he published a number of works on Riel's religious writings. These included: Thomas Flanagan, "Louis "David" Riel: Prophet, priest-king, infallible pontiff," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 9, no. 3 (August 1974), 15-25. Thomas Flanagan, *Louis 'David' Riel: Prophet of the New World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979).

[25] Glen William Campbell was a professor of French, Italian and Spanish at the University of Calgary. He along with Thomas Flanagan, Raymond Huel, and Gilles Martel worked with George Stanley in editing the five-volume collected works of Louis Riel.

one of the things that has interested me in the Riel project [at the University of Alberta Press].[26]

I suppose that, like the people of my own generation, I was more influenced by political history. I always was interested in the question of people of different racial and cultural backgrounds. That, I suppose, had been part of my boyhood—this business of different ethnic groups or different cultural groups. This interested me about Indians, it interested me about Métis in New Brunswick, it has interested me, of course, with regard to the Acadians. Now these, and the political side, were really what I was writing about. And so I neglected the other sources.

Question: Bill Morton had written *Manitoba: A History*,[27] which came out in 1957. It went over the period of the 1840s-1860s. And in that period of course, he had written Introductions to the Begg diary[28] and the Colvile letters[29] too. Did that affect your interpretation at all?

Stanley: No, not really. I was delighted to be able to make use of the Begg diary because, as Bill pointed out in the introduction, when I wrote *The Birth of Western Canada*, all I was using was Begg's *Creation of Manitoba*,[30] which is a version of the diary. After all, Begg wrote that based on the diary, but I thought some of the details in the diary were very interesting. And you notice I made use of them when I wrote Riel.

Question: Did you think Bill had a different perspective upon culture clash than you had taken or were taking?

Stanley: At this point, I really don't know what to say, because I don't remember enough about it. I thought, when Bill Morton's *Manitoba* came out, this is a model for provincial histories. I had tried very hard to interest John Gray and also the University of Toronto Press in bringing out a series of provincial histories. When I was out at U.B.C., right at the end of the war, someone said "Well, now we should take up and republish in a series the best provincial histories, such as Howay's British Columbia." And I said, "It's a dreadful book. Why don't you start from scratch and commission a series of provincial histories?" And when Bill's book came out, I thought, "There's a model they could follow." I carried this on when Carleton came out with their idea of republishing books. I wrote and said, "Why don't you sponsor something like provincial histories." It was a damp fuse. It never went off. Nothing happened.

Question: You came back in 1936 and would have spent some of those next summers, I expect, at the P.A.C.[31] and I wondered who were your closest colleagues and friends in the national historical community. How did that national community function?

Stanley: That's an interesting question. I'd like to think about that. Because there was quite a sense of community in the old archives—in that reading room—and I've never experienced it since. And working in the archives now is not like it was at that time. We were all struggling along and working on the

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[26] George F. G. Stanley et al., *The Collected Writings of Louis Riel/Les écrits complets de Louis Riel,* 5 vols. (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1985).
[27] W.L. Morton, *Manitoba: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957).
[28] W.L. Morton, ed., *Alexander Begg's Red River Journal and other Papers Relative to the Red River Resistance of 1869–1870* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1956).
[29] E.E. Rich, ed., with an Introduction by W.L. Morton, *London Correspondence Inward from Eden Colvile 1849–1852* (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1956).
[30] Alexander Begg, *The Creation of Manitoba or, A History of the Red River Troubles* (Toronto: A.H. Hovey, 1871).
[31] This was the Public Archives of Canada, now going by the name of Library and Archives of Canada (LAC).

same thing, that is, in preparing theses. I look back at that period as one of the very happy periods. I enjoyed every instant of it. Even if it involved driving myself, and working long hours. But we used to stay there and work at nights, at that terrible place in the summer, because it was so hot and smelly. I have only happy recollections of it. I can tell one or two stories about people. Well, most of us were not very well off. Oh, I'll tell this story about Conrad Wright. We got into, at one point, a rather bad habit, about six or seven of us, going off to a meal together, at lunch. One would bear the cost. We generally came out to the cafeteria at the Château Laurier. But we were all kind of deceiving ourselves. It would be awfully nice to go the next six days and not have to pay. Even if you did make a lump payment for all seven at one time when it was your turn. Well, on one occasion, Conrad, (who wrote a book on the Hudson Bay Railway, I think it was, or the opening of the Hudson Bay route) said he had found a new place and he was going to give us all a little surprise. He said, "It's not an expensive meal, but it's a very good one. So we wondered where he was taking us. He took us up to Zellers and they had a 25-cent special, chicken à la king. Poor Conrad, Conrad had nothing. No money at all. Conrad told me in confidence one day—I'd be murdered for this now—"My wife gives me just enough to cover my meals and my transportation by streetcar. You know, if I buy anything else, then I just don't have that much. I hadn't really saved up enough to do anything more than that 25-cent meal."

Question: Did you feel a sense of kinship to or links with Creighton or the Thomases?[32]

Stanley: Well, in those days, the Thomases were not around. It was really only the group working on a Ph.D., particularly the first summer I was there.

Question: After the war, did a similar community develop?

Stanley: Yes. When I came back, I felt out—you see, I had been out for seven years, and—well, since confession is good for the soul, I felt rather resentful. I had been out for seven years and I felt, "I'm behind now. I'm way behind. I don't know what's been written, I'm trying to catch up." Seven years—it's quite a long period in one's career at the outset. I felt that my academic career was just starting, all over again. I went out to UBC after I had retired from the army. While I had been doing a lot of history in the historical section, military history—that really wasn't history for publication. And besides, it was rather remote from the interests I had had earlier. I had to start in again and get my course work put together.

I had intended to start on something I have never done. I wanted to write a volume on Canadian Indian policy. Well, I went to UBC in the middle of the year, to begin with. It was a bad start. I was discharged in January 1947. And I was at UBC that spring. Then I applied for a Guggenheim and had it in 1948–1949. In that period, I worked in the archives, here in Ottawa, and I worked in the library at Yale, looking at Indian policy in early New England. This was going to be a volume starting with the Ancien Régime and carrying right up to the present time. My notes went up to about as far as Bond Head, about 1837. I intended to go ahead with that. Well, then in 1949, I went to the Royal Military College and that started me off on this blessed writing of military history. I kept writing little bits and pieces of the history of Indians, Indians in the War of 1812, Mohawks and the Six Nations in the Revolution, and the Six Nations in the War of 1812. Always this interest was still there. But I've never seen my way clear. Then, of course, I went back to Riel again. That was a prior interest and I never did get the book on Indian policy done that I had wanted to do. And now I never will. And I regret this, because I felt that was an opportunity, a real opening here for something dealing

[32] Donald Creighton, L.G. Thomas, and L.H. Thomas. See later interviews of L.G. Thomas and L.H. Thomas.

with the changing Indian policy. This is one of the reasons why I still write little bits and pieces about Indians, such as that paper I did on the Sioux in the West.

The interest is always there because, as I told you, I have this very strong interest in Indians. This goes back to my father's earlier contacts with Indians in southern Alberta. He was able to talk with them and do a little bit of Indian languages; this always fascinated me. I think I may have told you before, his taking me to Brocket, the Piegan reserve, just before they moved the graves. The government had decided that Indians could no longer be buried up on sticks or on platforms. This was unsanitary, oh, I don't know why. They would have to be interred in the ground. So my father took me, and said, "I'm going to take you and show you something you'll never see again. We're going down to the Piegan reserve, and you'll see how the Indians bury their dead—or put them on platforms to keep coyotes and so forth away." So I saw this. Of course, this is quite fascinating to a youngster, this type of thing. So the Indian interest was there but it never came out in the kind of thing that I would like to have done.

Question: How do you see your role as historian in Canada? What is your function?

Stanley: Well, when I started in teaching it was to teach Canadian history to people who didn't know any. One of the things that I was asked to do when I went to Mount Allison was to teach Canadian history because they never had anybody who had ever taught it. But when I look back and think that, well, I made Canadian history my particular life interest, I only had one university course, and that was the one that I took from A.L. Burt. The result is that I'm not always convinced that the number of undergraduate courses a person may take will determine what he's going to do—or be that important in his life afterwards.

Question: Did you have other purposes?

Stanley: I was always a nationalist, right from very early times. This was emphasized by A.L. Burt when he used to talk about autonomy. This was the period, you see, when I was just starting university, at the time of the Imperial Conference of 1926, and the statement that was issued at that time by Balfour, about the Dominions being equal in all respects … And there's no doubt that my stay in England emphasized my sense of Canadian identity. I didn't have any relatives in England or in Great Britain. The ties had been broken there too long before, I think I told you. The only sense of mission I ever had was really that of trying to teach Canadians Canadian history. But if you're talking about the sense of mission, if that's what you really have in mind, I suppose the other one was always to try to teach westerners, particularly those coming into the West at a later period, something about the Indians or the original peoples, for whom I felt a certain sympathy and—I can't say kinship—but it was really a strong sense of sympathy. Those are the only two things, if one had to say I had any sense of mission.

Interview with Irene Mary Spry[1]

Ottawa, October 16, 1981



Irene Spry in 1962 – LAC PA-136748
(1907–1998)

I remember vividly my two conversations with Irene Spry. They took place in her home in Rockwood, a fashionable older neighbourhood in Ottawa. I found her stories fascinating, full of detail and superbly told. The chat continued over dinner and included her husband, Graham. Both Sprys loved political discussions and I can still recall her denunciation, disappointed as well as emphatic, of the economic policies being pursued by the then-governor of the Bank of Canada.

[1] Edited parts of this interview appear in, Gerald Friesen, "Irene M. Spry: A Biographical Note," in Duncan Cameron, ed., *Explorations in Canadian Economic History: Essays in Honour of Irene M. Spry* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1985), 319-26.

Question: Let's start with your childhood.

Spry: It was very confused. I was born in South Africa where my father was in the education business.[2] He went out with Lord Milner after the Boer War and, for a time, ran a teachers' training college. Then he became inspector of schools in the Transvaal. All three of us, my brother and sister and me, were born in a little place called Standerton, about 100 miles from Pretoria.

We left when I was two—two and half perhaps—and we then went to what is now Bangladesh, then part of India, where my father was in the education service in Bengal. We lived there for three years and then my mother took us back to England and left us with relatives while she went back to India—the awful problem of Imperial families. The war had broken out, the First World War, and she couldn't get back, so my unfortunate aunt was stuck with the three of us and two cousins. She was not a gifted child-raiser. So, all through the war, we were in a little town called Boscombe, near Bournemouth in Hampshire, and that was not a very happy part of my childhood. The poor lady had far more on her hands than she could cope with and gave us a pretty bad time.

Question: Where did you go after the war?

Spry: My mother finally got back and we stayed with her in Boscombe until about 1923 when my father returned from the Indian service where, incidentally, he had served during the war as well as doing his work in the education department and also sitting on LEGCO (Legislative Council). He had served as a major in a Gurkha regiment[3] which was a stirring assignment because the Gurkhas used to forget that their army manoeuvres were just a game. They would whip out their kukris and my poor father would have to spring in front of them and remind them that it was just make-believe. He came back to England and we spent some time in the West Country—in Devonshire, but particularly in Somerset. His family came from Somerset originally. Then he was appointed to the education department in Kenya where they wanted someone with both African and Indian experience. By this time, we had got to the university level and stayed in England when he and my mother went out to Kenya.

I had a year at the London School of Economics where I was lucky enough to be a student of Eileen Power,[4] the great mediaeval historian, who was the most beautiful and wonderful person you could possibly imagine. She was my tutor. I used to see her every week. I used to write essays for her and I think the greatest thing she contributed to my mental development was to say, "I will not read a single essay in which you use jargon. You have got to write so that any intelligent person could understand what you have to say." She was absolutely marvelous. Another wonderful person at the London School was Lillian Knowles,[5] the great economic historian, who is terribly neglected. What she wrote still has so much to contribute. She was one of the wittiest and funniest lecturers but her

[2] Irene Mary Spry (née Biss), was the daughter of Evan Ebenezer Biss, Inspector of Schools in the Colonial and Indian Service, and Amelia Bagshaw Johnstone. She was born on 28 August 1907, in Transvaal, South Africa.

[3] The Gurkha regiments are elite military units composed of Nepalese soldiers. They were formed in 1815 by the British East India Company which was impressed by the fierce combat skills of the Nepalese soldiers. In 1947, after the partition of India and Indian independence, Gurkha regiments were divided between the British and Indian armies.

[4] Eileen Power (1889–1940) was a British economic historian and medievalist. She was director of studies in history at Girton College, University of Cambridge (1913–1921), lecturer in political science at the London School of Economics (1921–1924), and reader of the University of London (1924–1931). In 1931, she was appointed to the chair of economic history at the London School of Economics, only the second woman to hold this position.

[5] Lilian Knowles (1870–1926) was a British historian and professor of economic history at the London School of Economics. From1920 to 1924, she served as Dean of the Faculty of Economics at the University of London. She published on the industrial and commercial relations of Great Britain in the nineteenth century, and the economic development of the British overseas empire.

books were terribly dry and I think that's perhaps why she has been neglected.

Question: Where did you go from LSE?

Spry: Cambridge.

Question: Did you finish your B.A. there?

Spry: I did three years at Cambridge, taking the Economics Tripos, Parts 1 and 2, and it was a very exciting three years. Keynes[6] was developing his ideas at this point and there were a lot of other extremely interesting people around—Dennis Robertson,[7] A.C. Pigou,[8] Gerald Shove.[9] I was lucky enough to have to go right back to one of the early giants of economics, Alfred Marshall.[10] Alfred Marshall's widow was the librarian at the Marshall Library. She was an enchanting old lady. She must have been well on in her eighties. She used to pedal perilously around Cambridge on a tricycle to everybody's terror. If you went to consult her about material for an essay, she'd produce various recent books and then, with a charming shy smile, she would say, "And of course my late husband had a good deal to say on this subject," producing one of her late husband's books.

Question: How would you describe that first eighteen years of your life?

Spry: The first part of it was extremely interesting and mind-stretching, thanks to my parents. One of the earliest table conversations that I remember was my father saying, "Now, when you say 'me,' what do you mean? Supposing you lost a leg, would you still be you? Supposing you lost an arm, would you still be you? Supposing you lost your eyes, would you still be you?" And so on. The problem being, what was it in fact that you meant when you were talking about you." This was quite characteristic of his wide ranging and rather penetrating interests. I should perhaps say my father, [Evan E. Biss], was brought up—and so was my mother—as Plymouth Brethren. I don't know if you know about the Plymouth Brethren, but they're a most rigid dissenting sect. My father was thrown out of the meeting because he asked awkward questions such as, "why is it not worldly to keep your money in a bank but worldly to be a member of the teachers' association?" They didn't care for this and so they got rid of him. My mother went out with him. My grandmother Biss, my father's mother, who was a very stern old lady, held one view of what the scriptures said about many things and my mother's mother, who was a Scot, held another view. They were both good PBs—Plymouth Brethren—but they didn't agree about very much. The Bible can always be made to say whatever you want it to say.

I think that while we were with our parents we had about as good a childhood as we could possibly have had. When my mother was in England, she insisted that we should stay on farms and

[6] John Maynard Keynes (1883–1946) was an English economist whose writings are considered the basis for the school of thought known as Keynesian economics. He is considered one of the most influential economists of the twentieth century.
[7] Dennis Robertson (1890–1963) was an English economist who taught at Cambridge and London Universities. Robertson worked closely with John Maynard Keynes in the 1920s and 1930s, during the years when Keynes was developing many of the ideas that later were incorporated in his *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*.
[8] Arthur Cecil Pigou (1877–1959) was an English economist. He trained and influenced many Cambridge economists who went on to become influential around the world. He worked in various fields of economics, particularly welfare economics, business-cycle theory, unemployment, and public finance.
[9] Gerald Frank Shove (1887–1947) was a British economist. He was involved in the economics debates in Cambridge in the 1920s and 1930s, and his academic career was spent at King's College, Cambridge. His areas of expertise included diminishing returns, imperfect competition, and how to deal with complexity in economics.
[10] Alfred Marshall (1842–1924) was one of the most influential English economists of his time. He is known as the father of scientific economics, having unified the ideas of supply and demand, marginal utility, and costs of production.

get to know something about country life and run free in the country. One of my earliest memories of her was saying to my brother, who must have been three I suppose, when he was climbing up a conifer of some sort, which looked enormously tall: "Go on, Evan. Go right to the top." And he did. She taught us. We didn't go to school until she went back to India at the beginning of the First World War, by which time I was seven. She was an absolutely brilliant teacher. Nothing was ever taken for granted. Nothing was ever learned by heart. We learned the tables by putting beans, seven beans three times over, and then counting them so you knew it was real. It wasn't just some sort of mental abracadabra. Everything we studied, we illustrated; everything was real. We had little paper dioramas of each historical episode she told us about or that we read about. When we were talking about the development of handicrafts, she made us a little loom—and we actually did some weaving, so that everything had a concrete reality which supported the mental inquiry and learning that went with it. I never remember learning to read. You just always could read. Again, my brother, at the age of three, before we went back to England, actually, who had some kind of tropical disease—I can remember him sitting up in bed reading all the "begats" in the Bible and just laughing his head off: "So and so begat so and so"—rolling out the wonderful names.

It was a very good childhood. We had a lot of fun. But when we were left with the aunt that all stopped. She was a martinet and it was a miracle we kept our reason, I think. I was taken from school when I was fifteen. I think my father thought I wasn't getting on as well as I should. I had a very lonely mid-teenage life because we moved from one place to another. We never had a settled home with a group of friends. I had lost my school friends and it wasn't until I got to the LSE [London School of Economics] that I began making friends again.

I can never ever remember being bored except just once. There was always something to do, usually enormous numbers of things that one wanted to do. But once I do remember: I had just finished writing a story, a wild romance about the French Revolution, I think, and no inspiration had appeared for another story. There was nobody around to play a game and for about ten minutes I remember the absolute horror of having nothing to do and nothing to interest one. That is the only time in my life that I ever remember going through this experience.

I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to my mother for the foundations she laid. I then went to a little private school where the education was dismal except for the mademoiselle who taught us French. She was very, very good but everybody else was just unspeakably bad. After the good education I was used to from my mother, I found it quite intolerable. Luckily that only lasted a year, perhaps two years, and then I went to the Bournemouth High School for Girls. The headmistress then was Mary Broad, who was a really outstanding educationalist, tolerant, wise, intelligent. She recruited an admirable staff. I owe another enormous debt of gratitude to my English teacher, Dorothy Rowe, who would insist that, if you really understood a word, you could explain what it means. If you don't understand it, go away and find out what it means. I can still hear her voice saying to me, when I am worrying about punctuation, "If you have one comma, you must have two." Things like that. I am also particularly indebted to my science teacher who got me enormously interested in botany and who laid some foundations, rather skimpy I'm afraid, because I didn't ever pursue them, in the physical sciences, chemistry and physics.

Question: How would you compare that with the education a child would have received in Western Canada when your children were growing up?

Spry: Well, my children were never at school in Western Canada so that's a difficult question. How would I compare it with the education our oldest child had here in Ottawa during the war years when he went to Creighton Street School? I thought he got an admirable education based on very much the same principles my mother followed of actual concrete material as a starting point. For example, they

had a big sand table in the classroom and one day all of the children would be asked, "how does your father earn his living and why does he earn his living that way," in the pulp mill or whatever it might be. And working back from this to the economics and geography of the area and then widening that into general ideas about geography and economic development. There were no abstract generalizations. I thought it was a first-class education….

Shall I tell you about the Empire-Commonwealth connection? My mother's father was in the palm oil trade in West Africa where he died in 1884. He was a great friend of King Jaja, one of the African rulers in that area, who, in fact, gave Grandpa some corals and other very interesting things, some beautiful ivories, which my sister now has. My mother's grandfather worked in Fort Hare in South Africa in charge of printing at the Mission School which later became a college. When Grandpa Johnstone died, Grannie Johnstone took her children out to South Africa to be with her father at the mission in Fort Hare. In the meantime, my father had met my mother—a great romance—he was fourteen and she was nine—and they never wavered from that point. When he was at the University of Glasgow, Grannie and the family lived just outside Glasgow. I think that they must have met before that. Anyway, in the meantime, my father had gone to South Africa and the marriage took place there. The later connection: my sister went to Kenya as a teacher when she graduated and met and married a young man who was in the military in Kenya who then moved to Nigeria where he went into the police. She spent most of her life in Nigeria and has world-wide connections as well as the African connections.

Question: How did these Imperial associations affect your life and work?

Spry: It is very difficult to say. I think they've perhaps given me some facility in making friends with and perhaps a little bit of understanding of people in what are now called developing countries. I have spent a large part of my life working with the international Women's Institutes, the Associated Country Women of the World (A.C.W.W.), and that work has taken me into contact with people from all sorts of countries. In fact, I have been around the world twice on A.C.W.W. business. When we were in London, Graham always used to say, "they have 27 million members and they all come to lunch"—a slight exaggeration on both counts!

Question: Are you a British Imperialist?

Spry: No, I am a British Commonwealth-ist, if you like. I think the Commonwealth is one of the most important forces for good in the world at present. One of the reasons I thought A.C.W.W.—and still think A.C.W.W.—is such a terrific organization is that it is in some ways like the Commonwealth. Nobody tries to tell anybody else what to do. They discuss things together and arrive at agreed solutions.

Question: Let's return to your Imperial childhood.

Spry: A friend of mine at Cambridge said rather acidly, "you remember nothing of any social significance." Actually, I do remember a few things of social significance, such as the beggars. I'll never forget our bearer, who was the sort of head servant in the house, being married while we were there. We all went to the wedding and the bride was a child, not much older than I was. She couldn't have been more than seven, all dressed up like a Christmas tree, and looking absolutely terrified. I will never forget that. And the enormous pressure of people: One *felt* the population pressure, even knowing nothing about it at that early age: I will never, never forget that experience deep in the bazaar—it was in Dacca, not even Calcutta—Calcutta is that much worse.

I have very beautiful memories of the Hooghly,[11] which is the mouth of the Ganges. I used to adore going on river steamers and seeing the phosphorescent light at the prow of the ship as it broke through the river going up stream. The Himalayas will always be one of my most beautiful memories. Every evening, in the hot weather, the rainy weather, when the monsoon was playing havoc with the climate of Dacca, we used to go up to a little place called Darjeeling in the Himalayas. We couldn't see Mt. Everest but we could see Ghoom,[12] near Kanchenjunga, and every evening, before I went to bed, I used to go out and look at it. Here was this magnificently beautiful mountain, apparently floating in the sky and being turned to all the colours of the rainbow as the sun set, shining on it. This I will never forget. I'll never forget either the Bhutanese whom we used to meet in the hills, splendid hill people. I don't remember very much about personal contacts with people in Dacca—a little—I remember, for example, one day we were playing in the garden and suddenly the Mali, the gardener, reached out a hand and picked my sister off the ground. She had been just going to step on a particularly venomous little snake, called a krait, and the gardener had very cleverly seen it and snatched her out of danger.

We didn't see very much of Indians except the servants. And there are some interesting stories about that. My mother, on one occasion, spoke to the bearer about the coffee, which wasn't up to scratch. Did he strain it? "Oh yes, Memsahib, I always strain it." What do you strain it with? "Oh, one of the Sahib's socks." My mother expressed consternation, so he calmed her fears: "It is alright, Memsahib, I use the dirty socks."

The wildlife was often indoors. We had to sleep, of course, under mosquito nets and really, as soon as the sun went down, we children were clapped under the mosquito netting but, up and down the walls, little lizards that were called tik-tikis used to run all the time. If you touched them, their tails would come off, and they would lie on the ground wriggling and jerking around which was always frightening, but very interesting. There were things we used to call shutty-uppy flowers which were in fact sensitive plants and if you touched them the cases shut up. There were leeches which would stick to one and have to be removed by salt being put on them. It was a mixture of beauty, fascination and a great many terrifying things—incredible thunder storms, and I remember one earthquake when we were all rushed out of the house suddenly. It was the beginning of the rainy weather and the beds of flowers, in which poinsettias were growing, were filled with water and the water washed back and forth in tremendous waves as the ground shook—things like that. I remember one tremendous wind storm. Anne, my sister, and I were told by the governess to run home. We ran ahead while she came on with my brother in the push cart. Suddenly we saw something rolling along, blowing in the wind, the same colour as our governess's dress. It was somebody's sari which had come loose and was swept away, but I was sure it was the governess blowing over in the wind.

We used to play in the afternoons. We used to go down to what was called the *maidan*, which was a big open space around the race course and polo ground, and I can remember getting into terrible trouble. Jugglers, magicians and snake charmers used to come while people were at the *maidan*, and put on performances. My sister and I, little brats that we were, went round the back of the wretched magician on one occasion. He was doing the rope trick and we started calling out in loud children's voices, "Oh, but he has got …" I forget what it was—but explaining the trick—and then "Shh, missy sahib, don't say." I can also remember being taken to a circus which was absolutely incredible. A little girl who would have outdone Nadia Comaneci in gymnastics, made the most extraordinary contortions with a lighted candle in a jar of water on her head, without causing it to collapse or the flame to be extinguished. Also, the local—I don't know what he was, prince or rajah or something—used to give an enormous children's party every New Year's. At one of these parties, —my mother had always got into difficulties with monkeys—a monkey attacked her. That was the first thing. Then

[11] The Hooghly River, in the West Bengal, is the westernmost distributary (flowing away) of the Ganges.
[12] Ghoom is a scenic hill town in West Bengal, India, sitting at an elevation of 7,407 feet (2,258 meters).

we went for a ride on an elephant which ran away. That was the second thing. Then we went on a Ferris wheel which stuck when we were at the top. It was a most eventful afternoon.

Question: Were you conscious as a child of divisions of social class?

Spry: I was never conscious of being a member of a social class. But, in fact, my maiden aunts, (none of my father's sisters ever married, with the exception of the youngest one who had a scientific training and was a teacher), were all very lady-like; for example, my oldest aunt, who wasn't a dowager, but looked like one, during World War II, was walking along a quiet street in Boscombe, bordered with hawthorn, laburnum and monkey puzzle trees, when a German aeroplane came along machine-gunning people in the streets. My aunt gave him a very cold look and walked on. She did not feel this was a very gentlemanly way of fighting. Luckily for her, a soldier, who had taken shelter nearby, grabbed her and forcibly dragged her into a shelter, otherwise that would have been the end of my Auntie Nora. I can remember her saying in very top-lofty tones, "But *they* are in trade"—which made me laugh afterwards, because one of her aunts ran a shop in Weston-super-Mare[13] and was most certainly in trade. This didn't mean anything in my life at all. It never occurred to me there were different classes. Certainly, there were people who were poor and people who were rich. We weren't either rich or poor. It wasn't a question of class. It was just a question of what your income was, whether there was enough money to do all the things you wanted to do, which there never seemed to be. Though Pa must have had a reasonably good income in the foreign service, certainly we never seemed to have enough to do the things our friends were able to do.

Question: Were you conscious of being a different race?

Spry: Yes, I think so. I think my father, to the end of his life, felt that if you had a white skin and blue eyes, you were in some way superior to the people who didn't. I don't think he had any logical basis for this feeling at all. All the same, he certainly had a great many friends among his Indian and African colleagues—very close friends. Miss Cornelia Sorabji for instance, often came to meals at our house. We liked her very much. He was consulted, for example, by Jomo Kenyatta, before the beginning of Mau aero plane. I was not, in any personal contacts that I remember, ever instructed to look down on anybody in any way but there did remain in my mind a slight feeling that there were lesser breeds without the law.

Question: How about differences of sex?

Spry: Before we get on to that may I add something? I should say that my father's father, grandfather and great-grandfather had all been born in India and both he and all but two of his sisters were born in India. His mother had been a child in the Indian mutiny and so had his father. His father, at the age of twelve, had been stationed with a pile of bricks beside him to bash the hands of any mutineers who might try to climb on to the roof where great-grannie and her family had taken refuge, great-grannie saying, when all the other whites in the town had run away, "trust not in chariots and horses, put your trust in the Lord," or words to that effect. She then departed to the roof with her children. The mutineers went straight through the town pursuing the people who had run away and great-grannie and her children survived.

Question: I asked about gender. Was this important in your upbringing?

[13] Weston-super-Mare is a seaside town in the county of Somerset, England.

Spry: Not at all. Nobody ever thought about it. No, that's not quite true. My sister and I darned the boys' socks but the boys were supposed to do chores like cleaning the rabbit hutches in return. It was supposed to be specialization by sex but each did their own proper chores. On the other hand, when we were with my mother in Yorkshire one summer, in a charming little cottage up on the moors, everybody, boy or girl, had to take a week catering and doing all the cooking and washing up and certainly there was a strong feeling that everybody had to do their share. The boys helped wash up, my father helped wash up, and it was made a game. Basically, there was no distinction that was of the least importance; although I went to a girls' school and my brother went to a boys' school, it didn't make that much difference.

Question: Did you enjoy reading and what did you read?

Spry: Oh, yes. I read everything I could get my hands on. I can remember being absolutely astounded at Dorothy Rowe, aforesaid, when she had asked, at the beginning of one term, "What had we read in the holidays?" and then added: "How did you find a certain author? Did you get more books by him?" The idea that you could deliberately go out and get books seemed to me absolutely blindingly interesting. We three had just read what was available. The idea of going out yourself and looking for books by some particular writer and not just reading what you were handed was most surprising to me. We used to read Henty[14] in enormous quantities, Ballantyne[15]—everything he ever wrote, I think, we read. I remember one hideous book which was called *Beyond the Dragon Temple*.[16] We had a custom of reading aloud after supper. The girls would sew and I can't tell you what the boys did but somebody would read aloud. This was a ghastly book in which people were captured and held to ransom in a terrible oriental temple. It used to give me nightmares. I remember once when Pa was home, he read Rider Haggard's books to us. Gagool the Old[17]—I still have nightmares about the big stone door coming down and squashing her. Horrible. Things like Robert Louis Stevenson—*Treasure Island* used to terrify me out of my mind. Mum used to read aloud to us a great deal: the *Just So Stories*, the *Mowgli Stories* (*Jungle Books*), *Puck of Pook's Hill*, *Rewards and Fairies*—most of Kipling's writings—of course, we were very much in the setting for them. *Kim* I never appreciated—but I did when I came back to read him as an adult. We just read everything, omnivorous readers.

Question: Sports?

Spry: I was on the netball team at school. We weren't allowed to play hockey because my father thought it was bad for the female frame. That was another case where being female made a difference. At Cambridge, I was on the women's colleges' team—in fact I was captain, which I had forgotten until a teammate produced a photograph! I also played lacrosse at Cambridge. We played tennis whenever we had a chance. We learned to swim very young and were greatly encouraged to swim as much as we could. Oh yes, I was on the swimming team for my sins and for their sins when I was at the LSE. I'll never forget a meet we had. I was so slow that I was still going down the last lap while everybody else had come out of the water. It was horrible

[14] George Alfred Henty (1832–1902) was an English novelist of adventure and historical fiction.
[15] Robert Michael Ballantyne (1825–1894) was a Scottish author of juvenile fiction. He worked for the HBC as a clerk from 1841–1846.
[16] The adventure novel *Beyond the Dragon Temple* was written by Robert Hudson.
[17] Gagool is ancient, monkey-like sorceress and prophetess in H. Rider Haggard's 1885 adventure novel *King Solomon's Mines*.

Question: Boys?

Spry: No boys in my life at all until—we knew a few boys, my brother's friends who were all younger than we were—until I got to Cambridge, really.

Question: Is there anything else about your early years?

Spry: Another of the great debts of gratitude I owe to my mother is a permanent interest in and love of nature. Birds: she was a great bird watcher; I suppose we knew more about birds than most of our contemporaries as a result of her enthusiasm for them. I used to collect snails. One of the most triumphant moments of my life was when, climbing a yew tree in Wells in Somerset, I found a Laminated close shell which I could draw for you to this day. It was a great addition to my collection, very rare. Butterflies, insects—my mother's sister was a great bee-keeper and we knew all about bees and how honey was made.

My mother was also an impassioned gardener. Her garden in Kenya was superb. She grew everything from tropical fruits like bananas and oranges to temperate fruits like strawberries and raspberries. She used to experiment to see what she could make the garden grow. One of her problems was that, no matter how high her fence was, the zebras *would* jump over it and eat her rosebuds. Another problem was water, so she arranged for all bath and sink water to drain into the garden beds.

While we're on my mother and her love of natural history: one of the favourite entertainments for guests after dinner parties was to go driving in the game reserve and seeing how many lions or whatever you could see, and Mum used to get so excited that, if she was driving, she would do something wrong and stall the car, and hang out of the window saying, "Oh look at that lion coming towards us." Everyone else would say, "Start the car!" So in the end, she wasn't allowed to drive….

Question: As a child, did you attend adult events?

Spry: While we were in India, yes. But not at dinner. The waiting and so on was done by the servants. At lunch, yes: I can remember for example, Cornelia Sorabji coming to meals—this goes back to what you asked about feelings about other races (the Sorabjis were very dear friends of ours. I still have a book that Cornelia gave me long, long ago); when they came to lunch, we were certainly included because we always had lunch with our parents. We weren't put off in a nursery the way some of our contemporaries were. In fact, my mother really devoted all the time she could to us, as she didn't like formal entertainment, she didn't like formal parties, but it was part of her job and she had to do it.

Question: Did you ever attend dinner?

Spry: We never appeared at dinner, to the best of my knowledge. Occasionally we came in at sundowners and said "How do you do?" I can remember going round after the sundowner guests had left, drinking what was left in the bottom of the glasses. Usually strong Scotch, which I've hated ever since.

Certainly, the years we spent with my aunt in Boscombe were pretty miserable. Apart from anything else, there was this tremendously rigid so-called "religious" burden on us. I can remember in thunderstorms, just lying, shaking with terror, because I could never convince myself that I had been "saved," and I had always thought thunderstorms were the beginning of the second coming, and I was going to spend the rest of my life in hell. On Sundays we used always to go for lunch to my grandmother's house. She was blind, she was almost bedridden, she was very stately—a very dear and

extremely upright old lady—but we always had to read to her in turns for about two hours in the afternoon. Then we would be allowed as a great treat to go into the drawing room which nobody ever used, but which my aunts dusted twice a day and which was full of the most wonderful Indian memorabilia that both sides of the family had brought back. Exquisite ivory carvings, palanquins with sliding doors and individual figures, a whole collection of models of people of different sorts of tribes and occupations, little models, a wonderful collection. Heaven knows what happened to it when "Sharuhen," the house, was sold. That was the house that my grandfather had built for his family when he came back from India. I think everything was sold with it, probably to the local junkman. That's another interesting thing. "Sharuhen" was built in the middle of great pine woods when grandpa and grannie settled there. When the youngest child was born (the aunt I was named after), grandpa had to row from Boscombe to Christchurch to register her birth. There was no road. It's now one continuous suburban strip all the way. When I was a child, I can remember going on a picnic to Hengistbury Head where Hengist and Horsa had landed, coming up the Avon and Stour Rivers behind it. I was alone, I don't know why, I had a bicycle and I couldn't get the bicycle up the hill and I think I got left behind. And I'm quite sure I met Hengist and Horsa. There was something that caused me great fear, but also great excitement. This happened to me once again in Yorkshire, where again I think it was some lingering earlier presence.

Question: Did Canada figure in your world in those days?

Spry: When I was a child in England, indeed when I was at the university, I really knew nothing whatever about Canada. All I knew about it, I had gleaned from the works of Ballantyne (one of my great favourites was the *The Dog Crusoe*) and from the works of Ernest Seton Thompson, (*The Two Little Savages* and his various animal stories), and also the works of C.G.D. Roberts, which were on our shelves, again thanks to my mother's interest in nature and every sort of natural history story. A reflection on this: later on, I gave her *The Dog That Wouldn't Be* and she read it with such amusement that she was helpless with hysterics and could not get out of the train when she arrived at her destination.

Question: Let's turn to your university years.

Spry: When I went to the LSE, I was extremely young and extremely naive. I lived at the college where my sister was, which is now Queen Elizabeth College (it was then Queen's, Camden Hill). It was a Home Economics college and I went every day to the LSE on the Underground. As a result, I didn't make an enormous number of very close friends but I did make some enduring friends, notably Barbara Slatter as she then was, Barbara Jones as she now is, whose husband became a professional university president in the United States—Bennington College, Rutgers, a variety of other places. She was a very brilliant economist and still is one of my dearest and closest friends. The stimulus that I got from my year in the London School of Economics, apart from Eileen Power and Lillian Knowles, was, I think, the library, a most marvelous library in which students had access to the stacks. It was a sudden widening of horizons for me to find out what one could discover in books—that was of enormous interest to me. Books of every degree of intellectual sophistication and covering a range of subjects and interests such as I had never before encountered, in spite of what I think was an extremely good education at the school which I had attended.

At the LSE in the first year, we had to do some geography, we had to do either mathematics or logic—unfortunately for me, I took logic. I wish I had taken mathematics, because I've always been lacking in mathematical understanding and capability. We also had to take constitutional law, plowing through Dicey's great work, Walter Bagehot, and other authors—Mill for example; we also were

supposed to learn German. I didn't learn much although I went to classes. We had a very frightening professor who simply scared any capability for learning out of us unfortunately. What little German I learned I learned later, after I finished at Cambridge. I spent a summer in Germany which gave me some fundamental knowledge of the language though never any fluency at all.

One of the things I owe to the London School of Economics came from Hugh Dalton who taught the first-year theory course. He began by telling us a story about the expeditionary force to South Africa during the Boer War. He said that, of the teetotalers in the expeditionary force, 50% fell ill and died on the voyage over, and the remaining 50% died on arrival in South Africa, which proved that it was dangerous to be a teetotaler. On investigation, it turned out that there were two teetotalers in the Army. This taught me a very salutary caution in the handling of percentage figures. Ever since I have tried to insist—with my unfortunate graduate students, for example—that they should always give the absolute figures as well as the percentages.

I think one reason that I was sent to the London School of Economics was that my father had become enormously interested in the Labour Party in Britain. As a young man, he had been at the University of Glasgow. He'd worked his way through, very painfully, living entirely on sausages and mashed potatoes—why he didn't die of scurvy, I don't know—but his beloved brother fell ill and was dying when he should have taken his examinations. They wouldn't give him an aegrotat[18] so he left anyway to see his brother again and didn't get his degree. But when he retired from service in India, he went back to Glasgow as a very mature student and took his degree—with, I may say, a gold medal in geography. We children had done a great deal of work for his thesis, cycling about the West Country, collecting data. While he was in Glasgow, he used to spend his Sundays in the Gorbals and other Glasgow slums, listening to Communist speakers, heckling them, talking to them, becoming their friend, and becoming interested in the whole left-wing movement. When he came back to the little town, (a very respectable little town in Devonshire where we were living—my brother was at school at Blundell's—the town was Tiverton, which figures in *Lorna Doone*) he came out at the time of an election with a large red rosette in his button hole. He was, I think, the only Labour supporter in the entire town—where I had been living for the best part of a year, where I had been frantically trying to establish some sort of relationship with the local community who were all either Liberal—the MP was a Liberal, one of the Acklands family, who ran a lace factory in the town, a very longstanding business enterprise—or extremely Conservative. The people connected with the Blundells's school were on the whole, as I remember, very conservative indeed. I can't tell you what my humiliation and shame was, as a sixteen-year-old, when my father flaunted about the streets this disreputable insignia of interest in the Labour party….

Question: Why were you there at seventeen?

Spry: Well, I had been taken out of school at fifteen because my father, I think, thought I wasn't getting out of the school what I should. I had done year's study of economics by correspondence course which was dreary beyond description—a totally wasted year for me except that I went to the local art school and did a certain amount of handicraft and design work and took dancing classes which were quite fun—but, as far as the economics was concerned, the only thing I got out of it was some sort of concept of marginal cost and marginal return and the whole marginal analysis which stood me in good stead afterwards. After that year my parents went to Kenya and I was sent to the London School of Economics. I got a great deal of stimulus, certainly from the lectures, but very, very little from the student life except through friends like Barbara Slatter. The pubs? I don't remember

[18] An aegrotat is an unclassified university degree granted to a student who cannot complete final exams or coursework due to severe illness or injury.

that there were any pubs. Perhaps there were. I used occasionally to go to student meetings. Barbara was active in the student government and there were some other outstanding people like Ivor MacAdam, who was the president of the student union. But I don't remember taking part in any student activities as such at all. I certainly ate in the cafeteria—oh, I did eat with other people—but I don't at all remember many very close friendships because, of course, I used to go back to the college where I was living as soon as lectures ended. And my friendships really were established there rather than at the LSE. And they were very ephemeral friendships. I have no permanent friends from Queen's, Camden Hill.

I don't remember taking any admission exam to the London School of Economics. I suppose I must have done so. No, I think I got in on the results of the school certificate which gave me exemption from the matriculation. I think that's all you had to do. I did pass the intermediate examination at the end of the first year and I did pass the admission exam—which was fairly tough—for Girton College, Cambridge, where they gave me a scholarship. I had also tried an Oxford college entrance and I got entrance there but I didn't get a scholarship, thank goodness, so I went to Cambridge because Girton gave me a scholarship. I've always been grateful because I'm quite sure that Oxford would not have suited me and Cambridge was exactly what I needed.

Question: What was the difference?

Spry: The difference was, as far as my friends who went to Oxford were concerned, that they seemed to spend their whole time socializing, going to dances and climbing in. It seems to me that life at Oxford was very much more social and that there was less tough intellectual stimulus. There were dances at Cambridge and we had a lot of fun—long lunches in punts on the river, theatre, music and parties to listen to nightingales singing in the Madingley Woods. In fact, a very dear friend of mine, on more than one occasion, climbed in—with considerable consternation to her friends as our rooms were exactly opposite those of the mistress and there was nothing to prevent the mistress from looking out and observing this phenomenon. However, this wasn't habitual, it wasn't general—but it seemed to me (from the friends I had who went to Oxford) to have been the normal practice there. At Cambridge there was a very skeptical atmosphere. For example, there was an organization called The Heretics. The only rule of The Heretics, the only criterion for membership, was that you must never invoke authority in an argument. You must always give reasons and evidence to support any point that you were trying to make. My impression of Oxford was that you did cite authority, that what you tried to do was to know what or who the authorities were. I'm probably maligning Oxford which I did not know well, though my brother was at Balliol. However, the Heretics attitude seems to me a very sound basis for intellectual development.

Women were not full members of the University, but it didn't seem to me that this mattered at all. I was never, in all my time at Cambridge, made to feel in any way that I was inferior or peculiar because I was a woman, except that women were not admitted to Keynes' club. Perhaps this was because there were only two of us in economics in my year and we made many friends among the men who went to our classes, including George Cadbury[19] who later came to Saskatchewan. He was

[19] George Woodall Cadbury (1907–1995) was born in Birmingham England, and attended King's College at Cambridge to study economics. His supervisor was John Maynard Keynes. He was well known among the Fabians and came to know a number of Canadian socialists, including David Lewis. Lewis convinced Cadbury to visit the newly elected CCF government in Saskatchewan, and in 1945, Cadbury met with government officials there. Offered a job, he came to Saskatchewan to establish the Economic Advisory Planning Board and brought order to a group of Crown Corporation government enterprises, and institute long-term economic planning. At the end of the 1940s, he left the Saskatchewan for work at the United Nations.

one of my very close friends at Cambridge. Another particular friend was Lionel Elvin who was one of the first people to come to Cambridge from trade union circles on a scholarship.

Now this comes back to the class problem that you raised earlier. Cambridge, in my day, was largely inhabited by wealthy young men who were taking pass degrees. They certainly added some charm and gaiety to Cambridge life and, as the friend who was the other woman reading economics when I was there, said, "It was a good thing there were people like me there, because otherwise Cambridge would have been a very dull place." She came, by my standards, from a well-to-do family. She had a perfectly good brain, but she didn't apply it as persistently as she might have done to work for the Tripos. At the end of our time, in the middle of the Tripos examinations, our tutor summoned her and said, "Miss Crosthwaite, I don't know what we are going to do. The professor," (that was Pigou), "says that he cannot read your handwriting." At this critical moment in the middle of the examinations, Crosthwaite, (Tuttie, as she was always called), said "Well, I can't change my handwriting overnight." And so it was arranged that she should go and read her papers to the professor afterwards—if you can imagine a more frightful ordeal, especially as he was known as a misogynist. However, when she arrived in the professor's room, extremely alarmed and nervous, he put her at her ease by saying, "Miss Crosthwaite, we share the distinction of having the worst handwritings in Cambridge."

My tutor was Marjorie Tappan Hollond.[20] She married one of the leading lawyers in Cambridge who later became the Senior Dean of Trinity College. She was a Bostonian, a most elegant and exquisite creature, who was always late for everything. She always ran everywhere. As she told me later, when I came to know her as a person and not as a tutor, this was "A function of my late habits!" She was beautiful, she was charming, she was extremely intelligent, but unfortunately, she was not a good lecturer. She told me afterwards that this was because she had been brought up by governesses who spoke German, Italian, French, you name it, so she had never mastered the English language. However, she *could* express herself very crisply in personal conversation and in writing. She was a very good tutor. She never let a sloppy phrase or muddy thinking slip by. We used to go every week to see her individually to read an essay or sometimes two essays on a subject that had been allotted the week before and there was no mercy shown if the essay wasn't up to scratch. It was a most rigorous and useful intellectual training, and it meant that you had to get through an enormous amount of reading because for each essay you had to do a great deal of reading.

Besides weekly tutorials we went to a fair number of lectures. I wouldn't like to guess how many hours of lectures we attended in the week but I was very fortunate in being there in what still seems to me to have been the great days of economics in Cambridge, when Keynes was formulating his startling new ideas; when A.C. Pigou was still working on the economics of welfare; when Dennis Robertson was a moderating influence on the Keynesian ideas, (slightly more conventional in his monetary analysis but still extremely stimulating and interesting); when Maurice Dobb,[21] with his leftwing leanings—a very pink-and-white young gentleman at the time—was developing what you might call updated Marxism, I think; and when Gerald Shove, who unfortunately died young, was throwing out all kinds of novel ideas which are now embodied of course in the structure of environmental thinking. He was the first person I ever heard, other than Pigou, talking about what

[20] Marjorie Hollond born Marjorie Tappan (1895–1977) was an American-born British economist. She became director of studies at two Cambridge colleges, Girton and Newnham, in 1923, and a fellow in 1924. She became a Cambridge University lecturer of economics in 1926, and in 1929 she married Henry Arhtur Hollond, who taught law. After the second world war, she began to work again at Girton, and went on to help in the re-organization of Cambridge University in 1948, when women were first allowed to gain a Cambridge degree.

[21] Maurice Herbert Dobb (1900–1976) was an English Marxist economist at Cambridge University and a fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. Dobb helped to establish the Communist Party Historians Group which developed social history and attracted future members of the "Cambridge Five" spy ring to Marxism in the 1930s.

would now be called "externalities"—problems of noise created by certain types of industrial activity, certain kinds of transportation technology, which had effects on people but which were not taken into account in the pricing mechanism of the market and which therefore were ignored in economic decision-making. He would have been a very great economist if he had lived a little bit longer. He was really just at the threshold of important innovations in economic thinking; but alas, he died.

Perhaps it wasn't so much lectures that were important at Cambridge. It was talk. The endless, exciting talk, the challenging of other peoples' ideas and having one's own challenged, that was important. I can't remember any evening when a group of us didn't meet to argue about something—not just economic problems, not just the things we were working on, but political problems, social problems, aesthetic problems.

Two of my greatest friends were historians. One of them later married Frank Coe,[22] who ended his days in China after being a victim of McCarthyism in the United States. She is now dead, very sadly—a very brilliant historian. Leonora Lockhart, usually known as Winkie, who was also an historian, came of the Scottish family of Milton Lockhart who had been friends of Sir Walter Scott. She was a very salutary influence in my life. She challenged every one of the sort of smug lower middle class ideas that I came to Cambridge with, and perhaps the most important thing that happened to me in Cambridge was continual argument with her. Her much more sophisticated breadth of reading, her much less inhibited ideas, her background—she was completely different in both her intellectual and social background and great fun. She's still alive, I'm glad to say. She and Nan Crosthwaite and I nearly always meet whenever I go back to England. Joan Hopgood, a scientist, was another member of our group whom I still see.

Besides the evening discussions, there was a great range of student activity both in the college and in the university. In college, dramatics were important; debates were very important; there were societies for the pursuit of almost any interest that you might care to mention, even Morris dancing, which I was fascinated recently to find is now being practiced in Ottawa on a large scale. In the University, the Labour Club provided a focus for humanitarian ideas and colleagues with some actual experience of the labour movement. I remember we had a little song which went something like this: "Here's to Jimmy Thomas, string him up, string him up, He did the dirty on us, string him up"—in which is embodied a certain amount of history. At the time of the General Strike, in 1926, the members of the Labour Club were recruited to work on behalf of the strikers. I can remember, on hot summer days, peddling on a very bad bicycle around Cambridgeshire delivering the strikers' newspaper to rural hamlets, which can have had absolutely no relevance to the outcome of the strike, but it made me feel that I was doing something important as a contribution to the cause. Some of our friends were on the other side. I remember that George Cadbury, for example, drove a railway locomotive as a strike breaker, which wasn't quite consonant with his later role.

The Cambridge Union, although women were not yet admitted to it as members, (we went to debates to listen as guests), was an extremely interesting focus of intellectual discussion. Lionel Elvin, who was president of the Labour Club, was also president of the Union, which was considered a very important achievement, especially for someone with his sort of background. Geoffrey Crowther (later of *The Economist* and *Encyclopedia Britannica*) was in Cambridge at the same time, with whom I never ceased to fight from that day on until the last time I saw him before he died. A brilliant analyst, a brilliant person in many ways, he seemed to me unduly addicted to the glories of book learning. With the sort of educational grounding that I had had from my mother, I could simply not accept that book

[22] This was the first wife of Frank Coe, Nora Coe (Mallinson) (1906–1965). Born in England, she had come to the United States in 1929, to study at the University of Chicago. Married to Coe in 1931, she was divorced from him by the time he was accused of spying in the 1950s. Frank and Nora Coe were in Toronto (U of T) at the same time as Irene Biss (1930s). We have found no record of historical works authored by Nora Coe.

learning was the only worthwhile thing in the world. It seemed to me that to be a good gardener was every bit as important as being a good professor and this gave rise to many, not acrimonious, but cheerful and friendly, debates with Geoffrey. Geoffrey was a great friend of Paul Bareau, who married one of my dearest school friends, Kitty Gibson, and we are still in constant and close touch with them. Paul, who is now an honorary fellow at the London School of Economics and has recently celebrated his eightieth birthday, is a most civilized, charming and highly-intelligent economist, particularly in questions of finance, international and national. He wasn't at Cambridge, he was at the London School, and we came to know him through Kitty, who had been at the Bournemouth High School for Girls when I was there. Another friend, who later became mistress of Girton College, M.C. Bradbrook, commonly known as "Brad", once said to me a little wistfully, "You know, there used to be all sorts of 'characters' in Cambridge when we were undergraduates. Think of Miss Cave-Brown-Cave", (the mathematician), "think of …" and she ran off a list of well-known characters. I looked at her, and thought to myself, "Dear Brad, if you only knew it, you're one of the Cambridge 'characters' now."

One of the very interesting people when I was at Girton was the bursar, Miss Allen, a very elegant, charming person. She once told me a story—someone had been having trouble with a love affair. Miss Allen said to her: "When I was an undergraduate, I fell in love, and I was neglecting my work. And my tutor said to me, 'Miss Allen, we have all broken hearts, and we have all had our hearts broken, but we never allowed this to interfere with our work for the Tripos.'"

There's something else, perhaps, that I should add. Whereas, nowadays, in universities, there is paid staff to organize outside lectures for students and things of this sort, we did it all ourselves. This was part of our education. You made horrible mistakes sometimes, but you learned by making them. One of the things I remember with great vividness: we started an organization called "ODTAA"—one damn thing after another—and the first guest we wanted to invite was Virginia Woolf. I was deputed to invite her, which I did. A reply came back on purple notepaper, written in purple ink, surprisingly enough, accepting the invitation. We were overjoyed and we arranged the meeting. She was to speak at one or two other organizations at the University as well as at Girton. She came, but I had tonsillitis and was in bed at home, so I never did get to hear Virginia Woolf. Her visit gave rise to her book, *A Room of One's Own*.

Second Interview with Irene Spry, Ottawa, December 16, 1981



Irene Spry working in 1974 – LAC/e008383179

I went down from Cambridge in 1928 and I spent the summer in Germany because I had been given a scholarship to go to Bryn Mawr College. To enter Bryn Mawr, you had to be able to pass examinations in French and German and, although I had done a little German in the London School of Economics, it was very very elementary. So I went *au pair* to the home of the Oberforstmeister[23] in Mecklenburg-Schwerin in the great northern forest near Rostock, the old Hanseatic League port on the Baltic. There I learned a certain amount of German from a six-year-old child, the only person who would speak German to me. Everybody else wished to improve their English. From there I went to Berlin to a family from East Prussia who had been refugees from Russia in World War I and, from being a well-to-do landed proprietor-type of family, had been reduced to genteel poverty. They were Sozialdemokraten[24] and I have never been able to find them since Hitler. I have a horrid feeling that they are probably all dead.

Then I went to Bryn Mawr, which is near Philadelphia in the United States, a noted women's college where I did my Master's in Social Research and Social Work. Part of that course involved working in factories. I went once a week to work in a Philadelphia factory which made automobile parts, where I did a safety study which was extremely interesting. Once a week I also went into Philadelphia to do interviews for a research project about married women who worked and didn't

[23] Chief forest master
[24] Social Democrats

have families—worked in the sense of going out of the home to earn their living. Women staying in the home worked much harder, I may say. We were sent with questionnaires into the slummiest slums of Philadelphia to interview women about whether or not they used birth-control methods. Poles, Italians, you name it. Why we weren't lynched, I'll never know. Miraculously, because we were all young and we didn't even go in pairs, we escaped unscathed and brought back rather debatable material which I was supposed to write up but, to my shame, never have finished. It is still sitting incomplete in my files.

Question: Why did you go to Bryn Mawr?

Spry: Because I was given a scholarship. It was very simple. But also I wanted to take a look at the United States and I must say I found it absolutely fascinating. My most interesting professor was Eleanor Dulles who was related to John Foster Dulles—I think a cousin but I'm not quite sure. The work was most exhausting and not really, I think, very stimulating on the academic side but in what they called 'practicums' was very interesting. At the Christmas vacation, I worked in Lord and Taylors, the big elegant store in New York. I was lucky enough to stay with Barbara and Lewis Webster Jones. She was an LSE friend. They were deep in Walter Hale Hamilton's cast of medical care [analysts].

The following summer, I worked in a factory outside Boston in a little town called Watertown. It was a rubber factory, and I ended up as fore-lady in charge of a conveyor-belt section. I had no idea what it was we were making. Bits of rubber came whizzing past on the conveyor belt and we stuck other bits of rubber on to them. I had to see that the bits were stuck in the right place and that they whizzed properly fast. And it was only just as I was leaving that, by dint of my persistent questioning, I discovered that we were making rubber boots!

The University of Toronto had offered me a job just after I had accepted the Bryn Mawr scholarship. They were kind enough to renew the offer so I came to Toronto in 1929 after a year in the States and started teaching Economic Theory and Economic History.



Irene M. Biss at U of T 1929–1938

Question: As a lecturer?

Spry: As a lecturer, at the princely salary of $2000 a year. And I remember the first lecture that I gave. I was to lecture on English and European economic history and I got the timetable mixed up. When I appeared, thinking I was going to lecture on economic theory, I found I was scheduled to lecture on English economic history! Luckily, having had Eileen Power as a tutor at the LSE, I knew something about the manorial system so I was able to extemporize a lecture on the medieval three-field system of cultivation. It was a hair-raising situation and I blessed my Cambridge experience in debating.

I was also a don in residence, to begin with at Hutton House, University College, which was a small women's residence. Later on, I moved to Whitney Hall, to Falconer House, which was somewhat larger and very much more elegant. I was don in residence for about six years which was interesting but very exhausting. It meant, of course, that one got one's board and lodging which allowed a certain margin from the $2000 to travel and things like that.

Question: How long were you on the staff at the U of T?

Spry: From 1929 to 1938…. Lecturer and then assistant professor in the Department of Economics…. I worked first with people like Vincent Bladen and Wynne Plumptre, who were very stimulating colleagues. Bladen … gave a very solid intellectual basis for the theoretical work of the department. Professor E.J. Urwick was the head of the department at the time. He was a classical philosopher from England, a highly intelligent, interesting and inquiring sort of person. The members of the Department made up an extremely lively group. We used to meet every morning and every afternoon, in the morning for coffee and in the afternoon for tea and there was always some problem being batted around among us. I never remember being at one of these departmental gatherings without getting into some deep discussion, usually an altercation, but certainly a discussion, about some problem that was worrying somebody in the work they were doing. It was a most exciting and stimulating atmosphere. Problems such as, "What do you mean by freedom?" "Can there be such a thing as freedom?" "Is there free will?" What we discussed wasn't just economic problems. It was social and political and cultural problems—a range of topics that would now be called inter-disciplinary. One of the interesting people there was Lorne Morgan …. He was an economic historian, known by the students as "Machine-Gun Morgan." He was very small and very pugnacious. He had been a boxer, a light-weight boxer, among many other remarkable things in his career. He and Dal Grauer, who later became the head of the B.C. Electric Power Corporation, and several others—Otto van der Sprenkle, a wild Dutch political scientist—used to meet for poker at infrequent intervals, and that was an education in itself.

I also used to go painting on Sundays with a group which included Norah McCullough, who ended up as the western representative of the National Art Gallery. Then she was an assistant to Arthur Lismer when he was organizing his remarkable children's painting classes at the Art Gallery in Toronto. Barker Fairley was one of the group, and Reid MacCallum, a philosopher. It was great fun and extremely interesting as it meant of course that I had close contacts with the painting community in Toronto.

Toronto, as such, was an enormously alive, interesting place in that period. It was emerging as a center of intellectual and cultural initiative and activity in a most fascinating way.

Question: Who were the leaders in discussions in the Department of Economics?

Spry: I wouldn't think there were any leaders. Somebody would ask a question and everybody would take it up and argue it round and round.

Question: Was Innis[25] dominant?

Spry: Innis didn't come to these gatherings, strangely enough. He was much, much too busy. He was usually writing in his rather crabbed handwriting when we were talking. I got to know Innis later.

I began working on problems that arose in pricing electricity, and so the Ontario Hydro-Electric Power Commission absolutely fascinated me. It didn't seem to me that it fitted any of the conventional equilibrium analyses of price determination, the sort of Marshallian, neo-classical scheme of things. At this time, Joan Robinson had produced her remarkable book about monopolistic competition and an American, Edward Chamberlin, had produced a book saying much the same thing, though in rather a different way. We began discussing these two books and how we could embody them in the first-year course in economic theory, led by Vincent Bladen and Wynne Plumptre when he came back from Cambridge (of course hot off the Keynesian griddle). We produced a little booklet for the students about what Vincent happily described as "Mrs. Robinson's curves." Then, of course, there was all the new Keynesian analysis, to which Wynne had been exposed in Cambridge. These ideas began to be widely discussed.

There was also a very strong feeling that it wasn't enough just to consider the theoretical analysis. One had to go and look at what really was happening. This feeling, that it was essential to look at what was going on in the world of political economy—because of course Toronto was very strongly a center of *political* economic studies rather than just abstract economics—brought me into contact with Innis and his seminal (I don't think there is any other word one can use) studies of disequilibrium situations, the elements in the economy that created those disequilibrium situations, the 'rigidities'—as he called them—overhead costs and so on …

When Professor Urwick was retiring, Innis edited a book in his honour called *Essays in Political Economy*, I think. I did a piece for that in which I tried to disentangle the various ideas that were inherent in this notion of rigidities and the notion of overhead costs.[26] That was the first thing of any substance that I wrote and Innis, I think, was generously quite interested in it and from that time I began to work quite closely with him and eventually took over the first-year course in Canadian economic history on "fish and fur." Innis went to the later period, to pulp and paper and minerals and so on, and then, of course, from pulp and paper, which got him into the whole publishing problem, he went on to communication—but I had gone by then.

Question: In that period when you worked closely with Innis, what did you work on?

Spry: I was working on the development of hydro-electric power, basically. I started thinking about the Ontario Hydro-Electric Commission. Why was there public enterprise in this industry in parts of Canada when, in the United States and even in Quebec, it was mostly private enterprise? What were the technical characteristics of the industry? And the features of the cost structure? How were prices determined? It became quite clear to me that none of this was intelligible unless one went back into

[25] Harold Adams Innis (1894–1952) was born in Canada and became a world-renowned political economist, and pioneer in communication studies. He taught at the University of Toronto from 1920 until his death. Having studied at McMaster University and the University of Chicago, Innis began to re-orient Canadian studies with the development of a "staples theory," which posited interrelations between economics, politics and society; that Canada's culture, political history, and economy were decisively influenced by the exploitation and export of a series of "staples" such as fur, fish, lumber, wheat, and minerals. His early publications included: *A History of the Canadian Pacific Railway* (1923), *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History* (1930), and *The Cod Fisheries: The History of an International Economy* (1940).

[26] I.M. Biss, "Overhead Costs, Time Problems, and Prices," in Harold A. Innis, ed., *Essays in Political Economy: In Honour of E. J. Urwick* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1938), 11-26.

the history of the development of water power as a major source of energy and into the question of what was the impact of that development. Of course, this tied in with the whole problem of the lack of coal in central Ontario and so on. It was in that connection that I came to know Innis very well and did some work with him on his book on the cod fisheries, for example, and also on the book that he never completed on the pulp and paper industry. He was enormously helpful as well as enormously stimulating. Really, my education in what I would now consider as realistic economic thinking, I got from Innis rather than Cambridge. Cambridge gave me a much more theoretical education.

Question: What does that mean?

Spry: What does that mean? That means that instead of drawing curves to analyze hypothetical pricing situations, one went out and looked at the factories and looked at the places where whatever it was, was being produced and talked to the engineers and entrepreneurs who made the decisions about how much was to be produced—and how much, when and where—and tried to get a picture of what actually went on in the industry, with a view to describing it, so that one could try to think about the significance of what went on, instead of thinking in hypothetical and abstract terms. It was essentially an inductive approach to economic problems, instead of a deductive approach. My concern was essentially with electric power, particularly hydro-electric power, but I did go through mines and paper mills and factories. I read and re-read Innis' manuscript on the Atlantic fisheries. He had great difficulty in reducing an immense mass of material to comprehensible proportions. It was when he was struggling with this problem—I wasn't involved in the initial research on the fisheries at all—it was with the problem of presentation basically. In the end, he had to get a professional writer in to put the thing together in an intelligible way.

I became interested in the pulp and paper industry because hydro-electric power was so important—as were other uses of water—in paper production. My work on hydro took me to pulp and paper mills to a considerable extent, so I did work with him a little on his basic research on that industry.

Innis was helpful in my work in every possible way. I remember when I was going "down north" to find out what happened when there was not hydro development in connection with mining, to visit the Eldorado uranium mine on Great Bear Lake and other mines there and in the Yukon, he gave me a whole lot of letters of introduction. One was to COMINCO, as they had property near Great Bear Lake. I also wanted to look at the COMINCO installations at Trail. I got a very cordial letter back—saying they would be delighted to have Professor Spry go and visit their property in the Great Bear Lake area—I went, and had a most interesting time. The whole trip was deeply interesting. It was my first glimpse of the North, apart from anything else. I flew from Fort McMurray to Great Bear Lake. Then I flew from the Mackenzie Valley to the Yukon Valley and spent a little while at Dawson. I even panned a little gold in a rocker at one point. On my way out, I went up the Yukon River by boat—a sternwheeler—not long before the boat service was discontinued. And that also was enormously interesting and very, very illuminating, because, of course, for so long, river travel was the only means of access to the Yukon. From the boat, I transferred to the White Pass and Yukon, the little railway over the mountains to the coast of Skagway, and then down the inside passage by boat from Skagway to Vancouver.

When I got to Vancouver, I found an almost hysterical letter waiting for me from COMINCO saying they had just discovered I was a woman—they hadn't been able to read my name in Innis' inimitable handwriting—and certainly I couldn't go to the Great Bear Lake property. I was delighted to be able to reply that I had already been north and that accommodation there was entirely suitable for women. (This brings us back to the women business.) "There had been no problems. Thank you very much, I enjoyed myself."

Question: And you were entirely by yourself?

Spry: Yes, why not? There was absolutely no problem. Everyone was extremely kind. The Hudson's Bay Company and Mrs. George Black had given me especially helpful introductions. I kept hearing extraordinary rumors when I was in there about some female who had gone—probably for evil purposes—into the country. I discovered a Catholic missionary at Fort Rae, as I went in; so he instantly came to the conclusion that I must have some foul purpose. That, apparently, was how the rumor started.

In connection with what we were talking about earlier, I had to wait five days at Fort Resolution to make plane connections, and while I was there, the treaty money was paid so I saw the Indians gathered together, heard the drumming, saw this eternal gambling game they play, and saw the treaty payments being made. That was the first time I had any idea that any such thing happened at all. That was fascinating. I stayed with the Hudson's Bay manager and his wife while I was there.

Otherwise, there really were no problems. People were, I repeat, very kind, very helpful. There was always somebody, either a Hudson's Bay factor, or, in Aklavik, I stayed at the Anglican mission hospital; visited the Catholic mission of course, visited the Mounted Police—the Superintendent was Mr. Rivett-Carnac, who had an enchanting little blonde daughter of about three whose nursemaid was an Inuit who was doing time for manslaughter, and who was a charming person. He was the only Eskimo I had ever met up to that point.

There was one other problem—the mosquitoes and the black flies, which were absolutely incredible. When I went to Aklavik, I was bitten to pieces between the plane and getting under cover at the Mission as, in deference to the feelings of the good missionaries, I had worn a skirt instead of breaches. Between the top of my boots and the end of my skirt, I was just one solid bite all the way round and that was in ten minutes! The Hudson's Bay Company had lent me a wonderful veil that I wore over a wide-brimmed hat. It had a little leather mouthpiece with a slit in it to take a pipe, which I didn't, I may say, use, but I certainly used the veil.

There was one other problem, air sickness. I was very bad about air sickness at this stage of my life. I flew with people like Con Farrell and Wop May, which was great fun and very exciting, but I remember the flight from Resolution to Aklavik was very, very rough. Even the pilot himself felt airsick. The only person who wasn't airsick was the Mother Superior of the Grey Nuns who was making her visits around the various missions in which her charges were working. I was so sick that, when we got to Fort Norman, she took me out of the plane and up the hill. There weren't any Grey Nuns there but two or three lay brothers lived there and she put me firmly to bed in one of their beds so that I could sleep, recover from my agonizing air sickness. But that didn't take very long. When the plane was ready to go on, I was ready to go on too. That Grey Nun was a wonderful woman.

All this trotting around the country and trying to see what things really looked like and felt like in the field, of course, was in imitation of Innis who never wrote about anything that he hadn't seen himself, who, when he was writing about mining in the Yukon, went with Arthur Lower in a canoe down the Yukon River to see what it was like—to get the feel of the country, the sense of its character, the technology used in the industries concerned, the geographic basis, the transport problems that had to be faced and so on, which gave him a very realistic basis for his ideas about the successive great staple industries of Canada.

Each summer, except for the summers when I did a sort of tourist trip across the North American continent and the summer when I went to Kenya to see my parents, I went on research trips. One was around Quebec. A cousin of Graham's, Marguerite MacDonald who, a native Québécoise (her mother didn't speak a word of English), took me round the Saguenay country—Chicoutimi, Jonquière, Arvida and the pulp and paper mills and power plants and also the convents.

She is a very devout Catholic. One summer I went to the Maritimes. In fact, I worked, when Innis was with the Jones Commission, on the economy of Nova Scotia—on a study of the power situation for the Commission. Then, about—I don't remember the figures—half the province's power was generated from coal produced, of course, in the Nova Scotia coal mines and the other half, which was relatively recently developed, was hydro-electric power. And there was a great battle going on. Should hydro be developed? Or should the whole industry be thermal power?

I spent more than one summer in the Prairie Provinces and British Columbia. The prairies of course were extremely interesting as a counterpoise to the study of areas rich in water resources and hydro power. What happened when you had a shortage of water, when you didn't have any hydro power, except on what you might call the rim of the prairies, the foothills of the Rockies where the Calgary Power Company was developing hydro-electric generating plants and, of course, on the Winnipeg River, where there was hydro power. Elsewhere power had to be produced for the most part by some thermal system of generation, either oil or coal, as the case might be. So that called for a study of the contrast between the areas that were limited pretty much to thermal electric power in comparison with those that had lots and lots of lovely hydro power. Even Ontario had plenty of hydro power in those days. It doesn't any more.

B.C., of course, was tremendously interesting because there was the whole group of hydro plants on the Pend d'Oreille River that had been developed by COMINCO in relation to its mineral activities at Trail. And then there were all the plants of the B.C. Electric Railway. There were also the power plants on Vancouver Island—the Jordan River Plant for example, which took me to the Pacific Rim for the first and only time in my wanderings. These were all trips I made in connection with my research on the development of power in Canada, as well as journeys in Ontario from Niagara Falls to Abitibi and from the Ottawa River to Sault Ste. Marie.

Question: Did you publish?

Spry: I published three articles in the encyclopedia that W.S. Wallace produced with Innis' help, published by the University Associates. One was on the water power of Canada, one was on the provincial hydro-electric power commissions, and one was on hydro-electric power in general—they're still in the *Encyclopedia Canadiana*.[27] A couple of times I have brought them up-to-date. The last time they revised the encyclopedia without even consulting me which made me a little annoyed, I must confess. Besides the Nova Scotia study, I did an article on innovations in the Quebec power situation and one on the cancellation of the OHEPC [Ontario Hydro Electric Power Commission] power contracts. I would like very much to go back and do some more, particularly about Ontario Hydro, but I don't suppose I'll ever get around to it—too much else I want to do.

But you were asking earlier about how I got interested in Palliser. The trips I made to the Prairies, of course, got me interested in Palliser because he drew attention to the problem that was posed when you didn't have much rainfall—when your water supplies were limited as contrasted with the abundant water supplies that were available on the Shield.

Question: Were you not part of a group of intellectual crusaders in Toronto?

Spry: Apart from an enormous interest in the arts and letters which had begun at Cambridge, in connection with the experimental theatre that Keynes set up and delights of that sort, I am not quite sure that I would call my extra-curricular activities while at the University of Toronto intellectual so

[27] Irene M. Spry, "Hydro-Electric Power, v. 5; "Power Commissions, Provincial," v. 8; "Water Power," v. 10, *Encyclopedia Canadiana*, (Grolier, 1957–1975).

much as social crusading. I had, in Cambridge been a member of the Labour Club and I had, from my father largely, become interested in left-wing movements and certainly had a sort of missionary impulse to feel that one should do anything one could do to help other people. As the depression got worse and the unemployment increased, and the whole economy was simply breaking down as far as one could see, it seemed quite clear to a very young and very optimistic person that there were things that should be done and could be done. I may say, Innis didn't at all approve of such ideas. He felt we didn't know enough about the way in which the economy worked to be able to prescribe cures, to say what should be done. He felt that scholars should stick to trying to find out how the thing worked before they began making attempts at remedies. And that of course gave rise to the fight between Innis and [Frank] Underhill, when Underhill described him as a mechanic in the garage of capitalism, which I think Innis never forgave.

But a group of people, Underhill, Frank Scott, Harry Cassidy, King Gordon, Wynne Plumptre and others began to think that we certainly had a responsibility to try to do something—to put forward ideas as to possible remedies that might be tried. Even the greenest and youngest lecturers at the university were constantly being asked to make speeches. I must have made about a speech a month, I think, when I was first at the university. How I had the nerve, looking back on it, I cannot imagine, because I really knew absolutely nothing about the Canadian economy at that stage. It wasn't always about Canada. I had done a certain amount of studying about Africa and I remember somebody asked me to make a speech about Africa which I did on one occasion. But one was always being expected to be able to produce solutions for social problems, to make pronouncements about social problems, which was really very bad indeed for a young academic. It gave one delusions of grandeur which were entirely unjustified and, I think, did divert one from getting on with, finding out about the economy which, having being exposed to Innis, I came to see was really what should be done. But of course, the depression was horrifying. It was repugnant to common sense that there should be unemployed resources, people, factories, grain being burnt, when there were people going hungry, when the unmet needs of the population were so obvious. So we began to think about what might be done and at that stage it seemed fairly easy. The problem was that the resources which could and should be used were not being used. So how could they be put to use if the market system wouldn't put them to use, for whatever the reason—for a Keynesian reason, a Social Credit reason—then, surely, the government should step in and see that they were put to use and do away with this intolerable economic and social situation which had developed. Out of that sort of feeling the LSR [League for Social Reconstruction] came into being. I remember Frank Scott and King Gordon as being very active in the LSR.[28] We used to meet, not very often but periodically. A smaller group used to meet more often to plan what was to go into the book we decided we were going to try to write [*Social Planning for Canada* (1935)]. Graham [Spry] was actively involved. I met him first on the skating rink at the University of Toronto where the LSR was having a party. He used to come, not to all meetings, because he was based in Ottawa but to decision-making meetings. Later he moved to Toronto—but I haven't a very clear memory of the sequence of events but he was certainly involved in the early planning.

[28] The League for Social Reconstruction was a prominent Canadian organization of left-wing intellectuals and academics formed in 1932. They saw themselves as acting as a "brain trust" similar to the British Fabian Society. The League was one of the constituent groups that provided impetus for the founding of Canadian social democracy and the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF). Key figures included Frank Underhill, a history professor at the University of Toronto; F.R. Scott, a law professor and poet at McGill University; King Gordon, a theologian and educator active in the social gospel movement; Harry Cassidy, a social work expert who helped draft major policy blueprints regarding social welfare; Graham Spry, a public radio advocate and co-founder of the Canadian Radio League; Eugene Forsey, a constitutional expert and economist who participated in foundational research and writing; David Lewis, a lawyer and future national leader of the New Democratic Party (NDP) who acted as a key organizer; and J.S. Woodsworth who served as honorary president.

Question: Did you and Graham start meeting at that time?

Spry: Yes, he was—now again I am bad on dates—in the throes of moving from being National Secretary of the Canadian Clubs, based in Ottawa, to Toronto, where he became involved in CCF [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation] activity and the editor of what used to be the *Farmers' Sun* and became the *New Commonwealth*. When he was living in Toronto, we met each other quite often because we were involved in similar things. I wouldn't say that he took me out because he didn't have any money at all, but we did go to movies sometimes. It was not possible to take people out. But we used to meet quite often, and eventually the thing emerged.

Question: For what purpose would you meet him?

Spry: The League for Social Reconstruction … or, I had a Model A Ford at the time, and he used to borrow the car quite often. And there were political meetings of one sort or another, so there were occasions for meeting quite frequently. This was in 1938.

When I had been a little while in Toronto, and after the time I had had in Philadelphia, I began to be anxious to see a bit more of North America as a whole. Four of us, Joan Jackson, who was the sister of Gilbert Jackson (one of my colleagues at the university), the late Ella Martin, who until recently was in the education department of the Royal Ontario Museum and Louie Wright (now Mrs. Bray), who was teaching handicrafts and arts (and incidentally taught me to ride), bought an ancient ramshackle Pontiac car called Pegasus and proceeded to explore the continent.

We had to go east first because I was still struggling with my MA thesis for Bryn Mawr so we went to Maine where my supervisor ran a girls' camp and I worked till four every morning for a week and had still not got it done when we left. We went west through the United States and north through Yellowstone Park and the Waterton Lakes to the foothills of the Rockies. We had expected to go to the coast but found that, contrary to what we had been told in the east, the highway had not been completed, so we could go no further than the Columbia Valley. We must have zigzagged across the border because I am quite sure we were going west when we got to Calgary from Regina. This was in 1930 when the drought was beginning. This was my first introduction to water problems in the prairies. Also, there were grasshoppers. The dust was already beginning to blow. For mile after mile after mile there could be nothing but bare blowing soil and tumbleweed. It was terrifying. And when we were coming back, I remember—it wasn't me who was driving but Joan—we ran into a cow; she was driving very slowly indeed, but the cow somersaulted into the ditch but not before it had entirely squashed the radiator of the car. That was at Moosomin [SK]. We had to spend; I think it was three days there before we could get the car mobile again and in that time we didn't see a single drop of clear water. The water of that town all had to be tanked in and it was green and slimy. It was not what I would have thought of as water at all. That gave us a very clear impression of what the shortage of water could amount to.

It was an extremely illuminating trip. Among other things that I remember very clearly was camping in the garden of an old man who had been an Indian scout under Cody in the early days of the American Indian warfare and he told us hair-raising stories. The contrast between that and the Hudson's Bay Company's relations with Indians when later I went north and stayed with Hudson's Bay men left a very deep mark in my mind.

There was a sharp contrast between the rich lush mid-western American states and the Palliser Triangle in the Canadian prairies. First, we had seen the New England states, which were very beautiful but not very luxuriant or very rich, then the mid-western states, which were extremely prosperous and then the western states, seemingly remarkably empty, especially in the Badlands of South Dakota.

Ella Martin's uncle was a sheriff in Park County, Wyoming. We stayed with him and he took us around to ranches. We rode cowponies and we saw horses being broken and sheep being herded and got a real feeling of what range life in the far West of the USA was like. We also practised shooting with bottles of illegal confiscated spirits as targets.

Another extremely impressive experience was going through the Badlands in South Dakota and, going north, the geysers of Yellowstone Park. We came out in Canada, in the Waterton Lakes area, which are so very beautiful, but also very windy—our tent blew down. Later, I learned that Palliser's magnetical observer, Lieut. T.W. Blakiston, R.A., named the lakes after an ornithologist that he admired. And then we drove along to the edge of the Rockies to the Bow River and through Kicking Horse Pass, which then had only a narrow gravel road at the river's edge. I have always been grateful that I saw it then and didn't first see the Kicking Horse Pass from the terrific highway that goes through it now.

At the time my father was Chief Inspector of schools in Kenya and I hadn't seen my parents for some time, so I took advantage of the long vacation to go out to Kenya with a friend of mine from Toronto, Altalind Cook. We travelled out by boat across the Atlantic and by rail to Marseilles and then by boat to Mombasa. The voyage gave me my first view of the Mediterranean since my childhood. I will never forget a wonderful sunset in the Straits of Messina between Italy and Sicily, or Genoa for that matter, where we spent a day sight-seeing, and through the Suez Canal down to Mombasa and then by a railway (which was built by a Canadian, incidentally) from Mombasa to Nairobi. There, you were apt to be held up because a giraffe, a hippopotamus or a rhinoceros had strayed onto the track and had to be moved before the train could go on. Then through the desert country, the Thika thorn tree country, on the way to Nairobi. We stayed, of course, with my family. My father, who did a lot of travelling as inspector of schools, took us around to remote parts of the country such as the Suk Reserve[29] where nobody was allowed in without special passes and where later there was a sad tragedy when the schoolmaster on the Suk Reserve was killed during an uprising.

There were a lot of Canadian influences in Kenya at the time. The Kaka mega gold fields were discovered by someone from Canada and we went to a school in that area. We saw Mt. Kenya by moonlight. It was wrapped in cloud when we arrived at (I can't remember the name of the place, right on the equator where we had to stay in order to see the mountain). We couldn't see it, but, suddenly, just as we had all given up and gone to bed, the clouds parted and the moon came out and this incredible snow-capped mountain stood there in the most beautiful shining relief in the full moonlight. It was very exciting. We also saw Mt. Kilimanjaro, also snow-capped, on the other side of the Tanzanian border. There was a lot of game. I remember my sister took me to see the Rift Valley and we had a picnic lunch on the edge of the valley, looking down on this extraordinary rent in the earth. Some friends arrived just as we were leaving. The next day we met them in town and they said, "How did you like that lion you had your picnic with?" Anne said, "Lion?" And they said, "Didn't you see it? It was about ten feet away from you." We had sat there and had our picnic lunch and we had never seen the beast at all!

The giraffes were the most interesting of all, the most extraordinary creatures. You see them running, in very slow motion, their long peculiar-shaped legs and they seem to loll across the plain. Fascinating!

I had always had African influences in my life, of course, because as a small child I was in Africa and my family had lived in Africa and talked about it a lot. Yes, I think it affected me. It made me aware how precarious the livelihood of people in most parts of the world was. There was a plague of locusts when I was in Kenya, and the sight of these creatures coming down in swarms out of the sky, blackening the sky, and the frantic efforts made to keep them from alighting and destroying the

[29] The colonial term for the ancestral homeland of the Pokot people in northwestern Kenya.

crops was frightening. Besides, here were droughts and floods and many other problems faced by the people, plus, of course, the extraordinary difficulties that my father was coping with in connection with his work in the education department. How could you help people who had very recently come into contact with Western civilization, if you can call it that, to make the transition from a virtual Stone Age mode of life to coping with modern technology, modern government, modern "civilization" taken as a whole?

Perhaps this is where my concern with the prairie transition began. Back in Toronto, I certainly spent a lot of time on League for Social Reconstruction work. I did a couple of chapters in the book—I can't remember which now [[*Social Planning for Canada* (1935)]. A very great friend of mine, Betty Ratz (Hearn as she is now), worked very hard on editing the book. I don't think it would ever have got into print if it hadn't been for the work that she did.

This work did require that I find out more about the Canadian economy from different points of view than those that I was involved in in my strictly academic work. It did mean that I got to know Woodsworth, for example, which was enormously interesting. Later on, we got to know M.J. Coldwell and Tommy Douglas and people of that sort. Naturally, I got to meet LSR associates, including Montrealers, that I wouldn't otherwise have got to know. It was certainly important to my life, though I am not sure that I would think of it in terms of intellectual development. As I think I said before, it was a sort of crusading spirit that was involved in this, an attempt to figure out practical ways of dealing with an intolerable social situation.

Question: How did things change after you married Graham [1938] and went to England.

Spry: Marriage involved a very considerable upheaval because, at the time, a married woman couldn't work at the university. This was a sort of knee-jerk reaction to the unemployment situation; if there was one bread winner in the family, you couldn't have two. I knew that if I married, I would not be able to keep my job. Graham had lived on virtually nothing for months by then and he eventually had to give up the struggle. He could not get a job in Canada because of his left-wing associations and activities but his friends in the United States, particularly a couple of Rhodes scholars who were working in New York in quite eminent industrial positions, got him a job with California Standard Oil (Aramco). So he went off to England as an oil baron (that's an interesting story too) but that meant obviously that, if we were to be married, I would have to leave Toronto which I did with very great reluctance and very great sorrow. And, really—it was not good from my point of view to have to break off academic work. Actually, I was still working for my Ph.D. I had done what, at the University of Ottawa, we would call "Scolarité." I had completed a course with Underhill and one with Chester Martin. I was well into my thesis, which was going to be about water power and hydro-electric development in Canada. I never got further than the third chapter because, at that point, (a) Robin [their first child] was pending, (b) the war broke out and (c) I found myself on a ship going back to Canada.

In England, we had been expecting war. I had been going to Cambridge once a week to act as *locum tenens* for my own tutor, the late Marjorie Tappan Hollond. I got to know Joan Robinson quite well in this period. I got to know quite a lot of people I hadn't known personally as an undergraduate and that was useful to me. We saw a great deal of the London *Economist* people. A number of them were friends of ours and I did some reviewing for them and a couple of reports. I got to know Honor Croome, who was one of the editorial staff of the *Economist*, a bright economist and also a novelist. She later came to Canada during the war, with her five children. I got to know her even better then. I got to know Barbara Ward, later Barbara Jackson, who was a friend of Graham's—I ran into her later in India.

When Graham was in the oil business, I had my first and indeed only personal view of

entrepreneurs at work and at play, entrepreneurs on the multi-national corporation scale: Graham's colleagues in Aramco and the associate companies, because there wasn't just one company, but a whole lot of inter-related companies. I must say they were charming people but, of course, their view of the world was a rather different sort from any view of the world I had grown up with or was accustomed to. They were, without a doubt, nice, worthy, well-intentioned, kind people, whatever the results of their activities may have been.

When I was in London, I very much missed the company and stimulus of the academic community I had been accustomed to living in and working in, in Toronto. Although I had a day a week in Cambridge which was interesting and gave me opportunities of meeting interesting people, I was the rest of the time very much on my own. I was trying to get on with my thesis but there seemed to be continual interruptions. There were problems about learning how to housekeep in England and to cook for guests, and things like that, things which I never had the occasion to do before on any substantial scale. I found it very lonely indeed being a housewife instead of being an academic, very lonely and pretty inhibiting to concentration. Instead of getting on with my work, as I should have done, when I did have opportunities, I used to sort of sit and chew on the end of my pen and not press on at a reasonable rate. I got three chapters finished but that was as far as I got. Also I was pregnant and had a good deal of morning sickness, oddly enough in the evening. It used to be a race between the morning sickness and the train back from Cambridge on the days I went to teach there. Luckily the train always won but it was touch and go.

Then, of course, there was the political situation which was disturbing and distracting—the whole problem of Hitler and what was going to happen—the danger of war. One unexpected event was of some interest: for some reason, I have yet to discover why, I was asked to go as the representative of the SCM [Student Christian Movement] to a conference in Geneva about the world and what was going to happen and what should be done, at which John Foster Dulles was present. I found him less than impressive. He simply did not seem to have grasped what kind of person Hitler was—just not at all—and I still think that, therefore, his influence was not at all helpful in the early stages of the war, that perhaps if the Americans had come in right at the beginning, something different might have come of the whole thing, the whole crisis. However, that's hindsight.

When war was in fact declared, or rather, when it was perfectly evident that it was going to be declared, I was expecting our first child in a month. The skies of London were covered with barrage balloons, which all had pet names from the people in the local areas. I took a Red Cross course and, among other things, was on the committee set up for air raid precautions in the apartment house in which we lived. I will never forget two things. We had a meeting of the committee at which someone from the Ministry arrived to explain to us what we would have to do. It became quite evident that if we went into the cellars we would probably be drowned in sewage from broken drain pipes, even if we were not exterminated by bombs. I decided at that point that I would not go into the cellar. I would prefer to be exterminated by a bomb to being drowned in sewage. Then we had a great air raid drill at which Anderson, the Minister [John Anderson, 1st Viscount Waverley], was inspecting air raid readiness. We all went out onto the sidewalk and somebody had drawn little chalk squares on the sidewalk which were hypothetical air raid shelters that didn't actually exist. We all had to stand in these hypothetical air raid shelters as Anderson walked past and inspected us—very interesting!

I explained to Graham what he would have to do when the bombs started falling if I didn't have time to get to the hospital before Robin was born. At which point I found myself on the *Empress of Britain* on my way back to Canada. We stopped in Cherbourg for a whole day, apparently to load cars of tourists, which annoyed us rather, but later we discovered that the *Athenia* had been sunk by a German submarine which was lurking outside Sherbrooke hoping to get the *Empress* as well. Luckily for us it didn't.

On the journey over, several friends were on board which was agreeable. George Britnell, Alex

Brady, Alma Rolleston, a Canadian geneticist who had been at a conference in Britain (she has become one of our very dear friends)….

Liz and Walter Gordon had very sweetly invited me to come and stay with them, which I did, and in fact Robin was born from the Gordons' house. We just got to the hospital in time. Liz was in a total panic. I had made the mistake of telling her my mother had been rowing on the Vaal River ten minutes before I was born and only just managed to get to shore. When we arrived at the hospital Liz sprang out of the taxi and rushed in saying, "She comes of a quick family." They gave her a quelling medical look, took one look at me and whisked me into the delivery room without any further preliminaries. It was very funny.

Then my sister, who had been in Nigeria and had a small child a little older than Robin, came to Canada and we got an apartment together, (in Toronto still). She was supervising a cafeteria in Eaton's and I got a job with the National Council of the YMCA as economic consultant. There was a lot of discussion at the time about unemployment insurance. I remember this was really the central theme of the work I did with them. They wanted to know what it was all about and what it would do to society. Then, in 1941, I was invited to go to Ottawa to join the staff at the Wartime Prices and Trade Board [WPTB].[30] Hubert Kemp, a former colleague at the U of T, had already joined them and Ken Taylor was the head of their economic staff and I had known him while I was at Toronto, so I took off for Ottawa where I spent the rest of the war, first with the Wartime Prices and Trade Board and then, when Hector McKinnon moved to the Commodity Prices Stabilization Corporation [CPSC][31] and Donald Gordon took over the Wartime Prices and Trade Board, I followed Hector to the Commodity Prices Stabilization Corporation. Why? He asked for me and I liked him very much. Donald was a fascinating person but I wasn't as much at home with him as I was with Hector and also the last jobs I was given at the WPTB were really public relations jobs—which I was not very much interested in. When I was asked to go to CPSC I rather seized the opportunity.

That again was very interesting. It was the only inside glimpse I've had of how government bureaucracies work. Of course, it wasn't characteristic at all but I got some sidelights on what you might call the peacetime establishment because I had to go out to various departments that had not been much affected by the war. I remember I had to do a study of the salmon fishery which took me to the Department of Fisheries, and I got a fairly close view of how they operated. CPSC was of course a wartime organization and often we worked till all hours. If we got home before midnight we were lucky and frequently took papers home and were at our desks again at 9:00 the next morning. I had a lunch hour break of, I think, an hour or three quarters of an hour, when I had to go and collect Robin from his nursery school and take him home for my housekeeper to cope with. And then I had a two- or three-hour break in the evening when I went back and had supper with him and read his bedtime story and put him to bed. He was very little still. Let me think—he wasn't quite two when I first came to Ottawa so he had his early years here in Ottawa.

Graham was in London, sending me letters saying, "I've been looking out of my window and here's some shrapnel which I picked up off the windowsill." Dear man. He was in the Home Guard and seemed to be having a very exciting time indeed.

While Robin and I were in Ottawa, we had a ridiculous little house in New Edinburgh which had once been a stable. The stable had been turned into three houses. There was a wonderful garden. That saved my reason, I think, because in the summer I used to go out and garden in the evening while Robin played around. We really grew all our own vegetables except potatoes and onions, all our

[30] The Wartime Prices and Trade Board was a Canadian government agency created on September 3, 1939, to manage the wartime command economy and control inflation.

[31] The Commodity Prices Stabilization Corporation was a Canadian Crown corporation established on December 17, 1941, to control inflation and manage essential goods during World War II.

own vegetables and salads. Of course, things were very scarce during the war so that was also a great saver as far as getting food supplies was concerned.

You are interested in this business of the role of women. The only administrator in the Wartime Prices and Trade Board who was a woman was Phyllis Turner, later Phyllis Ross, earlier Phyllis Gregory—she had several marriages. She was, as you probably know, very very beautiful and very very brilliant. She used to tell marvelous stories about how big businessmen would arrive to negotiate with the "Administrator of Oils and Fats" and be shown in to Phyllis' office. They immediately assumed she was the secretary and started handing her the sort of line they produced for good-looking secretaries, only to discover that she was herself the Administrator!

It was educational to see the interrelationships between government and the private sector, particularly as a lot of private sector people had moved into the WPTB and CPSC as dollar-a-year men. Some of them found it extremely difficult to deal with the government sector. They were used to making decisions and just saying this has to be done and that has to be done. The idea that you had to go through channels and take into account the fact that questions might be asked in the House of Commons, and that what you did was subject to review by the Treasury Board—all these things seemed to them quite incredible. They just couldn't take it. I also had revealing contacts with lawyers. I can remember Harry Agnew saying, for example, "Oh, you just pass a law" to Hubert Kemp. (I don't know if you ever met Hubert. He was a wonderful little fat man who used to rock back and forth on his toes rather like one of those dolls that has a weight in the bottom.) The problem was firewood which was still quite important in those days. And Harry was saying that, if people wanted to charge more for firewood than the ceiling price, they'd just pass a law and put them in jail. So Hubert said, "Well, Harry, do you think this would encourage the production of firewood?" Things like that—there are so many memorable stories that could be told …

Wartime controls were the beginning, really, of the consumer movement. The women of Canada, the homemakers, were mobilized to play their role as consumers in containing threatened price rises. Their work was a remarkable achievement.

That reminds me, while I was in Toronto before I came to Ottawa, I remember being asked to speak to one of the women's sororities on the subject, "Why knitting socks is not enough." While I was talking to the students about this, the whole issue came up of cutting down civilian consumption during the war and trying to limit inflationary demand pressures. That was one of the central efforts made by WPTB and CPSC. At this time, it was becoming quite clear that the women of Canada were going to have to do, and were in fact doing, their share in the war in production, in the services. … A great friend of mine, Adelaide Sinclair, who later became deputy-director of UNICEF,[32] (she'd been at Toronto as a political scientist when I was first there), became the head of the WRENS.[33] The importance of the work of women was becoming very evident indeed during the war.

When I spoke earlier of having to make speeches eternally outside the university, I might have described one episode. Allan Ashley, a very sophisticated accountant in the Commerce Department, was asked to organize a course on what World War I had done to Canada and he assigned me to make a speech on what World War I had done to women. If you can imagine the wet-behind-the-ears young thing going down to the Stanley Barracks and standing up to address the assembled soldiery on such a subject: I was received with ribaldry, to put it mildly. Oh well, I put them in their place as if they were rambunctious students!

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[32] UNICEF (the United Nations Children's Fund) is a global United Nations agency that provides humanitarian and developmental aid to children and mothers.

[33] The Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service (WRCNS or WRENS) was established on 31 July 1942 during the Second World War. Patterned after the British service, members worked as cooks, clerks, wireless telegraphists, radar plotters, electricians, and vehicle drivers to free up men for frontline combat duties.

Graham was by now a personal assistant to Sir Stafford Cripps[34] and had gone to India with him. At the end of the trip to India he came out to the United States on a mission to find out what American feeling was about Britain. I suddenly got a cable that I was to meet him in Baltimore on a certain day. He then made a journey across the United States on which we took Robin who was then just over three, I think, which was really quite agonizing but it was his only chance of getting to know his father whom he hadn't met before….

We went right across to San Francisco and I remember he fell into the sea in his jeans in San Francisco and there was no chance to dry them until we got to Chicago. Then Graham went back to England and I went back to the Commodity Prices Stabilization Corporation. Richard was born the next year. Graham must have come back again because Lib was born. I went back to work after Richard was born but after Lib was born, I was extremely ill. When I got home after five weeks in hospital, I decided I really couldn't go back to the CPSC. WPTB and CPSC were winding down by then.

Graham came back, on his way to Saskatchewan. I seem to remember that was for briefings after his appointment as Agent-General for Saskatchewan in the U.K. and Europe. Then I followed him to England with the children in 1947. We couldn't find anywhere to live. England was still under wartime constraints. There was still rationing. You couldn't buy butter or jam or meat without coupons. I had kept the house in Canada, in New Edinburgh, so I came back with the children for the winter. In the spring of 1948, we went over again and spent a year house-hunting. We moved seven times—I can't tell you what it was like—and finally we found a house we thought would do…. Luckily we established that it was war-damaged and was subject to a claim for war reparations before we finally bought it. When we moved in and had the survey made, we found that it was riddled with dry-rot and the whole of one side was rebuilt over our heads as we lived in it. That also was not one of the most hilarious periods of our lives.

Harry Cassidy phoned one day and said he was on his way through London from Egypt and could he bring somebody to dinner. Well, thinking hurriedly—we were still rationed and had chops for dinner that evening—I went down and cut the chops into little pieces so that they could be extended rather further than the people they had been originally intended for. The wall of the dining room had been taken out. There was a tarpaulin in its place, and a heap of rubble in one corner. The friend that Harry brought turned out to be a minister of the Crown, Hilary Marquand. We had a picnic supper of a very informal but enjoyable sort.

Saskatchewan House was a lovely Regency house on Chester Street which runs off Grosvenor Place just opposite the backdoor of Buckingham Palace. (The Buckingham Palace flamingoes' feathers were used by our sparrows to build their nests. That was a nice touch.) We made do with makeshift furniture while the rebuilding was in progress. This took about six months and was pretty well a full-time job, (I more or less had to stand over the workmen because they did such stupid things unless one was there all the time.) The question of furnishing arose. I knew nothing whatever about Regency furniture but it was quite clear that the house would look ridiculous if it was furnished in a modern style, so I set to work to find out something about it and to collect appropriate pieces. We got some lovely things very cheaply. I used to wander around the back streets and out-of-the-way antique stores, digging things up. For example, we got a set of Trafalgar chairs, made in 1819, which had been signed

[34] Sir Richard Stafford Cripps (1889–1952) was a British Labour Party politician, lawyer, and diplomat. From May 1940 to January 1942, Cripps served as Ambassador to the USSR, and in March 1942, Prime Minister Winston Churchill sent him to India to negotiate with Indian leaders about Indian cooperation in the war effort in exchange for dominion status after the war. As a Member of Parliament from 1931 to 1950, he became Minister of Aircraft Production in Churchill's cabinet, 1942–1945. He headed several important economic ministries in the Atlee government, including Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1947–1950.

by the maker and the original owner which were really almost museum pieces. I had seen them from the top of a bus taking Lib to school!

…. Saskatchewan sold 28 Chester St. after we had left. Well, they couldn't help it. The lease—in London, as you probably know, you really have freehold property, you don't have freehold ownership, you have a lease that runs for 99 years—and the lease on Saskatchewan House was going to run out in 5 years. It was getting near the end and the estate—I can't remember whether it was the Duke of Devonshire or Westminster but one of them was the owner—wanted to turn the houses into apartments so they negotiated a deal. Saskatchewan gave up the remaining tag end of the lease and moved into offices opposite Canada House and sold off the furniture. I am told the furniture went to Canada House but I have never seen it there and it wouldn't be very suitable in Macdonald House but still it was good, original furniture. I spent a lot of time working on collecting it. A huge gilt mirror was my particular pride.

Then, I did some work again for the *Economist* but most of the time I was involved in the sort of thing you are involved in when your husband is an official representative. There is a good deal of entertaining to be done. We tried to keep more or less open house for people from Saskatchewan. We never knew when they might arrive. We found that students were in terrible trouble on New Year's Eve because none of them had the money to go to elegant hotels where New Year was celebrated in London …. And so we started giving a party on New Year's Eve, first of all for Saskatchewan students and then for all students and gradually it developed into a party for everybody from Canada. It ended up with about 150 people rampaging up and down the house. The first one we gave, we had had a very nice lad from Switzerland working in the house but he was going to Canada. He had set up the basement room before he left with a keg of cider and almost the last thing he did before he left was to come and say: "You needn't worry about that room. The glasses are all arranged and I put the spigot in the keg, so that everything is ready there." Luckily, I thought of checking just before the guests arrived and found the spigot had come out of the keg and the cider was all over the floor; the carpet was floating on a sea of cider. The first guests to arrive were set to work to mop up the floor. That was quite a party. They were great fun, those New Year's Eve parties and it was great fun having people from Saskatchewan visit us.

There were Canadians in and out of the house absolutely all of the time and not only Canadians but lots of other people too. For example, one of my dearest friends, who is an anthropologist at the University of Cape Town in South Africa, had two sons, one at Oxford and one at Cambridge. They became honorary members of the family; they both had pass keys and could come in anytime they wanted to. So could a lot of other people. At the end, our successor, who was by no means a lover of students, I don't think, came down one morning to find two scruffy looking types in the front hall with knapsacks on their backs. He did a double take and said, "Who are you?" "We've come to stay with the Sprys." "Well, the Sprys are not here anymore. How did you get in?" "Oh, we have latch keys." So that night the locks on the house were all changed. When the accountant checked how many outstanding keys there were, she found it was 167. Well, we had lots of visitors in and out of the house.

Question: How did Graham get the Saskatchewan appointment?

Spry: Basically, because he knew Tommy Douglas. He had been a signatory of the Regina Manifesto and when Tommy was looking around for someone who knew the people in England, he thought of Graham. Graham was a great friend of Sir Stafford Cripps and knew the other Labour people very well, so Tommy thought that he would be a useful person to put on the job.

The first job Graham had to do was to find out whether the Hudson Bay route could not be more effectively used and he did a lot of work on that. We became friends of Peter Dalgleish who ran a line of ships into Hudson Bay. We went to launchings of a couple of his ships. I took him to Shirley

Douglas' first night in a West End play, and took him around behind the scenes afterwards. Graham was in Canada at the time. Peter was a cheerful, very nice North Country man from Newcastle-on-Tyne. By some horrible mistake we were shown into the chorus ladies' dressing room instead of into Shirley Douglas' room. I have never seen anyone go so red as poor Peter!

It became clear after Graham had been A[gent] G[eneral] for a little while that there were lots of other things that the government was interested in, that Canada House just didn't have time to cope with. Several of the provinces had Agents General. B.C. had had one for over twenty-five years. Ontario had a very aggressive, able person as Agent-General. Nova Scotia had one. About the same time that Graham was appointed, Manitoba appointed Murray Armstrong…. Rennie McMullen was appointed for Alberta. So there was pretty good representation of the provinces and all kinds of things came up. At the time of the doctors' strike [1962], Graham organized Lord Taylor's trip over to Saskatchewan and organized a flow of "blacklegs," if you like, to take the place of the striking doctors. There was persistent demand for engineers, for teachers, for all sorts of special types of skill, so Graham was in the recruiting business on a big scale. There were industrial problems too: for example, when it became clear that potash was going to be important, Graham did a good deal of travelling in Europe to enlist the interest of people who were concerned with potash. He negotiated a sale of canned horsemeat to Czechoslovakia. When the pulp and paper mill was being set up in northern Saskatchewan, he was in touch with Swedish pulp and paper interests and so on. He was Agent-General, not only in the United Kingdom but also in Europe and the Near East.

Question: And this was when you turned to prairie history?

Spry: I'd been interested in Palliser[35] away back when I first became aware of western Canada and its problems. While I was in Toronto, the Frontiers of Settlement series was coming out and I knew Bill Mackintosh and the work he'd done on the series. I was interested in Palliser both in a general way as an important element in Western history and in a particular way, as being a person who put his finger on the problem of a shortage of rainfall and of a water supply in the West. And, in 1957, Graham got a letter from Lewis H. Thomas, who was then in charge of the archives in Saskatchewan, asking if he would try to find any Palliser material that might still be around. They were making a collection to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of the start of the Palliser Expedition. They had got a microfilm of the Hector Papers from the Hocken Library in the University of Otago in New Zealand. And they knew that Palliser's home had been burnt down and all his personal papers had been lost in the fire, but perhaps there was someone who had papers relating to his Expedition. Well, we used to go every Armistice Day to the Commonwealth Relations Office and had noticed once or twice that they had filing cabinets labeled "Upper Canada" and "Lower Canada" so this encouraged me to suppose that they might have material about Palliser. I got into touch with Cyril Costley-White (somebody we knew in the PRO [Public Record Office) and he put me on to an extraordinarily nice woman, a Miss Cock, who managed to get the old Colonial Office files out of the Public Record Office. She went through them and I went through them and there was obviously a lot of Palliser material. Then she arranged for me to have a pass to the Public Record Office and I discovered more and more material, mostly in the Colonial Office files but also some in the War Office files and various other files. I spent a lot of time getting copies for the Saskatchewan Archives. I also went to the Hudson's Bay Company with whom I'd been in touch earlier …. The Archives in Saskatchewan had asked for a check of Peter Fidler's papers so that some tepee rings he had mentioned might be excavated before the South

[35] John Palliser (1817–1887) was an Irish-born geographer and explorer. From 1857 to 1860, he led the British North American Exploring Expedition which investigated the geography, climate and ecology of what would later become western Canada.

Saskatchewan Valley was flooded. I had got to know the archivist, Alice Johnson, who was a very fine scholar. Yes, she was sure they had material about Palliser. So I also spent a lot of time in the Hudson's Bay Company archives working on the Palliser stuff. I also went to Ireland and New Zealand collecting Palliser material.

And then various other inquiries came in. For example, Al Turner [archivist of Saskatchewan] was concerned to find out where the Qu'Appelle Lakes Post was because there was a feud going on between a man called Petty at Indian Head and somebody else. Each of them claimed that he knew where the Post had been. Could any light be thrown on this problem?

Then an interesting thing happened. Alice Johnson phoned me one day and asked whether anyone in Saskatchewan would be interested in a Cumberland House Journal for the late 1780s. I rushed over to look at it and we compared it with the Phillip Turnor Journal they had in their own archives and it was clearly a transcript in Phillip Turnor's own handwriting, so I got in touch with our archives. An old man had died and all his books had been sold to Foyles bookstore. His granddaughter, age sixteen, had been assigned to be there and to hand the books over when Foyles' representative arrived. While she was waiting, she'd been looking through the books and had found one of those marble-covered manuscript books. She pulled it out and thought it looked interesting, so she didn't put it back. She took it to her history teacher the next day who saw that it was obviously an interesting manuscript and had the wit to take it to the Hudson's Bay Company. And here it was, Phillip Turnor's Journal. The price was £50, which Saskatchewan could not afford. The Public Archives of Canada got it in the end.

Basically, the Palliser material I found was in the Hudson's Bay Company archives and in the Public Record Office but in addition I was extremely lucky. I hunted around for collateral descendants. Palliser died without any children. He was never married—well, I wouldn't guarantee there were no children but he was never married. But I did discover the son of the cousin of the niece who inherited the Palliser property. I went to Palliser's home which had just been purchased by a very interesting army man, a British Major. He was extremely kind and helpful. He contacted all sorts of local people who had any Palliser contacts. One of them had even known Palliser, Mr. Arthur Hunt, to whom I talked just before he died, an old man of ninety. I got some leads from Ireland which ended up by my finding Ian Fairholme, son of this collateral relative. He had some material which he was very generous in allowing me to use and he put me on to various other possible sources of material. I kept on hunting and discovered a crumb of information here and a crumb of information there. I went back to Ireland several times. I went, for example, to see Lord Dunraven's place—he had been a friend of Palliser's—and Lady Olein Wyndham-Quin, who was in Adare Lodge at the time, let me search the library for material. I was being escorted round Ireland by two members of the Irish Country Women's Association. They came in with me. The library was a huge high room with bookcases right up every wall. These two youngsters proceeded to climb up the bookcases, taking off their shoes at least, hunting for the Palliser report which did not come to light. But the sight of those two girls swarming up Lord Dunraven's bookcases is a very pleasing memory.

They took me all over. They took me to Stuart Decies' house [Henry Villiers-Stuart, 1st Baron Stuart De Decies Henry Villiers-Stuart, 1st Baron Stuart de Decies (8 June 1803—23 January 1874) British politician], which has since been pulled down. He was a friend and political enemy of Palliser's. It was a fantastic place. The original fort had been built to withstand the Vikings when they came up the Black Water River and, much later—indeed, I would think in Palliser's time—a very large and beautiful house had been built which was just crumbling with dry rot. The owner had recently died and the new owner was not there but the housekeeper let me in. The immense drawing-room was without furniture but it was knee deep in musty documents, lying on the floor. I spent the day on my hands and knees—searching through them. The smell of mildew was almost overpowering. The whole economic history of Ireland was there, rent rolls going back to the Middle Ages but—no Palliser

material. I tried to find somebody who knew something about these documents. Nobody could be found. I rushed back to Dublin, told the archival authorities with whom I had been in touch earlier, about them, and begged them to see that something was done to preserve these records, but I was told that it had been impossible to get any sort of answer out of the owners. It was heartbreaking. The next time I went to Ireland I finally found the new owner who was living somewhere else by then because the house had been demolished. He told me that he begged the people in Dublin to take charge of these documents, but could never get any response out of them. He and his wife had, in the end, stuffed what seemed to be the most important of the documents into sacks and taken them and dumped them on the doorstep of the Archives building. The rest had been burnt. If you can imagine!

I found Palliser's lawyer after long searching, a week after he had destroyed all the Palliser papers because nobody had asked for them for fifty years. However, I did have some luck. Major Gray introduced me to the son of Palliser's estate agent who produced some documents and gave a lot of interesting information. I finally found Palliser's mother's house, Annsgift, after four years of hunting. One of the Irish Country Women—I happened to mention that I had been looking for this place—she said, "Oh, we used to live in it." But just in time because in fact they had sold it to a German family, which was making jarring alterations in the gracious Georgian house. Ireland is simply full of Germans and Netherlanders. The Palliser home is now owned by a Netherlander who was on trial for war crimes.

Well, one thing led to another and it was quite evident that there was a good deal of material even though Palliser's papers had been burned and probably the papers of his brother, Edward, which also were kept in the attic. I found that there was a collection of Palliser papers in Alberta, made by J.N. Wallace, among the Rutherford papers. In it, there was correspondence with Caroline Fairholme who was the niece who inherited Comeragh House from Palliser. Another collection had been made by H.S. Patterson, Q.C., of Calgary, who had been a very active field historian and had gone out and looked at all the places that Palliser had travelled through. He had died but his son had not only all the papers but the original portrait of Palliser which had been painted by Mary Severn, the daughter of Joseph Severn, who made the famous drawing of Keats. He had gone to Rome with Keats when Keats was dying. The Severns were great friends with the Pallisers. And I finally found Mary Severn's papers after, again, endless searching and hunting. I discovered that Lady Birkenhead, on the next street, had them. She would not, however, let me go through the whole collection. She loaned me typewritten copies of some diaries and letters and finally the originals of the Mary Severn diaries. Why she ever let those out of her possession, I can't imagine. She was using them as material for a book she was writing herself. She had written a fascinating book called *Against Oblivion* about Keats and Joseph Severn. In it, the Pallisers appeared frequently, which eventually led me to Lady Birkenhead.

The search for Palliser material went on and on and it ties in with my work with the ACWW [Associated Country Women of the World] because I had to go to Australia for them, so I stopped in New Zealand on the way and went to the Hocken Library at the University of Otago to study the Hector Papers first hand which was a great help. I also pursued various other Palliser connections and contacts which didn't lead to very much, but at least I was able to clear up some possibilities.

In Ceylon, for example, where Edward Palliser had lived for many years and Palliser's brother-in-law to be, William Fairholme, I was taken by a Ceylonese friend to stay at Nuwara Eliya which was where these Palliser connections had been. But nothing came of that except that I got some idea of what the country was like.[36]

[36] "Nuwara Eliya's climate lent itself to becoming the prime sanctuary of the British civil servants and planters in Ceylon. Nuwara Eliya, called Little England, was a hill country retreat where the British colonialists could immerse themselves in their pastimes such as fox hunting, deer hunting, elephant hunting, polo, golf and cricket." *Wikipedia* entry for Nuwara Eliya.

Well to make a long story short, "Rache" Lovat Dickson, was then head of Macmillan's [publishing house]. He was a Canadian from Alberta. He was a good friend of ours. He used to organize for the Canadian student organization a once-a-year literary dinner to which we always went. We met Margaret Laurence among others at this annual dinner which was a fascinating affair. One day, at a dinner party I was sitting next to Rache and somehow—he was asking what I was doing—I started telling him about Palliser. In the end he said, "Why don't you write a book about it?" So I did and Macmillan published it.[37]

I realized there was still a great deal to be found out about Palliser. Eventually I went on to do the Champlain Society volume.[38] I sent a questionnaire to all the major libraries in North America asking if they had copies of the Palliser Report. I wanted to track down all the available copies of the Report to get some idea of how many there were. The questionnaire brought to light something new. The University of Nebraska at Lincoln has a kind of penny dreadful version of *The Solitary Hunter*, the little book that Palliser wrote after his 1847–1948 trip in the U.S.A. Later I saw it when I went to a conference there. It is incredible, with illustrations that had absolutely nothing to do with the *Solitary Hunter*. Where they ever dredged them up, I can't imagine. It is the only copy that I have ever heard of, of this lurid publication. Well, that was the Palliser work. New fragments of material are still turning up and someday I hope to write his biography.

While I was doing the Palliser search, I was also doing a good deal of unofficial work for the government. Of course, I organized all the household and the parties and things of that sort and looked after research inquiries as well as handling the distribution of Saskatchewan films, so I was given the use of a secretary. She was a fine secretary who is now in Canada, a girl from Jamaica. I never would have got the Palliser stuff done if it hadn't been for the work she did. One of the things I tried to do was contact all the descendants of all the people that were mentioned in any of the Palliser material I came across. One of the people he had obviously known was H.J. Warre (later Sir Henry).[39] One evening Evelyn, this charming girl, was at a dinner party. She sat next to somebody called Warre. And she said to him, "Are you by any chance any connection of General Sir Henry J. Warre?" And he said, "Yes, I am his nephew." He had his uncle's papers. Now the Warre Papers that concern Canada are in the Public Archives here in Ottawa. Evelyn helped with many such searches. Mrs. Edgecumbe, who was Henry Lefroy's grand-daughter[40]—we tracked her down. She didn't have much in the way of documentary material but she did have a wonderful portrait of Lefroy which she promised to leave to the Canadian Archives. Whether she is still alive, I don't know. Bit by bit, crumb by crumb, information built up. It is not complete by any means yet, but it's more complete than it was.

The other thing that I got involved in in this period was work as representative of the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada [FWIC], on the Executive Committee of the Associated Country Women of the World. The national president of FWIC, Nancy Adams of Saskatchewan, asked Graham if he would persuade me to be their representative on the Executive Committee (as it then was) of this international organization of rural women's organizations—like Women's Institutes. I don't know if you know about Women's Institutes. They were started in Canada and spread all round

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[37] Irene M. Spry, *The Palliser Expedition: The Dramatic Story of Western Canadian Exploration 1857-1860* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1963).

[38] Irene M. Spry, ed., *The Papers of the Palliser Expedition, 1857–1860* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1968).

[39] Henry James Warre (1819–1898) was a British Army officer who, after an appointment to Canada in 1839, led an official investigation of the river route from Montreal to the Red River Settlement. Subsequently, in 1845, he was sent on a military reconnaissance mission, through the Rockies to the Oregon Country to prepare for an Anglo-American war over the territory. During the trip he made paintings and sketches of the region, and reported on possible military preparations.

[40] John Henry Lefroy (1817–1890) was a British Army officer and later colonial administrator, who also made scientific studies of the Earth's magnetism. As part of this latter interest, he made a field expedition to the Canadian northwest to measure magnetism from Montreal to the Arctic Circle.

the world. When I went into the Home Economics College at the University of Otago in 1962, there was a picture of Adelaide Hoodless, who was one of the founders of the Canadian WIs, on the wall. When I was in Malaysia they made me a wonderful hand-painted scarf with maple leaves—as they conceived maple leaves—on it, in honour of the Canadian WIs. They were having their tenth birthday party when I was there. Again, to make a very long story short, I represented the Canadian WIs on the Executive Committee of ACWW from 1954 until I left England in 1967 and I became the chairman of the Executive Committee. I did that for six years. It was pretty well full-time work and in 1968 I became Deputy-President of ACWW. All of this meant that I was at seven of the triennial international conferences that are held in different parts of the world. I have been at two triennial conferences in Australia, one in Germany, one in the United States, one in Scotland, one in Norway—all the conferences since 1954 except one in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) in 1957 and one in Kenya in '77.

I have been deeply involved in this international work which is of enormous value. You were asking earlier whether such international contacts had changed my view of things. Well, certainly working with ACWW has. I found that whereas academics were *talking* about development, these people were actually doing it at the grassroots. I went into ACWW very reluctantly and with a very haughty sort of academic view of these poor amateur people. They were in fact doing splendid development work on a practical scale right at the village level and it's very very impressive what they're doing, and they're doing it themselves with a certain amount of help from the outside, from governments and UN bodies.

I can give you an example of what the importance internationally of this movement is. At the time of the Freedom from Hunger campaign—we have consultative status with … [several United Nations organizations]—we were sent a draft statement of the campaign's objectives. In this statement there was a lot about breeding better cattle and growing better crops and using more fertilizers and so forth—not a single word about *using* the food better, about better nutrition or better understanding of nutritional problems—so we sent in an amended statement which we thought was necessary, which included due emphasis on nutrition and knowledge of nutrition. And our then international president, Geerda van Beekhoff of the *Plattelandsvrouwen*[41] of the Netherlands, a most impressive woman, went to FAO [Food and Agricultural Organization of the UN] with our revised statement which was accepted. She was appointed the only woman on the committee to organize the NGO [non-governmental organization] work for FFHC [Freedom From Hunger Campaign]. What we do basically is to remind the international authorities that there are women and that the women are essential to achievement.

It isn't just the elite women, particularly the urban elite, who are essential. It's the ordinary women who devote their lives to bringing up their families and running their homes who are absolutely necessary if there is ever going to be progress *throughout* society, not just among a handful of special people with special educational privileges. The thing about this movement which is to me so amazing is that it isn't the result of do-gooders imposing progress from the top on the people in the villages and the people in the small towns. It's the people in the villages and the people in the small towns *winning* progress *for themselves*, winning for themselves educational opportunities in spite of extraordinary difficulties, winning for themselves a chance to take part in the development of their communities, and of their countries, and of the world.

May I give you another example or two of what seems to me the great importance of this work? Our first Lady Aberdeen Scholar—we have various projects and one of our important projects was the Lady Aberdeen Scholarship—was a woman from Uganda, Nesta Rugumayo. She had been working with the women's groups in the villages on the problem of kwashiorkor, the illness that the first baby gets when the second baby is born and the first baby is weaned—in other words, usually

[41] Dutch for "Countrywomen".

the first baby then goes onto a carbohydrate diet, so it's a protein deficiency illness. Nesta [saw this transition caused] … great trouble not only because of limited economic means at the disposal of the village women, but also because there are traditions in Uganda that women do not eat eggs or fish, which are the two inexpensive available protein foods, so Nesta was trying to find some possible source of protein. Her husband was taking a degree in England. Nesta had come over with him with her little boy (who is now a six-foot engineer) and we arranged a special course for her at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

She used to come and see us at the office and she came in one day in a state of despair saying, "I have learned that the solution to the problem is to use leguminous food—beans, things of this sort—but unless you cook beans for a long time, they're toxic for small children. We have very little fuel in Uganda. The scarcity of fuel in the villages is acute. What is the solution?" It happened that we had that day received a publication from Fiji called *Hints for South Pacific Kitchens* and in this publication was a model of a stove which had been devised in India which could be made out of local clay which would conserve heat and make it possible to cook things like beans for long periods of time at low heat with very little fuel. We gave this to Nesta. I wish you could have seen her face light up. "That's it! That's the answer!" And she took it away with her.

Well, that's the sort of thing that happened. I could multiply instances of this sort again and again. In the down-to-earth, day-to-day problems that women face in trying to raise their children to be strong, healthy citizens, they need help in solving them. First of all, they need to know that these aren't problems that Allah in his wisdom has sent to afflict them but things that result from germs, from lack of nutrition, from impure water, whatever it may be, things that you can do something about once you know that it's not the will of Allah or some equivalent deity. And so this is what the people in the villages can learn by banding together. Because the women are often too shy to say anything with their men around. They need their own groups until they find out that they can say something that is important—so, if the women can get together, can find out that they can solve these problems and what resources there are for solving these problems, then you can't stop them. Once they find there is something they can do to help their children, to keep their children from dying, they do it.

Question: One last angle—we haven't talked about your University of Saskatchewan connections.

Spry: I met George Britnell[42] when he was doing post-graduate work in Toronto with Innis. He became a very great friend and an important element in my intellectual development. I also met Vern Fowke[43] when he was in Toronto. I didn't know him as well as I knew George until a good deal later when, through Saskatchewan connections, I got to know him and his wife Helen very well. It became quite clear to me that Britnell, Fowke, other people at Saskatchewan, were doing important and original work. Another Saskatchewan historian of whom I became aware through Saskatchewan

[42] George Edwin Britnell (1903–1961) was born in London, England and moved with his parents to Saskatchewan where his father homesteaded. He entered the University of Saskatchewan in 1926, and after a year at the London School of Economics, he was appointed instructor in economics at the University of Saskatchewan in 1930. He would go on to study for his M.A. and Ph.D. at the University of Toronto, graduating in 1938. He was appointed assistant professor of cconomics at the University of Saskatchewan in 1936, and would later become professor and head of the Department of Political Science. He would publish *The Wheat Economy* in 1939, and *Canadian Agriculture in War and Peace* (with V.C. Fowke) in 1962.

[43] Vernon Clifford Fowke (1907–1966) was born in Parry Sound, Ontario. He graduated from the University of Saskatchewan in 1929, and then joined their teaching staff. He would go on to graduate work at the University of Chicago and University of Washington, graduating with a Ph.D. in 1942. His dissertation was published in 1946 as *Canadian Agricultural Policy*, establishing him as an influential historian of Canadian agriculture. He would subsequently publish *The National Policy and the Wheat Economy* in 1957.

House was Hilda Neatby.[44] Her book, *So Little for the Mind*, made a great impression on both Graham and me. We found that when educationalists came over to interview teachers, we had to hide the book away. It created a certain resistance in the minds of the members of the Department of Education. I didn't get to know Hilda until I taught for a year at Saskatoon, after I left London, from 1967 to 1968; when I got to know her very well and to admire her even more than I had admired her from that first book and from her historical writings.

The last time I saw Vern Fowke we talked over our respective research interests at the time. He was working on a book to be called *The Palliser Triangle: The First Hundred Years* and I was working on a book on the period between the heyday of the fur trade and the heyday of grain trade and settlement. It seemed to me increasingly that people tended to jump straight from the heyday of the fur trade to the heyday of the grain trade and the full flood of settlement. More and more I became aware that there had been a long difficult, indeed, an agonizing process of readjustment to make it possible for settlement to prosper when the flood of settlement came in.

I think the first thing that made me aware of this was the BBC. When I was in London, they asked me to advise them on a programme they were doing on the Mounties. In reading up for this and thinking about it, it seemed to me that the economic implications of the NWMP [North-West Mounted Police] were enormous. The demand that they created for all sorts of products, for all sorts of skills, for all sorts of labour was of great significance, even apart from their role in establishing the essential prerequisite for settlement of law and order. The help that they gave to the early settlers was vital and the introduction to the settlers of skills you need to live on the prairies, which a great many immigrants came without. If it hadn't been for the Mounties to advise and help them, I imagine that many of them never would have managed effectively to establish themselves on the prairies.

Well, other things led on from the Mounties. What about the missionaries? What was their economic role? What were the economic implications? Eventually, it seemed to me that the whole pattern of life of an economy based on sharing, an economy based on common property in the products and resources of tribal lands before the Indian treaties, involved a completely different view of the world and of the basis of economic organization, from the view of the institutional structure of the world and the basis of economic organization that the white man brought with him.

As long as the fur trade was the dominant economic activity, the problem was resolved by a partnership between the white fur traders and the Indians as middlemen or as trappers, as the case might be. But of course, this kind of partnership ceased to be possible, ceased to be a valid basis for the development of land as real estate for towns and farms…. [In earlier centuries] land was the mother that produced the resources on which the people who lived there depended for subsistence, for their livelihood … to be used by each generation and passed on to the next. That got me into a study, a very preliminary study, of what happened when the white men came to *exploit* resources as contrasted with the Indians who lived in the tribal territories and *used* resources for their own subsistence.

And clearly what happened was, when the white men forced the Indians—and the Mounties played their part in this—to allow strangers to come into their tribal territories and use those resources, that meant those resources were depleted extremely quickly. Therefore, you had to get all sorts of new institutions, the institution of private property, licensing restrictions on the fisheries (the Gilchrist Diary in the Saskatchewan archives, for example shows what happened in that connection). All sorts of new arrangements had to be brought into operation which simply didn't fit in with the Indian way

[44] Hilda Ada Marion Neatby (1904–1975) was a professor of history at the University of Saskatchewan where she had a long and distinguished career. In addition to serving as the first editor of *Saskatchewan History*, she served on the Royal Commission on the National Development in the Arts and Letters and Sciences, better known as the Massey Commission. Out of this work, she published *So Little for the Mind* (1953), a critique of the Canadian educational system. She also published *Quebec 1760-1791: The Revolutionary Age* (1966), in the Canadian Centenary series.

of doing things, the Indian sharing type of economy. That's what I tried to examine in the paper that I did for the Plains Centre meeting in Regina.[45]

Vern Fowke had a great influence on me, largely through his first book about agricultural policy which made clear the importance of the frontier of settlement in Canada as well as in the United States. The fact that it was a different sort of frontier in Canada was important, as was the fact that the frontier of settlement in south-western Ontario, as it now is, ran into the limits imposed by the Precambrian Shield, which meant that to get an expanding frontier, Canada had to leap-frog across the Shield to the Prairies. Now this was already inherent in a good deal of the work that Innis did and that Mackintosh did. The discussion of the Shield as an important factor in Canadian economic development is related to this but it wasn't until I went through Fowke's work that I began to understand how tremendously important an expanding frontier is, even if you don't have a staple. If you get a frontier of settlement that stimulates investment, stimulates economic development, perhaps you don't need a staple. You only need the staple later on to balance your international balance of payments, to sustain, if you like, the economy that the expanding frontier has established.

Yes, I think the Saskatchewan group, Fowke, Britnell, Buckley[46]—and there were others—I think they could only have developed as they did in Saskatchewan, against the background of prairie problems specifically. They were very much aware, of course, of the importance of geography as the basis of economic development. Well, Innis had been as well. In fact, when I wrote a report for the London *Economist* Intelligence Unit about the Canadian economy in 1947, they wrote back and said, "There is too much geography in this," to which I replied "There is too much geography in Canada." I may say that I was revolted to discover later that an English woman was put on to correct my report. I discovered that about a year ago. If Geoffrey Crowther had still been alive, he would have heard from me! I hope he has heard from me anyway.

The Saskatchewan School[47] was basically, I think, a realistic school in the Innis tradition. They didn't concentrate on abstract analysis. Well, that's not quite true. They did of course, use analytical tools. The abstractions came out of their observations. I remember a paper, for example, that George Britnell and Mabel Timlin wrote about the role of monopolies in relation to the well-being of the Saskatchewan economy. They were essentially realists but they also used theoretical tools and I think they were very much prairie economists.

A little earlier, you spoke of Western alienation, Western revolt. That of course was an element in their work, but to me, it has always seemed that it was the positive side of this that was important—

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[45] This paper was presented in 1974, and was published in 1976 as, Irene Spry, "The Great Transformation: The Disappearance of the Commons in Western Canada, in Richard Allen, ed., *Man and Nature on the Prairies, Canadian Plains Studies 6* (Regina: Canadian Plains Center, 1976), 21-45. A revised version of this paper was published in 1983 as, Irene M. Spry, "The Tragedy of the Loss of the Commons in Western Canada," in Ian L. Getty and Antoine S. Lussier, eds., *As long as the Sun Shines and Water Flows: A Reader in Canadian Native Studies* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983), 203-228. A precursor to these two studies was published in 1968. See Irene M. Spry, "Transition from a Nomadic to a Settled Economy in Western Canada, 1856–96," *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, Fourth Series, vol. VI, sect. II (June 1968), 187-202.

[46] Kenneth Arthur Haig Buckley (1918–1970) was born in Saskatchewan, and studied at the University of Toronto and the London School of Economics, after which he returned to Saskatchewan and taught in the Department of Economics and Political Science. In 1955, he published an influential book entitled *Capital Formation in Canada, 1896-1930*. It studied the impact of the wheat economy on Canadian economic growth.

[47] "The Saskatchewan School" in Canadian economic history and political economy refers to a prominent group of scholars at the University of Saskatchewan during the 1940s and 1950s who analyzed regional economic structures, agricultural policy, and the role of government. They extended Harold Innis's staples thesis by detailing how agricultural commodities and federal policies structured western Canadian economic life. This group included George Britnell, Mabel Timlin, and Kenneth Buckley, with Vernon Fowke acting as the anchor of the group. See Robin Neill, "Economic Historiography in the 1950s: The Saskatchewan School," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol 34, no. 3 (Automne 1999 Fall), 243-260.

their study of the development of the cooperative movement as a solution for problems, their understanding of the role of the government in relation to the private sector, giving a counterpoise to the private sector in developing the Western economy. It wasn't just a revolt *against* things. It was a very coherent and constructive attempt to understand how solutions had been worked out.

Question: There must have been differences in how men and women were regarded during your career.

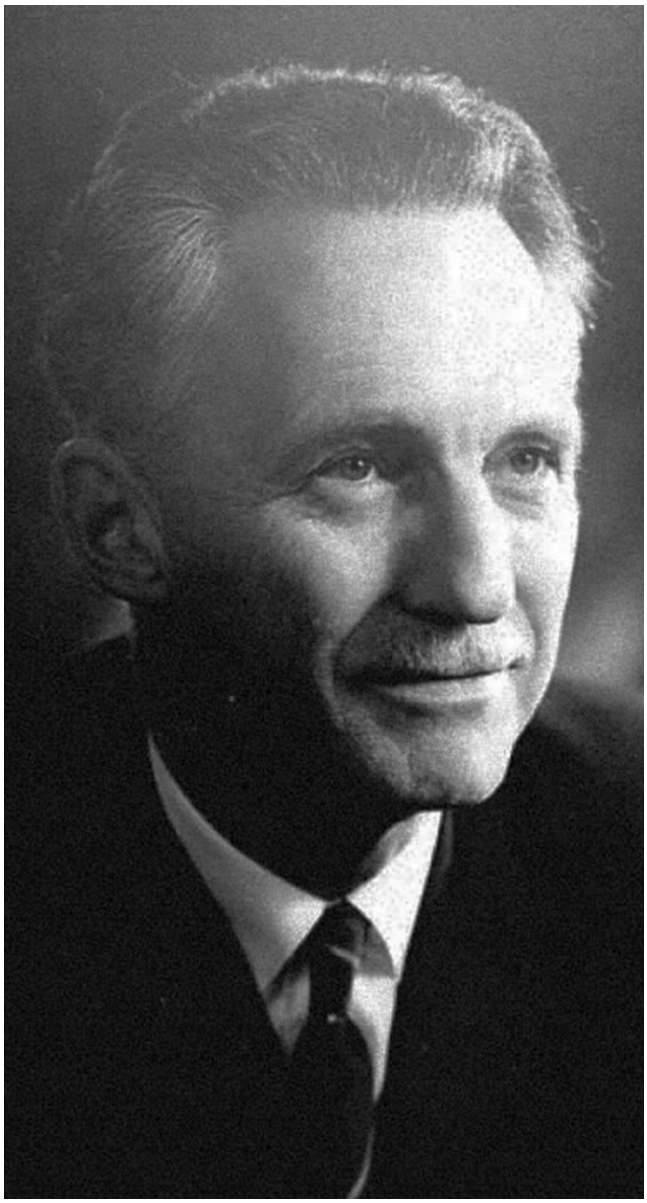
Spry: Personally, I was never made to feel that I was any different from my male colleagues. There were problems. I wasn't admitted to Hart House.[48] I wasn't admitted to Keynes' economic organization in Cambridge but this was just like the weather. It was just something that existed. Individually and personally I always felt I was completely one of the group of scholars who were trying to understand what was going on in the world.

Other difficulties weren't the fault of my colleagues; they were just the fault of geography. Obviously, I couldn't be married to Graham in London and go on working in Toronto. There was this much to fault, not among my colleagues personally, but the university authorities, which in the period of the Depression ruled that no married women could work there. Not that that would have solved my problem, it was the result of the geography of marriage, essentially. The same thing was true later. I would still be teaching in Saskatchewan if Graham hadn't wanted to be in Ottawa. If I was going to be married to him, I had to be in Ottawa too, but I spent as much time in Saskatchewan and the West as I could.

For my money, Saskatchewan is the place to live. In fact, I consider Saskatchewan the Athens of modern North America. It's the most civilized community that I have ever had the good fortune to live in.

[48] Hart House is the main student activity center and cultural center of the University of Toronto. It was established in 1919, and was financed by Vincent Massey. His donation stipulated that the building was only to be used by men. It was only after his death, in 1967, that women were allowed to become members.

Interview with Samuel Delbert Clark
University of Toronto, June to September 1982



S. D. Clark (1910–2003)

Professor Del Clark grew up in rural Saskatchewan, attended the University of Saskatchewan for both his bachelor's and master's degrees, and then studied at the University of Toronto, McGill, and the London School of Economics. He was one of Canada's leading sociologists and a founder of the discipline at the University of Toronto. It might appear strange that he was one of the scholars I wanted to interview but he was involved with the Canadian Frontiers of Settlement series at McGill and was

the director of the series on Social Credit in Alberta, two major collective academic projects on prairie Canada completed during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. He also edited an introductory volume on sociology in Canada in 1942, *Social Development of Canada,* that gave evidence of his prairie origins. It was in that context that he agreed to meet for an interview.

Professor Clark was recovering from a heart operation when our conversation took place in 1982. It was a hot day and his University of Toronto office on the very busy Spadina Avenue in downtown Toronto needed the ventilation of open windows. He spoke softly and, as we feared, passing buses and streetcars ensured that only parts of some answers could be heard on the Dictaphone recording. The transcript is a matter of guesswork in some places, indicated by square brackets.

What struck me at the time of our conversation – we had never met before – was his informal manner and the precise detail in his answers. He listed his annual income at one point – much of it lost to the noise of the street – and he offered succinct comments on colleagues and scholarly work without hesitation.

Question: I'm interested in the way prairie scholars have written about Canada and the prairies, how prairie scholars have shaped our view of the prairies. And I'm interested in prairie scholars. I think of you as being one of the generation that did much to shape later impressions.

Clark: But I've not done much work on the prairies. An M.A. thesis on dry land farming in Saskatchewan[1]—that's about it.

Question: Well, the early book, the first book, the one published in 1940 [1942],[2] had prairie material in it.

Clark: Yes. I think the bias that one develops with growing up in western Canada is reflected pretty well all the way through …

Question: I'd like to run over your biography.... Then I'd like to spend some time on your childhood and your university training, your M.A., the 1940 [1942] book, and then the Social Credit series….

Clark: Well, born February 24 in 1910 on a farm north of Lloydminster, three miles inside the border of Saskatchewan. Starting out, as far as school is concerned, with some sort of voice defect where I'd very great difficulty being understood by anybody except my mother, and I … started school and dropped out of school—I wasn't getting anywhere because the teacher couldn't understand me. I had an operation—something with my tongue—so I came back a little late. When I say a little late, I think really about age eight, and then moving ahead very rapidly in public school.

[1] S.D. Clark, "Settlement in Saskatchewan with Special Reference to Dry Farming," M.A. thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1931.

[2] The book being referred to was undoubtedly S.D. Clark, *The Social Development of Canada: An Introductory Study with Select Documents* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1942). Clark published no book in 1940, and the date given here was a slip.

Question: What kind of school?

Clark: Oh a rural school, approximately 30 pupils, one-room, [called] Durness [Alberta]. I travelled two and a half miles to school—dead of winter, either by horseback, or cutter, and in the summer on a two-wheeled cart. Mostly horseback, but there were the other ways too. Going on through—this is not a boast; I think this is simply rather a striking statement of fact. I remained for a long while as the first person to pass grade 8 in that school, and then I did grade nine in the same school…. sat at the end of a row and worked by myself all day—but then, at the end of the school day, the teacher stayed overtime for maybe half an hour or so.

Question: Who taught you?

Clark: I can start at the beginning or I can start at the end. The teacher who taught me grade nine was from Edmonton—her name was Miss Smith. My first teacher was from Nova Scotia. Somewhere along the way there was a teacher out from England with a very strong English accent—very hard to understand—terribly British. We got a great kick out of tramping on the Union Jack [in] … the school closet. Another teacher was from a local community just thirty miles away called Islay, who was thoroughly and completely incompetent and was finally fired in March or April of that year, and then a farmer who had been school teacher took on for the balance of the year. He was a very good teacher, an excellent teacher. Those were some of the teachers.

Question: Looking back, you will have thought of the quality of that instruction. How would it have measured up?

Clark: Well, of course, you say 'measured up'—measured up against what? I think, on the whole, it was reasonably good. It was, as I say, starting out with a Nova Scotia teacher and ending up with this teacher from Edmonton—I suppose I'd have to say it was about fifty/fifty of good teachers and bad teachers. The worst teacher ….—complete lack of discipline—… Until the parents discovered this in March, we spent most of the time wandering around outside, being called in and then climbing out through the window and disappearing. That was the kind of year it had been, so I don't know how much I learned that year. Probably most of what I learned that year was taught by this Mr. Martin. He was one of these very old-fashioned school teachers who had taken up farming, and he came back in again—he continued the next year. He was an extremely good teacher….

Question: Could you read when you went school?

Clark: Oh, I think the answer would be no. I didn't come from a scholarly home. Neither my mother nor father was at all well-educated. My mother, all the time until she died, kept up correspondence. There was the odd letter that I would get from my father that I valued very highly—with a great many misspelled words. I don't recall actually. I don't think it was the kind of thing that happens today. I don't think there were any children's books in the house.

Question: Were there books in the house?

Clark: Very few. Jehovah's Witness books—not that my parents were Jehovah's Witness—but along came these books for *free*, so we took them. No, it wasn't an academic background.

Question: What was your mother's and father's background?

Clark: They were both from Meaford, Ontario, my father growing up on the farm, and then going west in 1905. My mother—her father was a blacksmith and a bit of a drunk to boot, as most blacksmiths were—was a very fine person. She was a Methodist and dad was Presbyterian, but they both ended up as Presbyterians.

Question: There was a local Presbyterian Church?

Clark: No, there was—a great distance away—a small Anglican Church, but any religious service that was held, was held in Durness School. This Anglican clergyman, at one stage, was brought over and we would have religious services in this school. There must have been a Presbyterian that came out from the town—Lloydminster. I can remember going to the school in the spring, at the time of break-up, on a stone-boat. I suppose we went to church fairly regularly. I think it was in grade nine I became an avowed atheist, studying Ancient History where the Greeks have all these gods—well, how can I be sure that the God we have is the right God—or a god at all? But my mother was still religious—not terribly religious—stopped going to church and my father very much dropped away from the church in later years, so that I didn't have much of a religious upbringing—very little reading of the Bible ….

Question: How much older was your brother than you?

Clark: Two years. There was a real division there. My brother and I grew up playing together, certainly as long as we were going to public school. The younger brother, the kid brother, was four years younger—an enormous difference—so he never really became part of the gang, and when I say the 'gang'—my brother and myself, and a number of people in the school …. I suppose I'd have to describe myself, in that context, as the star pupil.

Question: Were you athletic …?

Clark: Not really. Played a little baseball, played a little soccer—never became good at anything…. soccer, because this was an English settlement. Over half of the people were from England and had been in Lloydminster for a number of years …. There was a change later …. Probably about three or three and a half years after I started school we stopped playing soccer and took up baseball. Not hockey—there was a skating rink—well, this man from Durness, he was an old bachelor and every year he flooded [an area] which was a mile from school, and we would go there and skate. Of course, it was an open-air rink. You'd take off your boots, and put on your skates and then end up by putting on these frozen boots afterwards. There'd be no place to change.

Question: Was there a town nearby?

Clark: There was a village three or four miles away—Streamstown [Alberta, 19 km northwest of Lloydminster]. There was a railway station there. It was a school district. CPR came through, elevators, and a grocery store, hardware store.

Question: The farm—was it a grain farm or was it mixed?

Clark: Mixed. Somewhere in the order of 100 head of cattle, quite a substantial number of cattle, but it was very much mixed. It was wheat farming and cattle-raising…. butter and eggs. Chickens, but no

ducks, no geese, no sheep…. My father wasn't the richest farmer in the area, but he was a well-to-do farmer, suffered certainly through the depression. I think he was the first to own a Model T Ford back about 1916; bought himself a McLaughlin Buick about 1920.

Question: Tractor?

Clark: Oh yes, of course. The old tractor was a Fairbanks Morse, [I regard it with] nostalgia, one cylinder, but that was only used for threshing. [We got a] Case tractor about 1923…. we moved in 1920, from the old homestead farm to a much larger farm two or three miles away, and I can pinpoint some things in terms of before 1920 and after 1920 ….. A lot of breaking had to be done in the early years. I did an awful lot of cutting brush, I'll tell you, during the summer.

Question: Did you have a role as a farm worker at an early age?

Clark: Oh, I used to claim that I was the hired man's assistant…. The hired man worked for my older brother and my father. So I had been pretty active…. I never took a lead. I suppose my academic career, to some extent, turns on this fact. And I didn't have a sister until six years after me. I had an older brother who became a very good farmer, and was good from the beginning. So he was the person who worked with dad, and I was the person who worked with mother. I washed dishes, which I still do, milked cows—that was women's work more than men's—gathered eggs. I didn't take to horses…. I can remember during the influenza epidemic in 1919, everybody was in the house the whole day, day after day, [I was] washing dishes….

My brother never passed grade eight. But my mother was very good about that. When I came home from university with the Governor General's Medal, she just sort of looked at it, and that was all, and never played up the difference between myself and my brother. It was done very subtly. The same really was true of my father. In the case of my mother, she didn't talk about this "great student" or anything else. He was a good farmer and I was a good student and that was about the end of it. And I think he was such a good farmer that, you know, right up until the day he died, we were very, very fond of each other….

Question: So there you were in Lloydminster High School, in Saskatchewan, having done your first nine grades in the Alberta school system.

Clark: And a year behind in Latin was the consequence because that wasn't required in grade nine in Alberta. There were good teachers. I would say there were two or three very good teachers. Miss Cain, the principal, and the … history teacher; darned if I can think of his name. He went off with a high school teacher from Regina and became an NDP-er. One or two duds … but mostly they were pretty good teachers….

I boarded with my grandmother in Lloydminster. I would come home, I guess, several weekends, particularly until the middle of winter…. It wasn't a happy period in my life by any means. I didn't like living with my grandmother and … well, really, two crippled aunts. The boarding houses [appeared] much more exciting.

Question: How did the country boy do in the town school?

Clark: Well, the country boy [adjusted] very quickly …. The local barber said, whoever was first, he would give them a free haircut, so I got a free haircut. There was one girl, and it was a fight between her and me about who was going to come out on top.

Question: Dances? Parties?

Clark: Well, the big dances were in the local school, Durness. That was quite a history there. Up until, oh, it would be about 1928, these would be very much country dances—no drinking whatsoever, men sitting on one side of the school, women sitting on the other side …. Then the school started being invaded by the people from the town, coming out in their cars, and the dances began to change in character. The foxtrot was in …. I don't remember ever having gone to a dance in town.

Question: Was there any debate in the family about whether you should go to university?

Clark: No, there was none whatsoever—I didn't have to talk my parents into it … No, just from my grandmother living in Lloydminster—year after year she would write "When is Delbert going to stop going to school and get a job?" and this kept persisting all the way through … to university.

Question: But you had the ambition—did you have a clear goal?

Clark: Oh, well that's a bit of a long story…. I wanted a whole string of degrees after my name…. The logic to that? Well, two slight episodes here. I think it was probably the last year in high school; I went up to a U.F.A. [United Farmers of Alberta] convention in Edmonton, and went around to the School of Medicine, because I had the idea that I wanted to become a doctor, and I guess it was a student, he was like a young doctor to me—he took me all through the school right to the … cadavers. And I came back home and I never mentioned medicine again. There was no conscious thinking about it or anything else—I just forgot about medicine. There was an old fella who talked to, and I suppose I'd have to say, influenced, my father, and in a way influenced me, that the big money was to be made in accounting. So I went to university to take accounting. The University of Saskatchewan had a Bachelor of Commerce degree, and I arrive at university, and I'm in the Rector's office … and I decided I didn't want to take Commerce, I wanted to do Arts and Science—history was my great love. So, I made a switch right there at the last moment.…

Question: You went to Saskatoon on the train yourself to do this? This was in 1927? ….

Clark: Oh, yeah. I guess I got on the train at 5:00 in the morning, arrived in Saskatoon about 11:00. Heavy suitcase. No advance arrangements whatsoever…. Not even a room, and then walked [all the way to the campus], because I was too frightened to get on a streetcar—I'd only been to Edmonton once and that was the [extent of my big city experience] …… and got a room in Qu'Appelle Hall,—no advance registration for anything.

There was one chap, who was a distant relation of mine, but he and I were the two [from our district] who went off to university, both to Saskatchewan. He had a room on the main floor and I had a room on the third floor…. his became a gathering place. He was a very attractive person, and every night there would be a great gathering in his room. Well, you can guess the results as far as the year is concerned, but, as I say, he came back and got his BA, but he was a very good friend.

I suppose the best friend, by all odds the best friend, was one year behind me in school. He came from Parkdale, Alberta, about 20 miles south of Lloydminster, Joe McLean, and I suppose he became *the* bosom pal if one might describe him as such, and remained that for a good number of years. We roomed together in university, and he went on to do a law degree and then went back to Lloydminster to practice law. Of course, every year, I would go out there and be in touch with him, until in the end, he took to drinking….

Question: Did you stay in Qu'Appelle Hall the whole three years?

Clark: No. Just the first year. Then this Joe McLean showed up at university and we shared a room in a house ….

Question: What struck you about university? Small town boy, big city, big university, …

Clark: I couldn't understand how in the middle of the day I could jump on a streetcar and go downtown. It was a contrast between high school and university, but I settled in fairly well, and again, I didn't do very much. I don't want to give you a false impression here—I never had a girlfriend in university. Consequently, I never went to school dances or balls or so on and so forth. I started going to church at university

I think probably in my later years at university—the last couple of years—Arthur Morton[3] conducted what was a sort of parliamentary system. We would meet in his house about 8:00 at night—he had a big dining room with a big dining room table—one side was the opposition and the other side was the government party and he would be the speaker. He did that regularly. Somebody would introduce a resolution about something but I have no idea—they weren't nonsensical topics—they were sensible topics. Of course, Morton's belief was that you weren't debating to win, you were debating as if you were debating in the House of Commons. And the speaker followed the House of Commons rules.

Question: What did you think of him?

Clark: Oh, I loved Arthur's work. Oh yes. I was very fond of his wife … I was very impressed with Morton and I suppose; of all the people at university who influenced me, he would be the major influence. Talk about the Frontier and Canadian History … when you got it from Morton. I don't think he ever referred to [Frederick Jackson] Turner's book or anything like that but what he really talked about was *the Frontier*, the western Canadian frontier. In summers he would have me tramping around looking for a site of a fort, and I finally found one for him, and another I never found on the Saskatchewan River. I did at least two courses with Morton. I did a thesis on Dry Land Farming. Other professors were Hilda Neatby,[4] and George Simpson.[5] …….. that was the total

[3] Arthur Silver Morton (1870–1945) was born in Trinidad, and was educated at the University of Edinburgh before moving to Canada to become a Presbyterian minister. In 1914, Morton was hired by the University of Saskatchewan and turned to the study of western Canada. He did so because he felt an obligation to the history of his newly adopted home. He would become the chief librarian and head of the Department of History (1914–1940). He was one of the first historians to do extensive research in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives in London. On the basis of this research, he would publish *A History of The Canadian West to 1870–71* (London, Edinburgh, Paris, Melbourne, Toronto, and New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1939).

[4] Hilda Marion Neatby (1904–1974) was a professor of history at the University of Saskatchewan. She received a B.A. (1924) and, while working as a sessional instructor, earned a Master of Arts degree (1930). She completed her Ph.D. (1934) at the University of Minnesota. From 1934 to 1946, Neatby was an instructor at various secondary and post-secondary institutions in Saskatchewan. She returned to the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon in 1946 and remained in the Department of History until 1969.

[5] This was George Wilfred Simpson (1893–1969), who taught history at the University of Saskatchewan from 1922 to 1957. He eventually became head of the Department of History and assistant dean of the College of Arts and Science. He pioneered Slavic studies at the university, and he helped initiate the formation of the Saskatchewan Archives. He also became the first provincial archivist in 1945, and he was instrumental in establishing *Saskatchewan History*, a publication of the Saskatchewan Archives, in 1948.

Department of History, I think.

Question: What about the other disciplines?

Clark: Well, I took Education and this was by a professor who simply got up and dictated notes straight on for 50 minutes—a lot of material in the history of education. Science, I didn't flunk out in Science—I got a C in chemistry, and I got a C in French the first year. The French teacher was a terrible teacher—he was a Frenchman, more interested in the girls' legs than anything else. The chemistry teachers—there were two—one was a very distinguished chemist, Thorvaldson, and then the second half of the year was Matt Grace. He was a young man and a very good teacher. I didn't take to chemistry—to lab work. I still have the scar here from when I punctured one of those glass tubes right into my hand. Oh, economics, of course—great teacher, the first teacher—[Robert] McQueen[6]—and I had him as a colleague in Manitoba. Political science, I had two great teachers—one was R. MacGregor Dawson,[7] and then the year he was on leave of absence, Alex Skelton.[8] He was a very interesting teacher.

Question: In sum, you enjoyed your undergraduate classes and were particularly struck by Arthur Morton, and the teachers in political science and economics?

Clark: Yes. I enjoyed Simpson as a matter of fact. Hilda Neatby? Well, she was a woman—I shouldn't say that—but sort of a hard driver. Of course, in the end, I became very very fond of Hilda, and maintained contact with her right up until the end. Outside of the professor we had for French I'd say I had no duds at all.

Question: Did the whole lot convince you that you wanted to be a professor?

Clark: I think the answer to that is yes. Going on the train to Saskatoon, not the first year but pretty early, this Miss Cain I mentioned who was the principal, she talked all the way down about how crazy it was to become a university professor, but it went in one ear and out the other and I never had any other idea—no that's not quite true—I thought about becoming a newspaperman. Joe McLean and I had this great ambition to buy the *Lloydminster Times* about the time we graduated and [as we were] heading into the Depression in the 1930s. I started in 1927, graduated in 1930, did my M.A. there in 1930–1931, so I was really working into the Depression.

Question: Why did you decide to do the Master's degree and to take the topic of dryland farming?

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[6] Robert McQueen (1896–1941) was born at Edmonton in 1896. Educated at the University of Alberta and the London School of Economics, McQueen became an assistant professor of economics at the University of Saskatchewan in 1924. He remained there until 1934, after which time he moved to the University of Manitoba.

[7] Robert MacGregor Dawson (1895–1958) was born in Nova Scotia, and studied at Dalhousie University, Harvard University, and the London School of Economics. From 1928 to 1937 he taught and was head of the Department of Political Science at the University of Saskatchewan. In 1937 he moved to the University of Toronto.

[8] Douglas Alexander Skelton (1906–1950) was born in Chicago, but moved with his parents to Kingston, Ontario. He received his B.A. from Queen's University (Kingston), and was a Rhodes Scholar at University College, Oxford. When he returned to Canada in 1930, he was appointed acting professor of political science at the University of Saskatchewan. In 1931, he became an economist of the Beauharnois Power Corporation, and in 1935 he joined the Bank of Canada as research director. From 1947 to 1948 he was acting director-general of Reconstruction and Supply, and in 1948 he was appointed assistant deputy minister in the Department of Trade and Commerce.

Clark: Well, I suppose the main story there was that in 1930 I was offered an open fellowship at McGill. I was talking to Morton on the telephone, and he talked me out of accepting this fellowship and [said] that he would provide the equivalent at Saskatchewan—this was from the Canadian Pioneer Problems grant—so I went to Saskatchewan the next year. And, of course, being on that, you had to have a topic that had some relationship [to the purpose of the grant], so it was dry land farming. I suppose I wasn't aware of the significance of this until recently, [when] talking to Harry Hiller, [U of Calgary professor, author of a study on sociology in Canada], but that was my first real research experience and that was a [serious] research undertaking—going through Saskatoon papers—and there was quite a substantial body of material there….

Question: And did you find it striking that you were going over problems of the sort that your parents were facing?

Clark: Well, you see, in a way it wasn't, because … my part of the west was not terribly short of rainfall, except very occasionally—I remember 1919—but I was familiar with farming techniques and I knew what summer fallowing meant.

Question: You finished the M.A. degree in 1931. What was your next step?

Clark: ….The next year I got the Open Fellowship from the University of Toronto, came down here, started on a Ph.D. in history, started on the thesis. Don't ask me what the thesis was all about—something to do with settlement in Upper Canada in the 1850s. I always felt this was a mistake. The first task you were put at was to prepare a bibliography and I've never made that mistake since. I ended up with a stack of cards like this. Then Conrad, who was also a student here and doing his Ph.D. in history, and I went up to Ottawa during the Christmas period of two weeks to work in the Archives. Got back here …. working through the *Upper Canada Sundries*, making massive amounts of notes; now I have no idea what it was all about. By this time, in fact, I approached [Professor] Chester Martin,[9] and said that I wanted to do something on the farmers' movement and he turned that down flat. That wasn't history, [he said] ….that was a contemporary kind of thing….

Question: Who was that original thesis with?

Clark: That was with [Chester] Martin. I did the course with George Brown[10] on historiography. I sat in on lectures with Creighton,[11] but didn't do a course with Creighton. And, I sat in on lectures with

[9] Chester Baily Martin (1882–1958) was born in Nova Scotia, and received his B.A. from the University of New Brunswick. In 1904 he became the first Rhodes Scholar from North America, attending Balliol College at Oxford University. In 1909 he was appointed professor of history at the University of Manitoba. In 1929 he moved to the University of Toronto where he became the chair of the department. His works included: *Lord Selkirk's Work in Canada* (1916), *"The Natural Resources Question" The Historical Basis of Provincial Claims* (1920), *The Colonial Policy of the Dominion* (1922) and *Empire and Commonwealth* (1929).

[10] George Williams Brown (1894–1963) was born in Ontario, and received his Ph.D. at the University of Chicago in 1924. In 1925 joined the Department of History at the University of Toronto, where he taught Canadian and American history until 1959. He also served as the editor of the *Canadian Historical Review* from 1930 until 1946, and the general editor of the University of Toronto Press from 1946 to 1953.

[11] Donald Grant Creighton (1902–1979) was born in Ontario and studied at the University of Toronto and Balliol College, Oxford. He was hired by the University of Toronto's Department of History in 1927, and became professor in 1945. He retired in 1971. In the interval, he became the foremost historian of Canada, publishing *The Commercial Empire of the St. Lawrence* (1937), a two-volume biography of John A. Macdonald (1952, 1955), *Dominion of the North: A History of Canada* (1944), and *The Road to Confederation: The Emergence of Canada, 1863–1867* (1964).

Underhill[12] and saw a good deal of Underhill that year—that was the LSR era [League for Social Reconstruction]—Underhill gave lectures, also J.S. Woodsworth,[13] they had sort of meetings at their homes. I remember distinctly a meeting at Underhill's home with [J. Francis] White, who was the editor of the *Canadian Forum*, and who really was a Marxist, and being at that point, in these kinds of discussions, becoming aware of the fact that Underhill really wasn't a socialist, he was a liberal. He'd get on the platform preaching socialism, yet getting into discussion with people like White, he [Underhill] was the liberal—which he ended up by being. So the LSR figured very prominently in that year.

Question: Then your career took a new turn?

Clark: As I say, I think I was veering from history. Then of course I got the I.O.D.E. scholarship, which took me to the London School of Economics for a year. At that time, it wasn't a renewable fellowship in Saskatchewan. Then I did work with the "greats"—Tawney, Laski, Postan, [Charles Kingsley] Webster—the two who really stood out were Tawney and Laski. I then got on the boat—third class—coming back, arriving in Montreal with practically no money. When I got into Lloydminster, my brother had to buy me a piece of pie in the Chinese restaurant.

But wandering around—I had the day in Montreal—I … went up to McGill. A friend of mine from Saskatchewan had been doing his M.A. with [Carl A.] Dawson.[14] I knocked on Dawson's door, he let me in, and we talked, and he says, "Now if you're as good as you say you are, you can have this research assistantship, so send in your curriculum vitae, or whatever …" So it was sort of by chance that I stopped off at McGill for two years, and in those two years did another M.A.

Question: Now, was Dawson, at that point, working on the Canadian Frontiers of Settlement series?

Clark: Oh yes. He picked up this very able group of people around him—that was his great accomplishment, I think….You had Eva Younge,[15] Lloyd Reynolds,[16] Harv Gibbard, Steve

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[12] Frank Hawkins Underhill (1889–1971) was born in Ontario, and studied at the University of Toronto, and Balliol College, Oxford. He taught history at the University of Saskatchewan (1914–1927), and the University of Toronto (1927–1955). He was also one of the founders of the League for Social Reconstruction, and one of the authors of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation's (CCF) Regina Manifesto (1933). Later in life he supported the Liberal Party. He was the author of *The British Commonwealth* (1956) and *In Search of Canadian Liberalism* (1960).

[13] James Shaver Charleston Woodsworth (1874–1942) was a Canadian Methodist minister, politician, and labour activist. He was a pioneer of the Canadian social gospel, and helped to found the CCF. He also served as a member of Parliament for Winnipeg from 1921 to 1942.

[14] Carl Addington Dawson (1887–1964) was born in Prince Edward Island and studied at the University of Chicago under Robert Park. In 1922 he was hired by McGill University where he founded the first university department of sociology in Canada (1925). He remained chair of the department until 1952. In the late 1920s, the Canadian Frontiers of Settlement project examined settlement patterns on the Prairies, and Dawson contributed two volumes to this nine-volume project. These included: C.A. Dawson, *The Settlement of the Peace River Country: A Study of a Pioneer Area* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1934); and C.A. Dawson, *Group Settlement: Ethnic Communities in Western Canada* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1936).

[15] Eva Young (1898–1975) was born in Denmark, and grew up on a farm in the Canadian west. She would study under C.A. Dawson at McGill University, working at the same time as his research assistant on his settlement studies. Completing her M.A. at McGill, she did her Ph.D. at the University of Chicago. She then returned to McGill to the School of Social Work where she stayed for twenty-two years.

[16] Lloyd G. Reynolds (1910–2005) was born in Wainwright, Alberta, and was educated at the University of Alberta (B.A. 1931), McGill University (M.A. 1933), and Harvard University (Ph.D. 1936). Reynolds taught at Johns Hopkins University as an assistant and then associate professor from 1938–1945. In 1945 he moved to Yale University where he was Sterling Professor of Economics until his retirement in 1980. His works on Canadian topics included *The British Immigrant: His Economic and Social Adjustment in Canada* (1935), and *The Control of Competition in Canada* (1940).

Lampshire, and then a German by the name of Moellman, who had come highly recommended by [William] Swanson[17] in Saskatchewan, and was a complete dud as a student. There were two or three others—one, Reid, who ended up in the Government of Canada… We had a research lab in the Biology Building—a great big long room in the basement with typewriters—that's where we worked—probably half a dozen people in that group.

Question: What was Eva Younge's role in the project?

Clark: Well, Dawson exploited her in a big way…. There were the two teachers there at the time. I had a terrific admiration for [Professor Everett] Hughes.[18] I never really took to Dawson and yet I owed him something. He was a driver. He had no great intellectual powers whatsoever. The second year I was there, he led a graduate seminar, and when it started out, all he could do was just start into his definitions of what "society" is, what "institution" is, what this and that was, and so on. But … it became a good seminar, as I recall—not from any input, really, from Dawson. Other people—Oswald Hall, [Everett] Hughes himself—have always been quite loyal to Dawson. But there have been a number of people who had very much the same feelings I've had about him. He [Dawson] was the Baptist preacher who became converted to sociology. He learned his sociology almost by rote in Chicago, and then preached it all the time he was at McGill. Now he pushed it—he knocked it into your head—and, I'd say, you were not uninfluenced by him.

Question: What was your reaction to Eva Younge?

Clark: Oh, no intellectual heavyweight, very much the plodder, and I saw a great deal of Eva in those years and some after. I suppose the person who stood out, but who wasn't working in that room at the time, was Lloyd Reynolds. He went on to distinguish himself as an economist.
It was a fairly good group.

Question: You wrote a thesis there?

Clark: Well, I did two things there. One of them, or both of them, I guess, show up in … a book by [Henry] Angus—*Canada and Her Great Neighbor*. S. Delbert Clark appears in that. One was the M.A. thesis which was on the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, and which I continued and made into my Ph.D. thesis. The other one, which I had a research assistant for, was on "English Attitudes in Montreal to the United States"—something like that. It turned out to be, oh, as I recall, about eighty or ninety pages. I haven't got a copy of it. Some of it is quoted by Angus. But it was certainly a study of attitudes in Montreal, of English-speaking Montrealers, to the United States, that was really it.

Question: And then you came back to Toronto?

Clark: Yes. Dawson told me he'd never consider me his friend if I didn't go to Chicago. And I didn't go to Chicago. I came back, really—came down here on a weekend, sometime in the course of that

[17] William Walker Swanson (1879–1950) was born in Ontario and educated at Queen's University (Kingston), and completed his post-graduate work at the University of Chicago. In 1916 he became head of the Department of Economics at the University of Saskatchewan, a post he held until his retirement in 1945.
[18] Everett Cherrington Hughes (1897–1983) was born in Ohio, U.S.A., and eventually studied at the University of Chicago under Robert Park. After his Ph.D. (1928), he took a job at McGill University, where he helped to develop the Department of Sociology with Carl Dawson. In 1938 he returned to the University of Chicago.

second year in Montreal, and arranged to have lunch with Innis[19] and Underhill. Those were the two people that I wanted to do a Ph.D. thesis with. By the time I got here, Underhill and Innis were not on speaking terms, and I ended up really doing the thesis with Innis and [Alex] Brady,[20] and not with Underhill. It was an Underhill-type thesis, really, but he had no formal role—he wasn't supervising in any way. Brady was the supervisor.

Question: How were you supporting yourself?

Clark: Fellowships were the means of support in those days. Well, I can run through that pretty quickly. Saskatchewan, my M.A.—$500.00 was my fellowship. The Open fellowship in Toronto—$500.00—and in the London School of Economics, I was really rich—$1600.00 at a time when the exchange favored the Canadian dollar—I think it ended up about one pound equaled $5.00, but in the earlier part of the year it was something over $3.00, so I had lots of money. And then I came back, had these two years at McGill, and I think it was about $650.00 a year. That took me up to 1935, and then the two years I was here [at the University of Toronto], the first year I had again an Open fellowship called the MacKenzie Fellowship for $500.00, and the second year, I had a research assistantship—$400.00—[but] I never got by. I borrowed money that year—I could never make it on $400.00. That was my total income up to 1937.

Question: How about the impact of London?

Clark: You mean the city or the school?

Question: Well, the life?

Clark: Oh, terrific. Oh, terrific. I didn't want to come back. I wanted to stay there. Now that was in the depth of the Depression—but London was an exciting place to be –

Question: And of course, you were rich?

Clark: I was rich.

Question: And the student world—did you find that you easily became a part of it?

Clark: Um, I suppose my answer to that would be yes and no. … I was limited—in a quite meaningful way—to one student—Larry Rathbone of the Liverpool Rathbones. He and I became very close friends. I would say apart from him, no. Well, now, wait a minute, there were a few Canadians. Bus

[19] Harold Adams Innis (1894–1952) was born in Canada and became a world-renowned political economist, and pioneer in communication studies. He taught at the University of Toronto from 1920 until his death. Having studied at McMaster University and the University of Chicago, Innis began to re-orient Canadian studies with the development of a "staples theory," which posited interrelations between economics, politics and society; that Canada's culture, political history, and economy were decisively influenced by the exploitation and export of a series of "staples" such as fur, fish, lumber, wheat, and minerals. His early publications included: *A History of the Canadian Pacific Railway* (1923), *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History* (1930), and *The Cod Fisheries: The History of an International Economy* (1940).

[20] Alexander Brady (1896–1985) was born in Ireland and moved to Canada with his parents in 1906. He was educated at the University of Toronto and Oxford University. From 1921 to 1924 he was lecturer in history at the United College in Winnipeg, and he joined the Department of Political Economy at the University of Toronto in 1924. Among other works he published *Democracy in the Dominions: A Comparative Study in Institutions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1947).

Woods was there at the time, and there was a person from McGill that didn't become a friend by any means. Then there were the people at Oxford—Eddie McCourt,[21] Donald Masters[22]—those are the people I saw. It was really the Canadians—outside of this Larry Rathbone. The great thing, I always think, about London—when I think back—was not just Laski and Tawney, but going to public lectures—Bernard Shaw, H.G. Wells—two that I remember very distinctly. Innis came over—and there was a debate between Webster and Laski. I thought this was going to be a terrifically serious debate and I took Innis down to it, not appreciating the fact that Innis had a terrific sense of humour—and I was very upset. It turned out to be a debate between Laski, who was taking a highly conservative position on some sort of cricket rule—introduced by Australia maybe? ... And, of course, Webster was the radical, and it was a very, very amusing debate … The topic was Hobbes, the cricket player, and I'd assumed it was Hobbes, the theorist! Yes, … I thought it was going to be a serious debate about Hobbes' works!

Question: So, you came back to Toronto and started a Ph.D. thesis on the Canadian Manufacturers' Association. Did you teach as well?

Clark: That last year, starting in 1936-37, I had this teaching assistantship for $400.00, and I taught a third-year honours course in sociology. Completely on my own. And then, at the end of that year, I was offered an appointment. [Professor EJ] Urwick was … just ceasing to be head of the department and I was offered an appointment for the following year as instructor at a salary of $1000.00, and I went down to see Innis—this was very characteristic of Innis, of course—to say I really wanted a higher salary than $1000.00. And I got really chewed up. He said I should consider myself fortunate, so I went west. That was the last summer I worked on the farm, 1937.

Question: Had you worked every summer on the farm?

Clark: Every summer on the farm. Then, I got on the train, and arrived back here in Toronto, and got a telegram from [Robert] McQueen offering me an appointment in the University of Manitoba for $1600.00. So I got on the next train, and went back to Winnipeg. [The following year] I wanted very badly to [get a job at the University of Saskatchewan].

Well, I was brought out [to Manitoba] to teach sociology and political science. But [the president of the university] Sidney Smith wanted to bring in a senior person for the political science. They eventually hired Clokie. I was in negotiation, I guess, with George Simpson [in Saskatoon] about an appointment in Saskatchewan, and the appointment was just about settled on, and I was going to go to Saskatchewan—in political science—when George Britnell,[23] [professor of economics] had a

[21] Edward Alexander McCourt (1907–1972) was born in Ireland, and emigrated with his parents to Kitscoty, Alberta, in 1909. He was educated at the University of Alberta, and studied at Merton College, Oxford, as a Rhodes Scholar. After returning to Canada he worked at Upper Canada College, Queen's University (Kingston), and the University of New Brunswick, before being hired by the University of Saskatchewan (Department of English) in 1944.

[22] Donald Campbell Masters (1908–2001) was born in Ontario, Canada, and studied at the University of Toronto (B.A., M.A.) before attending Oxford University and earning his D.Phil. in 1935. He would teach at Wesley/United College in Winnipeg (late 1930s–1944), Bishops University (1944–1965), and the University of Guelph thereafter. His published works included: *The Reciprocity Treaty of 1854* (1937), *The Rise of Toronto, 1850–1890* (1947), and *The Winnipeg General Strike* (1950).

[23] George Edwin Britnell (1903–1961) was born in London, England, and moved with his parents to Saskatchewan where his father homesteaded. He entered the University of Saskatchewan in 1926, and after a year at the London School of Economics, he was appointed instructor in economics at the University of Saskatchewan in 1930. He would go on to study for his M.A. and Ph.D. at the University of Toronto, graduating in 1938. He was appointed assistant professor of economics at the University of Saskatchewan in 1936, and would later become professor and head of the Department of

terrific row with William Swanson, [also a professor of economics] and the only way they could keep George on was to give him a separate department, and that was the department of political science, so this knocked me out, and I'm bloody glad it did. But anyway, Innis was the one who was instrumental in bringing me back here [to the University of Toronto in fall of 1938].

Question: So you had one year in Manitoba teaching sociology and political science … How did you like it?

Clark: Well, I sure didn't like that trip from the Broadway campus all the way out to the Fort Garry campus—by streetcar—wandering about the city. Oh, but other than that, I had good colleagues. Of course I loved McQueen…. Bill Waines [professor of economics] went off to the Rowell-Sirois commission but he was there for the first half of the year. Bill Morton[24] was teaching in St. John's for an enormous salary of $600.00, [Donald] Masters—was he at Wesley? [Arthur] Lower[25] was at Wesley, [by now called United] College. [W. T.] Easterbrook[26] … was at Brandon. I think he was paid $1000.00. He's remarked several times he had never been as rich since as he was when he was paid $1000.00 in this little place. So there was a good group there.

Question: …The idea of working on a prairie topic didn't interest you at this point?

Clark: Well, I spent the year, as a matter of fact, writing up several articles based on my thesis. I think there were about four that were published in the *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* on the Canadian Manufacturing Association, and the power of the CMA as a pressure group, or something. That's what I spent my time on, so it wasn't until I came back here that I started making notes, as my wife keeps pointing out, on the back of envelopes, leading up to what was the Upper Canada book [and the prairie studies of the Social Credit in Alberta series].

Question: What got you into the Upper Canada project? That's a very ambitious thing to undertake at an early age. You were not more than thirty years old when you were developing that.

Clark: Thirty? Yes, I guess that's right. Well, I suppose it was, to some extent, a protest against sociology as it had developed in Chicago and at McGill. I had a very strong feeling that was influenced to some extent by Mackintosh and a talk he gave. He said something about boxes with nothing in them, you see. And my feeling was that this was the case in sociology—that there was nothing in the

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Political Science. He would publish *The Wheat Economy* in 1939, and *Canadian Agriculture in War and Peace* (with V.C. Fowke) in 1962.

[24] See interview with William L. Morton later in this volume.

[25] Arthur Reginald Marsden Lower (1889–1988) was born in Barrie, Ontario, and studied at the University of Toronto and Harvard University where he received his Ph.D. Lower would teach at Wesley/United College, Winnipeg, for eighteen years until 1944, when he became a professor of history at Queen's University (Kingston). He would remain there until he retired in 1959. Lower was interested in Canadian economic history, and was influenced by Innis's Staple Theory, and the Frontier Thesis. His best-known publications included *The North American assault on the Canadian forest: a history of the lumber trade between Canada and the United States* (1938), *Colony to Nation: a history of Canada* 1946), and *Great Britain's Woodyard: British America and the timber trade 1763–1867* (1973).

[26] William Thomas Easterbrook (1907–1985) was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and attended the University of Manitoba earning his B.A. in 1933. He obtained his M.A. and Ph.D. in economics from the University of Toronto in 1935 and 1938 under H.A. Innis. He then joined the faculty of Brandon College teaching there until 1941. From 1943 to 1946 he taught at the University of Manitoba, and in 1947 he was hired by the University of Toronto where he eventually became head of the Department of Political Economy. He published *Farm Credit in Canada* (1938), and after his death a collection of his writings appeared as *North American Patterns of Growth and Development: The Continental Context* (1990).

boxes. And certainly nothing in the historical sort of boxes. So I did that little paper called "Sociology and Canadian History," I think is the name of it … That then [that] led to an attempt to do something else—influenced, of course, obviously, by Innis and the model he set out in the book he edited with [Arthur] Lower, *Selected Documents in Canadian Economic History*.

Question: Did they direct or suggest or prod you in that direction?

Clark: No, I don't think so. No, no. I always got great encouragement from Innis … From that point on, Brady was not terribly interested in what I was doing. I wouldn't say there was any prodding. Innis, all the way through, in that *Social Development of Canada* book—I used to be amazed. I would have a whole bundle of manuscripts with very detailed quotations and so on. And he'd haul it home at night and show up the next morning with detailed notes on this thing. I was absolutely amazed! Little points—I even remember some of them, you see—a misspelling on my part, having translated from the French to the English….

Question: How did the Social Credit in Alberta series[27] get going?

Clark: Oh yeah, well that's very interesting. I was on a Guggenheim [fellowship], and spent six months in Columbia, and then went over to the University of Chicago for three months, and in the course of being in Chicago I got a wire from Innis. I think I can almost quote it word for word, simply saying: "Would you be interested in a Social Credit study?" How in God's name can one react to a telegram like that? So I got on the train and came up here [to Toronto].

Question: Really. Just like that?

Clark: Yeah. Well, it was—it sounded like something that I should be—I don't know whether you know the story there. The president of the University of Saskatchewan ([James S.] Thomson—the religious Thomson) … had gone to New York, met the Board of Governors [of the Rockefeller Foundation], and proposed doing a project on Social Credit in Alberta. This [Anne] Bezanson, who was Canadian, got upset about this, and she got in touch with Innis. I'm not sure whether I'd say [Thomson] *proposed* doing—I'm not sure whether it went quite that far—but, anyway, Thomson was making noises about doing or at least having somebody doing a study on Social Credit. So this Bezanson got in touch with Innis. The upshot of this was that the Rockefeller Foundation was putting up $25,000.00 for a study of the social credit [movement] and when I came up to see Innis—again, in his typical fashion—I got nowhere really—[he said] it's up to you, you see. But there was some notion that Easterbrook and I would join forces and the two of us would carry out this sort of massive study of social credit in Alberta. Of course, this was the kind of thing that today you'd think nothing of. You'd hire a bunch of workers and so on.

But I started west. At the end of the three months in Chicago, I went west from there and met

[27] The Social Credit in Alberta series consists of 10 sequential volumes published by the University of Toronto Press, and was sponsored by the Canadian Social Science Research Council. This massive project pulled together historians, sociologists, and political scientists to examine how the Social Credit movement changed western Canada. Its general editor was S.D. Clark. The ten volumes include: W.L. Morton, *The Progressive Party in Canada* (1950); D.C. Masters, *The Winnipeg General Strike* (1950); Jean Burnet, *Next-Year Country: A Study of Rural Social Organization in Alberta* (1951); C.B. Macpherson, *Democracy in Alberta: Social Credit and the Party System* (1953); J.R. Mallory, *Social Credit and the Federal Power in Canada* (1954); W.E. Mann, *Sect, Cult, and Church in Alberta* (1955); Vernon C. Fowke, *The National Policy and the Wheat Economy* (1957); L.G. Thomas, *The Liberal Party in Alberta: A History of Politics in the Province of Alberta, 1905-1921* (1959); S.D. Clark, *Movements of Political Protest in Canada, 1640–1840* (1959); John A. Irving, *The Social Credit Movement in Alberta* (1959).

with Bill Morton in Manitoba, and found some of these people interested in joining in a joint project. They were all interested in doing a study and Morton, of course, was already well-advanced in his [book on the] Progressive Party. Went to Regina—not Saskatoon—where I met with Vernon Fowke[28] who was doing something in Regina at the time. I went to Vancouver and met with John Irving,[29] who later came to Victoria College. And I went to see Alex Elliot in Alberta, but Elliot wouldn't touch it because it was too close. Saw [Donald] Masters in Winnipeg, [who was working on the] Winnipeg General Strike—and then later, [James] Mallory.[30] He was at Brandon College [and I hadn't seen him when I was traveling through], but he came to see me here and he got involved. Then of course there were these two Ph.D. students of mine—Jean Burnet[31]—I say Burnet was a student of mine—she was really doing her in Ph.D. in Chicago, but she actually did her thesis under my direction—and Ted Mann.[32] Now I probably have missed somebody there—there should be nine… Oh, C.B. Macpherson[33] is the other one, and I take a certain amount of credit for that, even though it wasn't exactly what he wanted…. There were two other people involved who fell by the wayside –… Doug Waines and John Graham….[?] They were going to do *the* economics study and the furthest they got was to get on a bus or a train or something, and head out to Calgary, out to Banff, up to Jasper, back to Edmonton—grand tour of the west. Those were the only casualties really.

Question: How was it evolving in your mind in the early stages? You'd gone out west thinking perhaps of a group project?

Clark: Oh, I would have to say that there was no very clear notion…. I suppose it was a matter of a

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[28] Vernon Clifford Fowke (1907–1966) was born in Parry Sound, Ontario. He graduated from the University of Saskatchewan in 1929, and then joined their teaching staff. He would go on to graduate work at the University of Chicago and University of Washington, graduating with a Ph.D. in 1942. His dissertation was published in 1946 as *Canadian Agricultural Policy*, establishing him as an influential historian of Canadian agriculture. He would publish *The National Policy and the Wheat Economy* in the Social Credit Series in 1957.

[29] John Allan Irving (1903–1965) was born in Drumbo, Ontario, and educated at the University of Toronto (Victoria College) graduating in 1926. He then completed two Master's Degrees at Trinity College, Cambridge. He began teaching philosophy at Princeton University, then UBC, and returned to Victoria College in 1944 to teach ethics and social philosophy. In 1959 he published *The Social Credit Movement in Alberta.*

[30] James Russell Mallory (1916–2003) was born in St. Andrews, New Brunswick, and educated at the University of New Brunswick (B.A. 1937), Edinburgh (L.L.B. 1940), and Dalhousie University (M.A. 1941). He began teaching as an instructor of political science at the University of Saskatchewan (1941–1943), instructor of political economy at the University of Toronto (1943–1944), and became assistant professor of political economy at Brandon College (1944–1946). He joined McGill University in 1946, and would remain there until he retired in 1977. He was a leading scholar of parliamentary government, and in 1954 he would write *Social Credit and the Federal Power in Canada.*

[31] Jean Robertson Burnet (1920–2009) was born in Ontario, and received her B.A. (1942) and M.A. (1943) in sociology from the University of Toronto. She then attended the University of Chicago earning her Ph.D. in 1948 with Everett Hughes as her supervisor. She began teaching sociology at the University of Toronto in 1945, and in 1967 she left the U of T to join York University becoming the founding chair of the Glendon Department of Sociology. She retired in 1985. In 1951, she would publish *Next-Year Country: A Study of Rural Social Organization in Alberta.*

[32] William Edward Mann (1918–1992) was a prominent Canadian sociologist and an ordained Anglican priest. He was born in Toronto, Ontario, and educated at the University of Toronto (B.A. 1942, M.A. 1943, Ph.D. 1953). Besides being ordained a priest, he taught sociology at numerous universities: Ontario Agricultural College (1959–1961) University of Western Ontario (1961–1965), and York University (1965–1983), where he was promoted to professor of sociology. In 1955 he published *Sect, Cult, and Church in Alberta.*

[33] Crawford Brough Macpherson (1911–1987) was a Canadian political scientist. He was born in Toronto, Ontario, and was educated at the University of Toronto (B.A. 1933) and the London School of Economics (M.Sc.1935). He joined the faculty of political economy at the University of Toronto in 1935, and in 1956 he became a professor there. In 1953, he published *Democracy in Alberta: The Theory and Practice of a Quasi-Party System.* His most famous work was *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Clarendon Press, 1962).

hit-and-miss kind of thing. All of these things to me had a relationship to social credit—the Winnipeg General Strike, the Progressive party, or the Liberal party in Alberta up to 1920. [John] Irving pushed me out of what I would have done as a sociologist. I would have been interested—was interested—in doing a study of the social credit movement in Alberta, but this is what Irving wanted to do so I backed off….

Question: … Was Fowke's study already underway on *The National Policy and the Wheat Economy*?

Clark: I don't think it was underway. Morton's was. I think Fowke had ideas. It wasn't a matter of dreaming up [a new angle]—I can't be sure of that.

Question: D. C. Masters' book—was it underway?

Clark: Well, it could have been. Masters' wife's family was deeply involved in the Winnipeg Strike, and she got Masters interested in the Strike. Whether he was actually started on a study or not, I'm not sure.

Question: And you encouraged Mallory in that direction?

Clark: No, I don't think I encouraged him. I think … he'd heard about or read about the social credit project and wanted to get involved and this was what he wanted to do. It was Mallory who wanted to do that. I think the only one [I influenced] was Macpherson. Macpherson, at that time, was in sort of the bad books of Innis. He didn't seem to be doing anything; he was off in the wilds there with his theory. I went to Innis, and then I went to R. MacGregor Dawson. What I wanted was simply a straightforward study by a political scientist of the government of Alberta.

Question: An institutional kind of study?

SDC: Yes. And R. MacGregor Dawson [was otherwise engaged.] So I went to Macpherson and he was quite prepared to take it on. This was a very deliberate move on my part to get him into something, and of course, he went from there to the heights.

Question: Did you ever hold group meetings?

Clark: Not of the whole group…. I certainly had meetings out in the west with—I can't think, but it seems to me that there were two or three occasions when I did meet with the whole group, but I can't quite recall,—whether it was out west or whether it was here.

Question: Were you active as editor?

Clark: Oh yes. Every one of those volumes—very thoroughly edited by myself as well as the Forewords…. The one person that I had trouble with was Jim Mallory … and I got R. MacGregor Dawson to go over it, and Dawson was a very good—excellent—thesis supervisor, and he made all kinds of notes all the way through, and I sent this thing back to Mallory, and he was mad as hell. Took an eraser and erased out all of Dawson's comments, and the next time I met him, we weren't on speaking terms—he was still furious. But, he came around. I think his was a very good study. I think it might have been a better study if he had been a bit more influenced by Dawson.

Question: Thomas?[34] How did that go?

Clark: Oh, I think it went very easily.

Question: And Masters' book—do you remember having to shift sections around at all? You know it begins with the trial, then switches back and goes forward again?

Clark: I think my disappointment with Masters [was] the whole idea that this was to be a study of western labour radicalism, starting with the Winnipeg Strike, but by no means ending with the Winnipeg Strike…. It was to go on to cover labour radicalism in British Columbia, southern Alberta, the coal fields and so on, but it never did get beyond the Strike. I think that was the disappointment in the Masters' study.

Question: Burnet and Mann—did you help them with the field work?

Clark: Not too much actually. I remember being with them in Calgary while Mann was working on his study. I shouldn't say this about Burnet but Burnet didn't do a very substantial piece of work in the way of research …. Part of that book of hers was written by an Alberta M.A. student who was taken on as a research assistant.[35] Jean was in Hanna, and I was in Edmonton, and I phoned her to say I was coming to Hanna and she informed me that she was just leaving. I was shocked at this …. she works very fast, reads very fast, but I was shocked that she came out of there so quickly. I don't think she was there for more than a month.[36] I assumed she would be there for the whole summer at least.

Question: Whereas Mann stayed much longer, judging from the book?

Clark: It was a very lively study. He did a great deal of work.

Question: What was your reaction to Macpherson's book when it came in?

Clark: Well, of course, I didn't like the thesis. I annoyed Macpherson by the Foreword I wrote because I felt compelled in the Foreword to [explain another point of view]. It was a good solid study—it wouldn't rank first …

I was very happy about the project as a whole. I wasn't the kind of person cut out to do that kind of project that you would be expected to do when you got grants from the Rockefeller Foundation…. it was a hit-and-miss…. There was certainly no rigid kind of outline for fitting in these different people's interests.

Question: So, it didn't take any convincing to have Fowke fill in?

Clark: If there was any convincing at all, it was Macpherson, but I don't think I had any difficulty in persuading Macpherson to take this thing on. Everybody else came along really. As I say, Easterbrook right from the beginning was not really interested.

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[34] See interview with L.G. Thomas later in this volume.

[35] In her preface, Burnet noted that she had two Alberta assistants: M. H. Spencer and S.R. Mealing. Jean Burnet, *Next-year Country: A Study of Rural Social Organization in Alberta* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1951), xii.

[36] Burnet also noted that she had conducted field research from June to September, 1946. Ibid., xi.

Question: This series must have been a significant factor in the shaping of Canadian social science. Have you ever thought about that?

Clark: Well, of course I had predecessors—the Canadian-American Carnegie series, the Pioneer Problems series—… [though] I think in both cases, there was far more direction from the director than there was in social credit.

Question: How much money did you have when you established the project?

Clark: It was $25,000.00. That was a great thing to people like Morton and Fowke and so on. Primarily [for] research, and I guess some travel. I mentioned the one trip out to Banff and Jasper, and some went into publication. George Brown was the editor at the time at the University of Toronto Press. They would undertake to publish as many as 10 volumes—it seemed very unlikely there would 10 volumes—for $1000.00 per volume, and this looked like a fairly good deal from their point of view … There was more money [that] came into that project later…. some from Rockefeller, and even more from …. [an] insurance company.

Question: What about that question I asked about turning a direction or a corner in Canadian scholarship? How did you think about the series as it evolved? Was it something that was much on your mind?

Clark: Oh, I suppose this is something that is of interest to you. I go way back to Chester Martin … Well, back to my interest in doing something on the farmers' movement. There was a real interest on my part in western Canada and therefore I could be quite enthusiastic about this project. As it turns out, as you know, I didn't do anything on western Canada. I became bogged down in [Upper Canada]. But that was certainly a very strong interest on my part. I found it very exciting—whether it was Masters on the Strike, or Irving's thing on Social Credit or Macpherson's—I was very excited about these studies, as such …

Interview with Lewis Herbert Thomas and Margaret Thomas

Regina, August 16, 1982[1]



L. H. Thomas, 1917–2004

Lewis H. Thomas (1917-1983) was born in Saskatoon SK, attended university in his hometown, and received his doctoral degree from the University of Minnesota. He started his professional career in the Archives of Saskatchewan, was the Provincial Archivist (1948–1957), and drafted the province's first archival legislation. He taught History at Regina College and the University of Alberta. Upon his retirement, he and his wife Margaret returned to Regina. Dr. Thomas was much weakened by Parkinson's Disease when we met in his apartment in that city. He tired during our conversation and his wife Margaret added details about his years in the civil service and his relationship with their neighbour, Premier Tommy Douglas.

[1] A biographical sketch of L.H. Thomas can be found in Lewis Gwynne Thomas, "Lewis Herbert Thomas: A Biographical Sketch," in John E. Foster, ed., *The Developing West: Essays in Honor of Lewis H. Thomas* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1983), 11-23.

Lewis H: One problem with Parkinson's disease is that your speech is a bit unclear and I have to make a special effort. I hope I will come through alright.

Question: Let's start with the United States. You went to California in 1941. It is a great surprise to me to hear that you worked with [John] Hicks[2] and [Frederic] Paxton[3] and [Herbert] Bolton[4] [American historians]. And I wonder how they influenced you.

Lewis H: Hicks is a very, very pleasant man, a real gentleman, not assertive. He related well to his students.

Question: Did you study a frontier approach to history with him?

Lewis H: Yes, in western American social history. Bolton was a most attractive figure. He was an old man by this time—he had a very long career. I always enjoyed his classes. He was a great man for maps. You used to go there and he had a great pile of them in his office. At the beginning of every term, he would call for volunteers to assist him with the maps. He called them his 'map climbers.' They would go to this office and he would pick out the maps he wanted and have them carried to the lecture room. So, on the first day, I held up my hand and I became his helper. He was fascinating.

Question: You didn't receive any money for taking on this role?

Lewis H: No. He gave me this autographed copy of one of his books, which I treasure very much. But my fellowship paid very well. I didn't need it.

Question: Did you enjoy California?

Lewis H: Yes, indeed. It was the first time I had ever been out of Canada, and Berkeley was a delightful city, very attractive. I stayed in the International House, founded by the Rockefeller Foundation to accommodate foreign students. When I was there, these students were mainly from Latin America, Iceland, and Egypt.

Question: You stayed there for a year. Was the quality of education higher than in Saskatchewan?

Lewis H: No, I felt that my Saskatchewan degree was the equal of the degrees down there.

Question: Then you switched to Minnesota with the offer of Saskatchewan support for an archives programme. You worked with A. L. Burt[5] as a thesis student. How did he influence your view of

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[2] John Donald Hicks (1890–1972) was a prominent American historian who wrote about farmers in the middle west. Included among his many books are: *The Populist Revolt* (1931), and *Agricultural Discontent in the Middle West* (1951).

[3] Frederic Logan Paxton (1877–1948) was a prolific historian and writer about the American west including: *The Pacific Railroads and the Disappearance of the Frontier in America* (1908), and *History of the American Frontier* (1924).

[4] Herbert Eugene Bolton (1870–1953) was a prominent American historian who wrote about the Spanish-American borderlands.

[5] Alfred Leroy Burt (1888–1971) was born in Listowel, Ontario, and received a B.A. from the University of Toronto (1910) before going on to Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar. He received an Oxford B.Litt. in 1912 and an M.A. in 1916. Burt's career with the University of Alberta began in 1913, when he joined as lecturer of history and economics, a position he held until he was made an associate professor of history in 1916. After serving in the First World War, he returned to his position as associate professor of history at the University of Alberta and became professor and department head in

history?

Lewis H: I think Burt gave me a better appreciation of the early period of Canadian history and the importance of the lecture as a method of instruction. He was a brilliant lecturer himself, very entertaining, almost an actor on the podium.

Question: Did he influence your view of Western Canadian history?

Lewis H: No, I don't think so.
Question: Who did?

Lewis H: Menzies Whitelaw[6] and A.S. Morton[7] at the University of Saskatchewan.

Question: In what direction would you say that influence tended?

Lewis H: They had very different approaches to history. Morton stressed the importance of narrative history. Whitelaw was only interested in the analytical approach. For example, I never heard A.S. Morton refer to Frederick Jackson Turner.

Question: Is that so! Was there much interest in social class as a model of analysis?

Lewis H: No. Not then.

Question: So, if there was to be talk of theoretical analysis, it would be Turner[8] that one would refer to in Western Canadian history?

Lewis H: … No. I was impressed by Turner's influence in the U.S. but I didn't feel his analysis necessarily applied to Western Canada.

Question: Why did you choose that topic for your M.A. thesis?[9] Did Whitelaw suggest it?

1921, positions he held until 1930 when he joined the University of Minnesota as a professor of history.

[6] William Menzies Whitelaw (1890–1974) was born in Valcartier, Quebec, and was educated at the University of Toronto and the Union Theological Seminary. He worked at the Public Archives of Canada in the 1930s, and was a professor of history at the University of Saskatchewan from 1940–1946. From 1946 to 1955, he taught in the Department of History at the American International College at Springfield, Massachusetts. He was a specialist in British overseas expansion, and Canadian-American relations. He is best known for *The Maritimes and Canada before Confederation* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1934). He retired in 1955.

[7] Arthur Silver Morton (1870–1945) was born in Trinidad, and was educated at the University of Edinburgh before moving to Canada to become a Presbyterian minister. In 1914, he moved to Saskatoon to become the chief librarian and head of the Department of History at the University of Saskatchewan (1914–1940). He was one of the first historians to do extensive research in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives in London, England. On the basis of this research, he would publish *A History of The Canadian West to 1870–71* (London, Edinburgh, Paris, Melbourne, Toronto, and New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1939).

[8] Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis argues that westward expansion and the availability of free land shaped the distinct democratic character, individualism, and inventiveness of the United States. This thesis was first elaborated by Turner in 1893, in a paper entitled "Significance of the Frontier in American History." It was delivered to the American Historical Association, and was first published in the *Proceedings of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, December 14, 1893.

[9] Lewis Herbert Thomas, "The constitutional development of the North-West Territories, 1870–1888," M.A. thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1941.

Lewis H: Yes. I started it because of the availability of a considerable number of basic sources in Saskatoon. They had a complete set of the Canadian Sessional Papers, and a very good set of newspapers and government publications.

Question: Was the Shortt Library there when you were there?

Lewis H: Yes, that is what I am modeling my gift to the University of Regina on. I have given all my personal books to the University of Regina and they are to be maintained there. My suggestion was that they be kept as in the Shortt Library. The books are not loaned out but are available to anyone. One can come in, sit down, and make notes. Frequently, university library collections will lack a volume—when it is borrowed—for three or four weeks. But in the Shortt Library, you always knew that the books would be available.

Question: And then when you went to Minnesota, you considered doing a comparative Canadian and American topic. What kind of topic did you have in mind?

Lewis H: I started work on comparative agricultural and institutional development but I decided that it was too big a bite for me. I concluded I would be more successful if I concentrated on developing the theme which I had begun in my M.A. thesis. It just went to 1888 and I decided I should carry on to the achievement of responsible government in 1897.[10]

Question: You then came back to Regina?

Lewis H: To Saskatoon, where the archive was begun at the University of Saskatchewan.

Question: An Archives Act had been passed?

Lewis H: No. A.S. Morton, during the preceding Liberal regime, had himself appointed to—he called himself Keeper of Public Records. This was modeled on the British system. Of course he was very much influenced by things British rather than American. He had managed to convince one of the ministers in the Liberal Government to sanction the transfer on a permanent basis of certain key records of the Territorial Government, including the Minutes of the Northwest Council and Assembly and the original Orders-in-Council, into his keeping.

Question: So he was really responsible for starting the archives. Then, I gather, the CCF took the initiative.

Lewis H: I guess Tommy [Premier Tommy Douglas] or Joe Phelps [Minister of Natural Resources and Industrial Development] said, "You fellows need an Archives Act, a proper Archives Act, and a properly financed institution." So, I was authorized, after Morton's death in early 1945, to draft a scheme for the establishment of an Archives based on my experience in Minnesota.

Question: The basic scheme is Minnesota-inspired?

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[10] Lewis Herbert Thomas, "Responsible Government in the Canadian North-West Territories, 1870–1897," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1953. This was published as *The Struggle for Responsible Government in the North-West Territories 1870-97* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1956).

Lewis H: Yes. It was also inspired by Nova Scotia, which was the only province to have an Archives Board at that time in Canada. Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia were [thereafter] the only two provinces which had an Archives Board to oversee the functioning of the institution. In some states in the U.S., it is mandatory for the Archivist to sanction the destruction of any government record. No destruction can occur without his approval. So I incorporated that idea.

You see [A.S.] Morton had the idea that the archives could function in Saskatoon but I never believed that this was possible. The archivist would have to be in direct contact with the government officials, keeping an eye on the situation, especially in regard to the destruction of records. Civil servants being what they are, you had to be very, very cautious in accepting their statements. Morton always accepted what he was told by officials—including the Ministers and Deputy Ministers—but I never accepted their word. I wanted to go down into the vaults and see for myself whether the stuff was there or not.

Question: Did you do that?

Lewis H: Oh, yes, I found all sorts of stuff.

Question: Did you embarrass them at times as well?

Lewis H: I can think of one or two. I remember the old Chief Clerk in the Attorney General's department complaining that these "university types" were restricting his moves. [*Mrs. Thomas then joined us for coffee. She said that they had been married in 1946 and that she moved from Ottawa to join Lewis in their new home in Regina at that time.*]

Question: That would mean you lived in Regina for eighteen years, all of it under the CCF, and at a time when Saskatchewan was changing. I am interested to know what it was like in Regina between 1946 and 1964. Were there links with the Saskatoon university community? One has the impression that Saskatoon was the centre of Saskatchewan's intellectual universe but there was a hint in Lewis's notes that there was a very active lively world here in Regina.

Margaret: I'll let Lewis answer it but I'll make a comment too. There was really quite a lively exchange among the young civil servants who had been brought in. The CCF had sort of been the magnet drawing them here—all of the exciting programs that were being set up. Tommy Douglas was the central figure, a sort of magnet that did draw them here, but when you look back on it you realize the real intellectual ferment that was in the city, and the real contact that there was between the civil service (not the bureaucratic civil service—that had been here forever—but the new people who had come in) and the university. The Al Johnsons, Tommy Shoyama, Tommy McLeod, and George Cadbury, Al Blakeney, Don Tansley, and David Levin. You know there was a big crowd of them.

Question: Did you see them often?

Margaret: We were on the outskirts of the whole thing because, after the first couple of years, Lewis was not teaching at the University. He was in the archives which was not in the mainstream of the programme. Wouldn't you say that, Lewis? So we wouldn't be as close to it is some people would be, but even in our case we saw quite a lot of them.

Question: Was there talk of policy?

Margaret: Oh yes, generally I would say, not any specific programs that were being studied at that time.

Question: Would you have contact with the cabinet ministers? Would they come to such gatherings?

Margaret: Well, in some cases, there would be contact. We had quite a bit of contact with Oakland Valleau [Minister of Social Welfare and Provincial Secretary] who lived next door to us. And then mother and dad, because mother had been so active in the CCF movement, knew all of them long before they came to Regina, practically all of them long before they formed a government.

Question: I have heard that these people who came into the civil service were like socialist hired guns from around the continent who were shipped into a province that they didn't know very well.

Margaret: Well that would be true in a sense, George Cadbury[11] coming in and being English. My impression is that it may have been David Lewis who suggested him and Tommy Douglas who made the actual contact. But Cadbury had actually been to western Canada before the war. Tommy McLeod, of course, had grown up in Weyburn and had been well acquainted with Tommy from about 1932. Al Johnson had lived here for many years. I don't know, I think perhaps he took his degree in B.C. but he had lived in Saskatchewan a long time. Tansley, I think was from Saskatchewan, although that I am not sure about. Al Blakeney came from the Maritimes. Cadbury brought him in. I am quite sure of that. He was a lawyer from the Maritimes. Most Maritimers seem to retain the Maritimes as their home forever. I never had that feeling with Al and his wife. I always felt that they had adopted Saskatchewan right from the time they came.

Question: Did you see much of [Vernon] Fowke[12] or [George] Britnell[13] or Cronkite?[14]

Lewis H: Fowke taught me economics at Saskatoon. I had double honours in history and economics.

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[11] George Woodall Cadbury (1907–95) was born in Birmingham England, and attended King's College at Cambridge to study economics. His supervisor was John Maynard Keynes. He was well known among the Fabians and came to know a number of Canadian socialists, including David Lewis. Lewis convinced Cadbury to visit the newly elected CCF government in Saskatchewan, and in 1945, Cadbury met with government officials there. Offered a job, he came to Saskatchewan to establish the Economic Advisory Planning Board and brought order to a group of crown corporation government enterprises and institute long-term economic planning. At the end of the 1940s, he left the Saskatchewan for work at the United Nations.

[12] Vernon Clifford Fowke (1907–1966) was born in Parry Sound, Ontario. He graduated from the University of Saskatchewan in 1929, and then joined their teaching staff. He would go on to graduate work at the University of Chicago and University of Washington, graduating with a Ph.D. in 1942. His dissertation was published in 1946 as *Canadian Agricultural Policy*, establishing him as an influential historian of Canadian agriculture. He would publish *The National Policy and the Wheat Economy* in the Social Credit Series in 1957.

[13] George Edwin Britnell (1903–1961) was born in London, England and moved with his parents to Saskatchewan where his father homesteaded. He entered the University of Saskatchewan in 1926, and after a year at the London School of Economics, he was appointed instructor in economics at the University of Saskatchewan in 1930. He would go on to study for his M.A. and Ph.D. at the University of Toronto, graduating in 1938. He was appointed assistant professor of economics at the University of Saskatchewan in1936, and would later become professor and head of the Department of Political Science. He would publish *The Wheat Economy* in 1939, and *Canadian Agriculture in War and Peace* (with V.C. Fowke) in 1962.

[14] Frederick Clinton Cronkite (1893–1973) was born in New Brunswick. He became a very influential Dean of Law at the University of Saskatchewan College of Law from 1929 until 1960. In 1937, he co-wrote the Saskatchewan submission to the Rowell-Sirois Commission exploring the idea of federal-provincial transfer payments.

I never took a course from Britnell but I knew him by reputation.

Margaret: I took courses from both Fowke and Britnell. Britnell was a very good lecturer. He was always away saving the country. There were always commissions and committees and so on. It was exciting to have a professor who was doing all these things.

Question: Was there a sense that Saskatchewan was a different community in the Prairies as well as in the country in the 1940s and 1950s?

Lewis H: Oh, yes.

Question: How was it different? Why was it different?

Lewis H: Much more progressive than Alberta and, of course, much more progressive than any other province in Canada because of the background of the people. There were a lot of Old Country people among the settlers—Scandinavians, Germans—members of social democratic parties …

Question: What strikes me is the political commitment these people seemed to have.

Lewis H: They had a greater sense of community—a sense of the Saskatchewan community—than there was in Alberta, for example. Alberta is more factionalized.

Margaret: Well, if we had grown up in Alberta, we might not feel that way, dear.

Question: I wonder. I asked L.G. [Thomas][15] this very kind of thing and he thinks that there were a number of different communities in Alberta and that there was more division within Alberta than there was in Saskatchewan.

Lewis H: That is essentially it. Alberta's divisions are a consequence of the importance of the ranching industry, which was a separate community, and the mining industry, which was also separate. There were stronger Ukrainian elements in Alberta, too—another world unto itself.

Question: But were there not the same ethnic divisions when you were here?

Lewis H: There were. But in Saskatchewan, as soon as it was settled (and that happened earlier than in Alberta), these groups had an opportunity to shake down, and to become sensitive to others. They were all farmers—dirt farmers, wheat farmers—and their sense of equality was very, very strong.

Margaret: In the 1930s even the people who were relatively alright still had the fear. It was all-pervasive: either you were in dire straits or you feared you would be soon. There was very little of the divisions that there are now.

Question: That's a good point. It probably helped to make the community more united.

Lewis H: Yes. You see the urban centres all depended for their prosperity on the welfare of the farmer. What affected the farmer, affected the city dweller.

[15] Lewis Gwynne Thomas. See his interview later in this manuscript.

Margaret: In Regina, in the years we lived here … the dust bowl was gone by that time, but some years were terribly dry … I think everybody was aware of the seriousness of possible drought. Whereas in a city the size of Edmonton, there wouldn't have been anything like the same experience….

Question: In a way you are a North American-trained scholar. And one of the things that struck me when talking to Bill Morton and George Stanley and even Lewis G. [Thomas], despite the fact that he went to Harvard, was their links with England. Not only do they talk with a kind of English accent, but their whole world is filtered through an Oxford-London sense of the world. Yours isn't, I think. Is that fair?

Lewis H: I think that is a very valid observation. But when I got to England, I had no sense of it being strange. So much of the environment, I felt I already knew. You know, here is where Dickens wrote—these cities I had read so much about.

Question: Well am I wrong, then, in this kind of generalization?

Lewis H: No, No, I don't think so.

Question: You do differ from Morton and L.G. Thomas? I look at your responsible government book and I see a real respect for the institutions of parliament and for the evolution of government, but I don't sense that you are harking back to Westminster. I have a feeling, rather, of an institution evolving within this community according to traditional rules. In your work, you concentrate upon an inherited tradition that has taken new life in a new atmosphere. But your focus is on the evolution within Canada of this new approach. On the other hand, with Bill Morton and Lewis G., one has the sense that the proper rules were the ones set in London and we should be trying to match that model. I have a greater sense of the autonomy of the West in your work. Does that sound fair?

Lewis H: Yes, I think that's reasonable.

Question: Yet, as I read the biographical notes you prepared, I discover you are a Maritimer.

Lewis H: I know Nova Scotia, you see. Nova Scotia has always had very close connections with the British way of life.

Question: OK, why is my generalization about your view of the West right? Did you become a Westerner when you came out here to go to high school?

Lewis H: Yes, I guess I did. My Nova Scotia experience is expressed in those books by Archibald McMechan.[16]

Question: Was it Saskatoon in the 1930s that shaped you?

Lewis H: I would say so, yes.

[16] Archibald McKellar MacMechan (1862–1933) was a writer and academic at Dalhousie University. He was born in Berlin/Kitchener, Ontario, and was educated at the University of Toronto (B.A. 1884) and John Hopkins University (Ph.D. 1889). Most of his written work deals with Nova Scotia and its history.

Question: Your uncle was a doctor. You must have been in a very comfortable home, a prosperous home?

Lewis H: Not a wealthy home but comfortable.

Question: The depression didn't particularly affect it?

Lewis H: No. But anyone with any sensitivity was quite aware of how the Depression had created hardship for many people.

Question: Did you enjoy that time in Saskatoon? It was ten years.

Lewis H: No. My aunt and uncle were very conservative and I was just a teenager, with all the inclinations and attitudes of a teenager.

Margaret: This was a childless couple. They had no experience with bringing up children.

Question: So it was a very restricted time?

Lewis H: My uncle was very strict. If ever I stayed out after ten o'clock, it was a crisis. (Laughs.) In my late teens, if I wanted to go out to a party or a dance, and if I was late, I would have to go down and sleep at the YMCA! (Laughs.)

Margaret: You didn't travel down to the Maritimes to see relatives or anything of that sort in those years. He was in Saskatoon and that was it—he couldn't continue an association with his mother's people.

Question: It would be a difficult time. Did you stay there as well when you were an undergraduate?

Lewis H: Yes.

Question: What was your relationship to Tommy Douglas?

Margaret: My father had at one time been a Baptist minister in Weyburn. He then went to Yorkton and a couple of years later he left the ministry and studied law, so all of my knowledge of him was as a lawyer. But my parents were very interested in this bright young man who had gone to the same church, the Baptist church in Weyburn. And when Tommy became involved in the CCF they were so interested and so keen on getting to know him. I have known him from the middle thirties, I guess, when I first met him. And all of the CCF speakers coming through would stay at our place.

Question: You make it sound as if he was a bit of a prodigy, that he was more able than the others.

Margaret: Oh, very much, yes, a very able man.

Question: And the focus of the movement?

Margaret: Well certainly from the time when he left the federal House and came out here as the

provincial CCF leader. But he was in demand as a speaker. You see he became a Member of Parliament in 1935.

Question: Tommy, to me, is a public figure, almost a cardboard figure. One sees just the public image and I wonder if, over that thirty years, the person you knew in 1935 didn't more or less disappear.

Margaret: That's not my feeling or impression at all.

Lewis H: We were next-door neighbours to Tommy in Regina on Angus Crescent and for eight years we lived next-door to them.

Margaret: We didn't see a great deal of them because he was so terribly busy. But it was nice to know they were there. We would see her and talk to her over the back fence.

Lewis H: I remember, on one occasion, he leaned over the back fence and told me that the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly was going to retire and said, "I think he should be replaced by somebody who has a good background in History. Do you have anybody to suggest?" So I immediately thought of Bev Koester, who was teaching high school and whom I had got to know. He was a man of ability and was certainly just the sort of person who would fit in. That was how Bev Koester got his start in public service. He is now Clerk of the House of Commons in Ottawa.

Question: You don't think then that Tommy changed over the years?

Margaret Thomas: No, that isn't my impression at all. In the book that Doris Shackleton wrote about him, there is a comment about his saying that really his work was his life and that he didn't think it would be very interesting to write about him. But no, I don't get that impression at all—I do get the impression that he didn't have hobbies outside of his work and that sort of thing but that is a rather different situation.

Question: It comes through in Lewis's new book, in the interviews, I think, that Tommy was someone who read for his work. When he had time to read on Saturday afternoons, he told Higginbotham[17] that's what he did—read some history or biography or economics. Very much a dedicated man. When I saw him in the late 1960s, when he was just finishing as leader of the party nationally, he … had lost contact with a particular community and become a nationwide figure.

Margaret: Well, I think that he was really very deeply hurt when he was rejected here in Regina. And Irma, for a long time … well, she just refused to come back, she was so incensed. I think they found a real community in British Columbia—the people in the Nanaimo constituency. I think there was a real community there and they were extremely good to the Douglases. They wanted them to retire out there.

Question: Was he a man who could relate detail to principle, to theory? Could he look at Saskatchewan and say social democrats should go this way?

Lewis H: I think he was more pragmatic. He was not a doctrinaire socialist.

[17] C. H. Higginbotham, *Off the record: the CCF in Saskatchewan* (Toronto/Montreal: McClelland and Stewart, 1968).

Margaret: When we saw some of the early B.C. leadership, we kept saying, "If they come within miles of forming a government, they'll blow it"—and they did—but there was very little of that in Saskatchewan as a matter of fact. But there was just no way he was doctrinaire. The reason he was a social democrat was because he was concerned about the lives of people and if what the theories said didn't seem to work out, well, forget about it. That's my feeling about Tommy. The reason for these parties is the life of the people. If a particular programme isn't going to aid in that way, then you do something else. Whereas with some of the people in B.C., this would never have been countenanced.

Question: Okay, I would like to switch back to those decisions you made, Lewis. The first one was that switch from the Archives to Regina College. Had you always wanted to be a fulltime university lecturer?

Lewis H: I suppose yes. Originally, that's true. When I was working on my Ph.D., I thought at first I might enjoy an academic career but as it worked out, the challenge of this job in the Archives, which of course was closely related to things academic, (because the institution of the Archives would serve the academic community), led me to devote a period of time to it. At the time I transferred full time to the College, I felt I had laid secure foundations for the Archives, and that I had done all that I could and needed to do. I had got *Saskatchewan History* established, I had administered an oral history programme, and I had made sure that the system of "scheduling" government records had been implemented—that is, a system wherein, at a certain time, they come up for destruction or preservation.

So when Roger Graham[18] resigned to go to Saskatoon, there was an opening and, since I had already taught at the College in earlier years (for two or three years), I thought this would be an interesting opportunity to switch over to academic life.

Question: And did you have a goal in mind? Was it the teaching that attracted you or was it writing history?

Lewis H: No, it was the contact with students and the hope that I would be able to help them in their academic careers. But I also enjoyed the challenge of teaching outside my specialty. I taught courses in the history of European civilization and in United States history as well as Canadian history.

Question: Did you have particular goals as a scholar writing about Western Canada?

Lewis H: In the sense that there was so much of the history of Western Canada that needed to be written and that there was a lot of room for such activity.

Question: Were there particular themes that you wanted to amplify?

Lewis H: I felt a lot more needed to be done in the fields of political and economic history which had been by-passed by earlier and contemporary scholars.

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[18] William Roger Graham **(**1919–1988) was a Canadian historian who specialized in biography and political history. He was born in Montreal, Quebec, moving first to Chicago and then to Winnipeg, where his father became principal of United College. He was educated at United College (B.A.) and Toronto (M.A. and Ph.D.). He was hired by the University of Saskatchewan in 1946, but by 1947 was moved to the Regina campus (Regina College). He taught there until 1958, when he accepted a position in the Department of History at the University of Saskatchewan (Saskatoon). In 1968 was chosen as the Douglas Professor of Canadian History at Queen's University (Kingston). He taught there until 1984, when he retired. His most important work was a three-volume biography of Arthur Meighen published between 1960 and 1965.

Question: Let's talk about some particular scholarship. At the time you were moving into western Canadian history as a full-time scholarly career, the major figure in the field would have been W.L. Morton, I guess—because his Progressive Party book would have come out as well as his history of Manitoba, the introduction to Alexander Begg's Red River journal and the Eden Colvile journal. Was he the dean of prairie scholarship in the late 1950s?

Lewis H: In my opinion he was, although I don't think he was so regarded by many others. I think many would have said he was not a superior or a predominant figure.

Question: That would probably be because the opinion makers you refer to were not themselves interested as much in western Canadian history. Did you think Morton's work was very strong?

Lewis H: Yes. I knew him personally as a result of a meeting of the Canadian Historical Association in Winnipeg. He struck me as a fine example of a scholar and a gentleman, very, very kind to younger people. When the position of Manitoba archivist came open, he felt I should be considered. I think he promoted the idea as best he could but for various reasons I was never offered the position and don't know if I would have taken it on. I don't think I would have but I appreciated his confidence in me.

Question: Would you have said that V.C. Fowke was also a dean of Western scholarship in the late 1950s?

Lewis H: Yes. I suppose he wasn't recognized in his time. I don't feel he was fully appreciated by his contemporaries. He was a most stimulating man. His wife was a secretary of the Student Christian Movement at the University of Saskatchewan with which I was associated.

Question: Did you like his interpretation of western history as it appeared in *The National Policy and the Wheat Economy*?

Lewis H: Very stimulating.

Question: What did you think of Morton's interpretations?

Lewis H: I thought he had a very stimulating approach to history, and this is illustrated by that brilliant short book he wrote dealing with the Canadian experience, *The Canadian Identity.*[19]

Question: The Saskatchewan Golden Jubilee [celebrations of 1955]: You would have worked on this with John Archer?[20]

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19 W.L. Morton, *The Canadian Identity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961).

20 John Hall Archer (1914–2004) was born near Broadview, Saskatchewan, and worked as a school teacher from 1933 to 1940. After the World War II, he received his B.A. and M.A. from the University of Saskatchewan (1947, 1948). In 1949, he graduated with a Bachelor of Library Science from McGill University, and from 1951 to 1964 served as the librarian for the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, and from 1957 to 1964 he was the provincial archivist. From 1964 to 1967 he was the director of libraries at McGill University, and from 1967 to 1970 he was an archivist and associate professor at Queen's University (Kingston), also earning a Ph.D. while he was at Queens. In 1970, he became the principal of the Regina Campus of the University of Saskatchewan, and the first president of the University of Regina in 1974. In 1980, he wrote *Saskatchewan: A History* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Books, 1980).

Lewis H: It was chaired by George Simpson[21] and Mr. Justice Culliton.[22]

Question: What was your role in the Golden Jubilee Committee?

Lewis H: I was on the Historical sub-committee of the Jubilee committee. This sub-committee was chaired by George Simpson. Other members were John Archer, myself, and Fred McGuinness.[23] We were very closely associated with promoting the whole historical dimension of the programme.

Question: What was your assessment of it in retrospect? Did it make a difference to Saskatchewan?

Lewis H: Yes, indeed it did. It stimulated the production of a number of books of popular scholarship and of a great many local histories which otherwise would never have been undertaken. It generally stimulated the cultural life of the province, including the establishment of the Provincial Museum.

Question: I gather that the committee worked well together. I talked to Fred McGuinness about it and my impression is that you enjoyed each other and were successful.

Lewis H: I liked Fred McGuinness. You know, I listen to his morning radio programme [CBC], "Neighbourly News" on the prairies.

Question: One of the other people writing at this time was George Stanley.

Lewis H: I was greatly impressed by George's work on *The Birth of Western Canada*. [It] was an approach to a biography as well as a history of Indian-white relations after 1870.

Question: Did you think it was a frontier interpretation of Canadian history that Stanley had written? People at times have linked it to the approach of Frederick Jackson Turner. He himself doesn't like that idea.

Lewis H: No, I agree with him.

Question: Would you say that you are a frontier historian?

Lewis H: In a sense, I am. If you are teaching U.S. history, general U.S. history, you had to assess Turner's view of America.

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[21] This was George Wilfred Simpson (1893–1969) who taught history at the University of Saskatchewan from 1922 to 1957. He eventually became head of the History Department and assistant dean of the College of Arts and Science. He pioneered Slavic studies at the university, and he helped initiate the formation of the Saskatchewan Archives. He also became the first provincial archivist in 1945, and he was instrumental in establishing *Saskatchewan History*, a publication of the Saskatchewan Archives, in 1948.

[22] Edward Milton Culliton (1906–1991) was a Canadian lawyer, politician, and judge who served as the Chief Justice of Saskatchewan from 1962 to 1981.

[23] Frederick George McGuinness (1921–2011) was a writer, journalist, and historian born in Brandon, Manitoba. From 1946 to 1951, he was a researcher for the federal Department of Labour, and from 1952 to 1956 was executive director of the Saskatchewan Golden Jubilee Committee that organized that province's fiftieth anniversary celebrations. In 1956 he became the publisher of the *Medicine Hat News,* and from 1966 to 1987 he as the associate editor of the Brandon Sun. He wrote a regular column in the Sun under the pseudonym of "F.A. Rosser."

Question: … At the same time that Morton, Fowke, L.G. Thomas and you were writing the history of western Canada, Creighton[24] was writing his study of Macdonald. What was your reaction to that?

Lewis H: Admiration at his literary skill and his capacity to get inside the mind of a man.

Question: How about his view of Canada?

Lewis H: Yes, I think I would have accepted his view—I was also aware of the significance of H.A. Innis,[25] who was the leader in expounding the role of economic forces. The only reservation I had about Creighton was, I felt, that he didn't really understand western Canada—and his treatment of Louis Riel was not particularly accurate.

Question: I spent the last couple of hours before I came reading your biography of Riel just to make sure I understood your view. I think it's very strong. Did you enjoy writing that work?

Lewis H: Yes indeed, though it was demanding.

Question: What do you think of [Thomas] Flanagan's approach to Riel?[26]

Lewis H: Stimulating but not completely convincing. I think he has some useful insights that are applicable but I don't think he has said the last word.

Question: You left Saskatchewan to go to the University of Alberta in 1964. This was certainly a shift in your own life and in your work in western Canada. You had been a Saskatchewan person for three decades. Why did you move?

Lewis H: I thought it would be interesting and stimulating to look at western Canada from a different setting.

Question: Was that really all that moved you? ….

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[24] Donald Grant Creighton (1902–1979) was born in Ontario and studied at the University of Toronto and Balliol College, Oxford. He was hired by the University of Toronto's Department of History in 1927, and became professor in 1945. He retired in 1971. In the interval, he became the foremost historian of Canada publishing *The Commercial Empire of the St. Lawrence* (1937), a two-volume biography of John A. Macdonald (1952, 1955), *Dominion of the North: A History of Canada* (1944), and *The Road to Confederation: The Emergence of Canada, 1863-1867* (1964).

[25] Harold Adams Innis (1894–1952) was born in Canada and became a world-renowned political economist, and pioneer in communication studies. He taught at the University of Toronto from 1920 until his death. Having studied at McMaster University and the University of Chicago, Innis began to re-orient Canadian studies with the development of a "staples theory," which posited interrelations between economics, politics and society; that Canada's culture, political history, and economy were decisively influenced by the exploitation and export of a series of "staples" such as fur, fish, lumber, wheat, and minerals.

[26] Thomas Flanagan (b. 1944) was an American-born professor of political science at the University of Calgary. In the 1970s he published a number of works on Riel's religious writings. In the period prior to this interview he had published, Thomas Flanagan, "Louis "David" Riel: Prophet, priest-king, infallible pontiff," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 9, no. 3 (August 1974), 15-25. Thomas Flanagan, *Louis 'David' Riel: Prophet of the New World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979). "The Political Thought of Louis Riel," in Antoine S. Lussier, ed., *Riel and the Métis* (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Métis Federation Press, 1979), 131–160.

Lewis H: There were certain developments in the College which I rather disliked concerning the plans for the establishment of the University of Regina and I thought I would feel more at home with Lewis G. and the others in Alberta.

Question: Did you enjoy Edmonton?

Lewis H: In the early years, yes, very much; in later years, and in particular the last four or five years, much less so. The policy of the Lougheed government was so anti-intellectual, so hostile to the university, that it became a much less interesting and attractive place. I find it amazing. Like many others I shared the view that Social Credit was a rather reactionary movement but in actual fact Ernest Manning was very shrewd and much more generous to the university than the Lougheed government ever was. Manning not only gave large capital grants but he also made sure that the operating grant was adequate. When I first went there, the book budget for the Department of History was $80,000. Last year, it was $27,000 as a result of Lougheed's austerity programme.

Question: What about this talk about western alienation and western separation from the nation?

Lewis H: I think that, in Alberta, there is almost a pathological condition. I have no use for Trudeau or his policies other than his stand on the constitution, but the actual hatred of the man in Alberta is really beyond belief.

Question: How could things come to such a pass in our country? Why would a part of the country become so bitter about the rest? [note the context here: when we were talking, the Trudeau government's National Energy Program was a source of much discussion in western Canada]

Lewis H: I think the fact that they had become so rich … they felt that they were not exercising comparable political influence in Ottawa.

Question: One had the impression, though, that Saskatchewan, despite its prosperity, found the national community more congenial. What's the difference? Why should Alberta be so hostile in the 1970s and why should Saskatchewan become the broker?

Lewis H: Partly it was a question of personality—Blakeney's personality. As a lawyer he recognized the importance of national institutions, and I think there was a more general awareness of the fact that, during the Depression years, Saskatchewan had benefitted very largely from federal activity—the PFRA,[27] the Farmers' Creditors Arrangement Act, the Bennett New Deal … In Bennett's last year, there was more that was congenial. And before that, of course, the Liberals under Jimmy Gardiner had fought for western Canadian interests in the federal government and had a very considerable influence. Jimmy Gardiner was a power in the land and his power base was Saskatchewan.

Question: In this regard, what did you think of C.B. Macpherson's[28] interpretation of Alberta as a

[27] Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA) was established by an Act of Parliament under Prime Minister R. B. Bennett in 1935 in response to the widespread drought, farm abandonment and land degradation of the 1930s.

[28] Crawford Brough Macpherson (1911–1987) was a Canadian political scientist. He was born in Toronto, Ontario, and was educated at the University of Toronto (B.A. 1933) and the London School of Economics (M.Sc.1935). He joined the faculty of Political Economy at the University of Toronto in 1935, and in 1956 he became a professor there. In 1953, he published *Democracy in Alberta: The Theory and Practice of a Quasi-Party System.*

homogeneous petty bourgeois society fighting Ottawa?

Lewis H: I thought it had considerable merit.

Question: And Seymour Martin Lipset writing on the Saskatchewan CCF[29] argued that it wasn't quite socialism, that it was yet another wheat-based populist protest.

Lewis H: Read the latest edition of *Saskatchewan History* on the 1944 election. I deal with the question there. Lipset was wrong.

Question: One of the things you commented on in my series of general questions was the influence of Christianity upon your work. Now you are, I think, still a very strongly Christian and church-going person. You said that Christianity, particularly 'social gospel' studies, played a large part in your work and I wondered if you could expand upon that. Am I right in saying that you are still a strongly Christian person, a believing person?

Lewis H: Of recent months, I have been much impressed with Buddhism as a significant and creative religious influence. Buddha, of course, lived in the 6th century B.C., and had a teaching career of forty years. When you examine his teaching, you find a number of parallels with the teaching of Jesus. Some of the insights which Jesus contributed are not in any way hostile to the views of Buddha. I think the thing that attracts me most is the fact that Buddhists are a peace-loving people. Despite the fact that there are many factions and divisions in the Buddhist world, they never fight each other either physically or intellectually. They state their own position and the student must make up his own mind. I regard the important element in Christianity as the teaching of Jesus. Christianity, as we know it historically, is not necessarily the religion of Jesus, rather it's the religion of Paul. When you consider the sorry history of Christian factionalism and disputes over the years, Catholics and Protestants fighting each other, modernists and fundamentalists … it isn't pleasant.

Question: What about cooperativism? Is that an important element in your thinking? Were you educated in the co-op movement?

Lewis H: In the sense that I was a member of the local co-op and felt that it had a significant role to play along with the state and with responsible private enterprise in the economy.

Question: When you say responsible private enterprise, would you regard the modern multi-nationals as responsible private enterprise corporations?

Lewis H: Not really. Some of them may have a more enlightened view than others but, by and large, they're concerned with the profit ledger, profit and loss.

Question: And to that degree are not responsible?

Lewis H: Indifferent.

[29] Seymour Martin Lipset (1922–2006) was an American sociologist and political scientist. In 1950 he published *Agrarian Socialism: The Cooperative Commonwealth Federation in Saskatchewan, a Study in Political Sociology* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1950).

Question: I asked you earlier to comment on your role as historian and you said that you had a social responsibility as a citizen. Did you see your responsibility as larger than that? Was it your function to educate the people of western Canada to their responsibilities as citizens or did you see historians as having some other public role *as* historians.

Lewis H: No. I don't think I can put my finger on anything beyond the individual's responsibility for his own activity.

Question: …. I asked you about what prompted you to choose particular research topics and you replied that it was largely chance or that someone asked you to do a particular thing. Would that be fair? When I look at your list of publications, I see *Responsible Government in the Northwest Territories*, and the letters of A. L. Burt, Douglas in Saskatchewan, Louis Riel, and Social Credit in Alberta.[30] In other words, I see a corpus that ranges across all of western Canadian history. You have obviously opted to do regional studies of the west. Now was that accidental?

Lewis H: Partly, but partly by choice, partly by invitation from others. The book on A.L. Burt is an example. His daughter, Joan Jenness, was very anxious that I should do something with her father's letters. Having been so closely affiliated with him, I decided to take it on.

Question: The Social Credit volume?

Lewis H: Members of the Copp Clark publishing house asked me to do something on Social Credit so I decided to work on the period of Aberhart's tenure of office.

Question: What about the Douglas memoirs—why did you edit those?

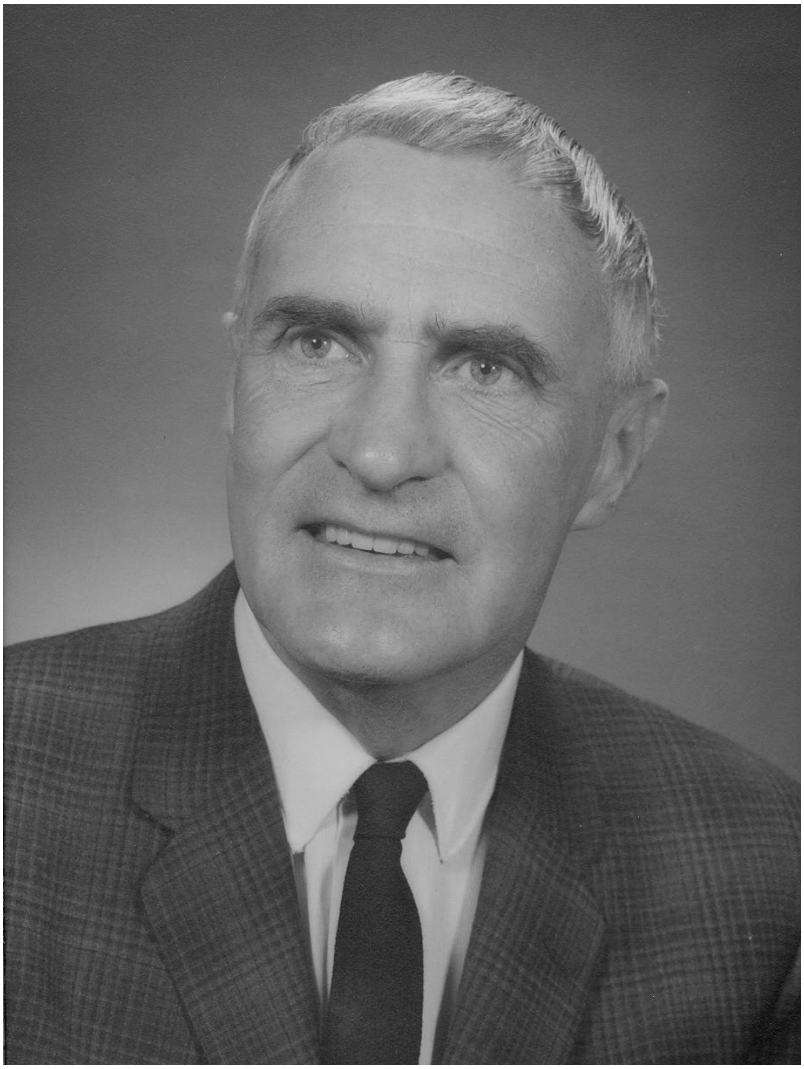
Lewis H: About five years ago, I decided that many people had been writing about the CCF and its rise to power and whether it was really a socialist movement or not, and had come to the conclusion that it was not socialist. But none of them had actually examined the record of the government in office. I thought that somebody should actually develop that theme. What really happened after 1944? Since a vast quantity of source material was in the Archives of Saskatchewan, so many ministerial papers, I decided I would take it on as a project. Well, I did quite a bit of work on various aspects of government activity after 1944. I took great quantities of notes and … [photocopies]. In the course of this, I came across the transcript of these taped interviews. I sat down to read them and was fascinated by the contents. It ran to over 800 foolscap typed pages. I found it very, very interesting, very rich, so I got sidetracked into a project for the publication of this document. It had to be shortened for publication purposes. It was much too long for a book so I had to select the significant parts. Then I showed the manuscript, the original manuscript, to the director of the University of Alberta Press. He was equally impressed by it and asked me to prepare a manuscript. I was three years in working it over, doing a first draft, cutting it down here and there, and then finally I submitted a first draft to the Press. They referred it to an expert for an opinion on its publishability and this person—I don't know who he was—was very shrewd and made a great many useful suggestions, emphasizing the fact that I had not identified many of the people to whom Douglas refers. He said: "the average reader won't know

[30] Lewis H. Thomas, *The Renaissance of Canadian History: A Biography of A.L. Burt* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975). Lewis H. Thomas, ed., *The Making of a Socialist: The Recollections of T.C. Douglas* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1982). Lewis H. Thomas, "Riel, Louis," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. xl (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982). Lewis H. Thomas, ed., *William Aberhart and Social Credit in Alberta* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1977).

who Aneurin Bevan or E.M. Culliton was." My initial reaction was, "He's quite right. It shows my age." So I spent considerable time on brief sketches of all the significant people in the text, combing *Who's Who* and so on.

Interview with Lewis Gwynne Thomas[1]

Winnipeg, June and November 1981



L.G. Thomas (1914–2001) Departmental Photo

L.G. Thomas is *the* Alberta historian to a generation of Albertans, particularly those who were students at the University of Alberta. He wrote one of the scholarly books in the ten volume "Social Credit in Alberta" series,[2] the foundation of academic

[1] This transcript is based on three interviews with Lewis Gwynne Thomas by Gerald Friesen in Winnipeg, June and November of 1981. It has been published previously in *Heritage of the Great Plains* 22, no. 4 (Fall 1989), 33-51; and "An Interview with Lewis G. Thomas," *Alberta History*, vol. 71, no. 3 (Summer 2023), 12-27. The biographical introduction was written by Gerald Friesen to accompany the 1989 article in the *Heritage of the Great Plains*. For a more extensive biography see, Lewis H. Thomas, "Lewis Gwynne Thomas," in Lewis H. Thomas, ed., *Essays on Western History in Honour of Lewis Gwynne Thomas* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1976), pp. 1-12.

[2] L.G. Thomas, *The Liberal Party in Alberta: A History of Politics in the Province of Alberta 1905–1921* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959).

research on that province. He also edited and prepared footnotes for the second edition of A.S. Morton's landmark work, *A History of the Canadian West to 1870-71*.[3] He has written several dozen historical articles and introductions, and he continues to publish regularly on the history of the Canadian west.

Dr. Thomas has been a teacher and administrator at the University of Alberta. There he introduced a course on the history of western Canada, one of the first in this field, but he also lectured in British, Canadian, and International History during his thirty-four years on the staff. Among his administrative responsibilities, he served as the first Albertan head of the History Department. During his six years in that position, from 1958 to 1964, the department's faculty complement increased from five to thirteen and the lineaments of the modern organization were established. L.G. Thomas has influenced a generation of teachers and a group of university and government-employed scholars. He is representative, too, of those few western Canadian scholars—W.L. Morton, L.H. Thomas, V.C. Fowke, Margaret Ormsby, G.F.G. Stanley—who were the first children of the four western provinces to record the area's history in their scholarly work. Dr. Thomas's recollections and reflections are worthy of attention, then, because they offer insights into the formative intellectual currents in the Canadian prairies.

Lewis Gwynne Thomas was born into a ranching family near Millarville, southwest of Calgary, in 1914. His father, the son of a banker in North Wales, had left the security of middle-class Britain to seek adventure in the North American "West" and eventually became a rancher in Alberta. His mother, an English governess employed in 1904 by ranchers in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains near Calgary, married Mr. Thomas a year later. Their third child, L.G., was educated in local schools and spent two years in Mount Royal College, Calgary, before entering the University of Alberta at the age of sixteen in 1930. After an M.A. at Alberta and doctoral studies at Harvard, Thomas taught in the History Department in the University of Alberta from 1938 to 1942, when he entered the Royal Canadian Navy, and from 1945 to 1975, when he retired. He still lives in Edmonton with his wife, Muriel Eleanor Massie (who is known as Jonesy), and spends the summer months at his cottage—and in its carefully-tended garden—at nearby Lake Wabamun.

Lewis speaks with an English accent and, in his conversation, often raises images of a world dominated by an earlier, imperial Britain. His sense of style is, for lack of better phrases, western British or prairie English. During one of the interviews that became part of the following text, he was wearing a gray, rib-knit cardigan, a light blue shirt, and a dark blue ascot. His slacks were dark blue, his socks gray, and his shoes suede. His white hair was combed forward and his bushy eyebrows accentuated his blue eyes. L.G.'s rhythms of speech and expressive gestures suggested self-deprecation but

[3] A.S. Morton, *A History of the Canadian West to 1870–71*, 2nd ed., edited by Lewis G. Thomas (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973).

also the confident expectation of an attentive audience. Tea was served during our conversation, scotch after.

The three interviews integrated into this text took place in June and November 1981. Our discussions ranged over Dr. Thomas's youth, his academic activity, and, to a lesser degree, his views on education and contemporary society. Readers who have entered university in the years since 1960 may also be struck by the broad, humane approach to education evident in L.G. Thomas's discussion of the University of Alberta. His own teaching ranged across the history of England and modem international relations as well as Canada. And *his* professors apparently accepted a like obligation to know their students well and to emphasize the international context of their Alberta experience. Dr. Thomas's recollections of the university between 1930 and the 1960s are dominated by this liberal, humane and international perspective. He himself devoted many hours to consultation with his students. And the specialist courses of the post-1970 generation have no counterpart in his pre-expansion prairie university.

One cannot talk to Lewis Thomas without being intrigued by his views on the working and structure of Canadian prairie society. He grew up and then became a professor in a plural community, of course, because Alberta is the home of immigrants from many lands and stations. As he comments, he belonged among the "privileged." He spoke English, was encouraged from an early age to read widely, enjoyed a comfortable though not an extravagant material environment, was able to enjoy the benefits of a "good education," and, thus, he travelled through life accustomed to the rituals and ceremonies—the tea and the church and the legislature—that might perplex those who were less favourably situated. He sees Alberta as an open society. Though he acknowledges differences of language, gender, ethnicity, and class, he does not depict them as crucial variables in the lives of its citizens: one's *aspirations* would determine whether one achieved the full measure of one's powers. Similarly, communication within this society was a matter of following the natural flow of kin and occupational and geographic *networks*, not of surmounting—or failing to overcome—barriers and conflict. Dr. Thomas emphasized connections, not discontinuities, in his discussions of the community in which he lived. In this optimistic world, the prairie church played a crucial role, smoothing over division and offering a believable interpretation of the present and the future. This may not have been a universe of certainties, but it was a harmonious and plausible whole for Dr. Lewis Thomas.[4]

[44] A collection of his papers has been edited by Patrick A. Dunae as *Rancher's Legacy: Alberta Essays by Lewis G. Thomas* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1986).

Question: You were raised on a ranch southwest of Calgary, near Okotoks. What was your childhood like?

Lewis G. Thomas: Well, it was very odd. One of my colleagues once said it explained why I was so odd. When I was six—just ready to go to school—my parents decided that the local school, which was quite a long way off, was not really very desirable. And so my mother bought a house in Okotoks and my sisters and I … went there during the week and went back to the ranch for weekends. It was only eight miles but, of course, we didn't have a car. We used horses. We spent a sort of suspended childhood … and I think it affected me more. Then, of course, most of our friends … were much further west and they had quite a different kind of life than that of the town.

Question: A rancher's life?

Lewis G: Well, it was that very peculiar community which is still quite well known in the Calgary area—Millarville. It had been settled early and almost entirely by people from the U.K or people who related easily to them. And as far as we were concerned, life centred around the church, the racetrack, and the polo grounds, with gymkhanas pulling the church and the racetrack together, you see. And very horsey. Well, I gave up horses—had too much horse really—the church had more permanence in my life than the horse.

Question: Were you an active horseman?

Lewis G: Oh, we rode a great deal, of course, because it was our means of transport and our pleasure.

Question: It was a very British life?

Lewis G: I haven't quite made up my mind. It's a very closed kind of society. It's North American in that it pretends to a great degree of egalitarianism, but I have come to the conclusion that that is largely a pretense. It's North American never to think that anything is structured in terms of class and even if you do, never to mention it—never use the horrid word.

Question: The society was cosmopolitan and yet it had class distinctions?

Lewis G: Well, horses I think are the secret, tempered only by the fact that the strongest cultural element was the church, I mean specifically, the Anglican Church, in my case. As I say, I rather gave up on the horses but the church certainly lingered on.

Question: Were you told that you were part of a select few?

Lewis G: It was never as explicit as that, and any suggestion that that was the case would certainly have been clobbered by almost everybody in the group, because they subscribed on the surface to this egalitarian North American attitude but … one tended to make the friends of other people who shared the same aspirations. It is more a matter of aspirations than actual background, I should think.

Question: Wealth was not necessarily the source of social distinction?

Lewis G: Well, no. We certainly were very poor, but nobody was rich. There were one or two families who were comparatively well-to-do, but most of the people were very poor. But, of course, in southern

Alberta and again I suppose in British Columbia (Margaret Ormsby[5] and I have often talked about this) before the war of 1914, you could do all these things, none of which involved horses, with a very low income. You didn't need to have very much money, but I think in most cases, there was a trickle of support coming in. … I am describing the privileged sector. That is the person who came with, say, a professional education of some kind which he could put to good use as doctor, lawyer, architect, or clergyman.

They came with this little bit of extra privilege. The largest group probably are those who had a little money or access to it. They always knew that they could borrow or they knew that someday they'd inherit—something like that. This is what I mean by privileged sector: it isn't wholly a matter of money. It's an ability to link yourself to the society to which you want to belong and remain in it. Southern Alberta was a society which centred upon interest in horses—and dogs, too. Cattle were all right, but they weren't horses, after all. People were quite devoted to cattle, but you don't have quite the same sentimental attachment, though my sister refers to her Herefords as her "babies."

Question: This definition of your childhood milieu is elusive: money, ethnicity, education, aspiration all seem to play a part.

Lewis G: I think aspiration is really the key. It's liking that sort of thing, wanting that kind of life and yet not being willing to sacrifice all the amenities to have it. People kept their manners, I think.

Question: Were there servants in this society?

Lewis G: No, you had "lady helps" and "gentleman helps"—that is, floating bachelors who worked from place to place and who could, because they were in the genteel tradition, be part of the family.

Question: More than a hired hand?

Lewis G: Very definitely! They fitted in comfortably and often married eventually and some of them even prospered. I can think of one quite well-known racehorse owner whom I would classify as gentleman help. His father was an army captain. He belonged to quite a genteel Cornish family and they had absolutely no money at all at that stage. He worked from place to place and finally homesteaded, was ultimately involved with racing, and made a very sensible and happy marriage. He got some racehorses. He had two passions—horseracing, which was his living—and the amateur theatre. Rather an odd combination but explicable in terms of this discussion.

Question: Did you have to do much work as a child?

Lewis G: Not really, no, I think I was exceptional in this way. It was this business of skating back and forth between the two homes. I did chores. I did a lot of gardening because that was really about all there was to do, and as time went on I stooked and did that kind of thing. But I have to admit I never learned to milk a cow.

[5] Margaret Anchoretta Ormsby (1909–1996) was born in Quesnel, British Columbia, and educated at the University of British Columbia (B.A. 1929 and M.A. 1931), and Bryn Mawr (Ph.D. 1936). After teaching high school for a few years, she lectured at McMaster in 1940, and was hired at UBC 1943. She was promoted to professor in 1955, and head of the Department of History in 1965. She held this position until she retired in 1974. She was a Canadian historian with a specialization in BC history.

Question: You were sent to Mount Royal College in Calgary for high school. Did you enjoy it?

Lewis G: Well, yes and no. The ethos of the college was not what I had been used to. The curious sort of mixture of fairly High Church Anglicanism and very left-wing liberal Welsh nonconformity, which my background involved. … I was about thirteen, and I suppose by that time one is forming these judgments and of course it was apparent to me immediately that the level of teaching, though done entirely by university graduates, was low. They used to import these teachers from the Maritimes, pay them very badly, and make them work very hard. I think for a little WASP brought up on lots of English children's literature, the school system in terms of curriculum and objectives and so on in the 1920s, when I was going through school, was really a lead-pipe cinch because it was geared to somebody who was literate, who had learned how to speak grammatically, more or less, and who had been fed precisely the diet that would make us all into little models of Ontario Tories.

Question: This Toryism would have had a religious base?

Lewis G: The churches were very much the cement that held the community together. My entry was into the little Anglican group which was held together by the church and certainly not by class, because it was a very diverse group—from the man who drove the honey-wagon [sanitation service] to the nearest thing to a squire that the town had … I think we had a kind of inheritance … a kind of cultural inheritance effectively passed on to those of us who were receptive to it. It must have been incredibly meaningless to the people who didn't have the aspirations that my parents and their friends had for their children and themselves. I liked to read, that was certainly what I most liked to do, and I quite liked going to school.

Question: Your parents would assume that you would go on to further education?

Lewis G: Well, they hoped very much and they certainly took steps. I can remember the controversy in the town over the teaching of French. It was not the question of people not wanting French and Latin to be taught; it was a question of luxury. Pressure was brought to bear by people like my parents who said, "After all, we're tax payers too, and we're going to have French and Latin for our children, so that they can matriculate. …" But there was a substantial division of opinion in the town as to whether this wasn't a frill and a little unnecessary, because a very much smaller proportion of people in my age group went to university immediately. A good many did eventually but, in Alberta, university education for large numbers was very much a post-World War II thing.

Question: You then went to the University of Alberta in Edmonton.

Lewis G: Yes. I was quite young when I went to University, I was a freshman in what was actually second year Arts at the ripe age of 16, which does mean that you are young to the group, but it was an incredibly close, tight little society which was very much what I had expected it to be. And I knew what to expect from people who talked about it. I'd met one or two of the very small number of professors; some of them were known to my parents and we had—not a wide acquaintance in Edmonton, but—in Canada, and perhaps the West particularly. Canadians tend to know each other and so you were very comfortable in the University. The University was dominated by the academic side—History was dominated by Rhodes scholars.

Question: Were you interested in History as a subject of study?

Lewis G: Yes. I'd liked it as a kid. I was fed a lot of it, especially British and ancient history, by my aunts in the United Kingdom who saw to it that no stone went unturned—although the odd thing was that they were extremely left-wing ladies—all suffragettes—but the books they sent out were British Imperial adventures. The work of Patrick Dunae does so much to describe the literary and cultural experience of somebody like myself who is the child of British immigrants.[6]

Question: Why did you enter the Honours History programme?

Lewis G: Well, I was sixteen and the only place I could find employment at the age of sixteen would have been in a bank—that is, suitable employment. I couldn't have been accepted as a student in Normal School for teacher education because I was too young, so the only thing to do was to go to university. I received a letter from the President that it was a bit exceptional to enter second year Arts at my age, so he recommended that I enroll in an Honours programme.

Another advantage of the Honours programme was that you didn't have to take Science. It wasn't that I dislike Science. It was that it was appallingly dull, and actually grade 12 Physics was not only dull but almost totally erroneous. What a waste of time! I've never been a great sympathizer of Lord Snow on this point. I've got on quite nicely without the Third Law of Thermodynamics. So I took Honours History. A.L. Burt[7] had been head of the Department and he had given it, I think, real distinction. He had produced a number of Honours students whose academic careers—Aileen Dunham for example,[8] and of course George Stanley[9] (who was very close to me in time)—were very distinguished.

I still remember my teachers as excellent people. I think the level of lecturing was probably not as high as it is now. And I don't think that all academics were as dedicated to their better honours and graduate students as my colleagues are now. But my teachers took a tremendous interest. Of course there was very close contact because there was so few of them—and so few of us. I'd like to write a memoir on [one of those teachers] George Smith.[10]

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[6] Patrick Dunae, "'Making Good': The Canadian West in British Boys' Literature, 1890-1914," *Prairie Forum* 4 (Fall 1979), 165-81.

[7] Alfred Leroy Burt (1888–1971) was born in Listowel, Ontario, and received a B.A. from the University of Toronto (1910) before going on to Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar. He received an Oxford B.Litt. in 1912 and an M.A. in 1916. Burt's career with the University of Alberta began in 1913, when he joined as lecturer of history and economics, a position he held until he was made an associate professor of history in 1916. After serving in the First World War, he returned to his position as associate professor of history at the University of Alberta and became professor and department head in 1921, positions he held until 1930 when he joined the University of Minnesota as a professor of history.

[8] Aileen Dunham (1897–1987) was born in Columbia, Missouri, and was educated at the University of Alberta (B.A. 1920), the University of Toronto (M.A. 1921), and the University of London (Ph.D. 1924). Her dissertation was published in 1927, as *Political Unrest in Upper Canada 1815–1836* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1927). In 1924, Miss Dunham joined the faculty of the College of Wooster, in Wooster, Ohio, where she would eventually become the Michael O. Fisher Professor of History and Chairman of the Department of History. She also served as Visiting Professor of History at the University of Alberta in 1946 and 1947.

[9] See the interview of Stanley at the beginning of this manuscript.

[10] George Malcolm Smith (1888–1947) was born in Burlington, Ontario, and was educated at the University of Toronto (B.A. 1909) and was a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University (B.A. 1911 and M.A. 1918). After Oxford, he returned to the University of Toronto and lectured there before and after World War One. With the resignation of George Wrong from the chair of the Department of History, the president of the university, Robert Falconer, recommended Smith accept the position on an acting basis. Smith accepted (1927–1929) but was anxious about the position as he had few publications. In 1929 he resigned for reasons of personal health, and was replaced by Chester Martin. Smith left the profession to enter a brokerage firm, but by 1931 he had decided to come to the University of Alberta as the head of the Department of History. In 1938 he was appointed Dean of the Faculty of Arts in addition to his position in history. L.G. Thomas was much influenced by Smith. Smith, who disdained archival research, believed it more important to teach students how to write and talk about history; history was about writing well to get at the truth and Smith took enormous trouble to ensure

Question: What was he like?

Lewis G: Well, he wrote his lectures. He used to tear them up every year and write new ones, and in those days, of course, even the head of the department, and, as he became, Dean of Arts, taught at least three courses and lectured three hours a week in each nine hours. Now to produce what was in effect a text, which he then read with such elegance and such distinction and such diction … lectured sitting, but of course you could because classes were relatively small. His were very popular. He really introduced the study of international relations in Alberta. I suppose it was one of the first courses that was given to Canada.

Question: What was it like to grow up in Alberta in these years?

Lewis G: What I can say about Alberta in the 1920s and 1930s is that it didn't seem nearly as detached from the real world as it seems today – when I say the real world, of course you know I mean London. I suppose it is still true to some extent; my kids probably feel much more at home in the U.K than do the kids from further east … but even the ones who haven't spent time there seem to adjust to it, they don't have any of that sense of being colonial.

Question: Your choice of Harvard for graduate studies must have seemed a milestone.

Lewis G: Well, that was George Smith. I graduated into the depths of the depression and I'd never had any summer employment because there were really no summer jobs going. … If you could live at home and perhaps deliver papers or something, you could survive ... so I spent my summers quite pleasantly doing whatever my mother thought needed doing in the garden and having a nice time—and reading. … Well, it seemed reasonable to do my M.A., and the Department found me a little money, and I had a research job for George Smith, who helped Angus in that volume in the Canadian-American Relations Series.[11] Then I think they found me some more money. It never crossed my mind—George was rather cross with me about it—He said, "Why didn't you ever apply for a Rhodes scholarship?" I said, "I didn't think I would conceivably get one. I'm no good at athletics." Well, I tried the IODE but I didn't quite make it. I wasn't really that distinguished a student. I squeaked through first class. [Then] … I did the M.A.[12]

Question: You must have been satisfied with that thesis.

Lewis G: Well, it's pure literature of course. It hasn't a footnote in the significant part of it—about as unscholarly as anything could be. I think I wrote better in those days than I do now.

Question: You wished you had carried on the study of ranching?

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his students learned to write well. In 1943, Smith was granted a leave of absence to do war work in Ottawa. A nervous breakdown, however, ended this work and he returned to the University of Alberta to teach international affairs. Still suffering from depression, he died suddenly in the midst of the 1947 term. L.G. Thomas Papers, University of Alberta Archives. G.M. Smith Files, University of Toronto Archives.

[11] H.F. Angus, ed., *Canada and Her Great Neighbor: Sociological Surveys of Opinions and Attitudes in Canada Concerning the United States* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1938). This volume was part of a project entitled "The Relations of Canada and the United States," a twenty-five-volume series edited, under the auspices of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, by J.T. Shotwell between 1936 and 1945.

[12] L.G. Thomas, "The ranching period in southern Alberta," M.A. Thesis, University of Alberta, 1935.

Lewis G: I don't anymore, but at the time I wished that I had done that rather than politics. I really think that my interest was in the nature of society rather than the nature of politics—political history now seems to me to be so much a product of social history. But one had to get the politics off one's mind. It was a nice, neat, tidy thing that you could do and it only took me 18 years. [Laughs]

Question: Why Harvard?

Lewis G: Well, George Smith was the worldly one, he gave you the advice. … George said there were four possibilities: you could go to Toronto (I wanted to do Canadian history by this time), you could go to Berkeley, you could go to the U.K., or you could go to Harvard. Now he said, "Toronto really isn't very good but they do have a lot of Canadian history. You have a point of view completely warped by your United Kingdom background so there is no point really in your going to the United Kingdom as a student. If you are going to be spending your own money, it's wisest to spend it going to an American university." And he said, "There are two choices for someone interested in Canada and the West: one is the University of California where Bolton[13] is. The other is Harvard with [Frederick] Merk."[14] … So he said, "Take your choice." I said New England sounded more exciting than California. … I had read absolutely no United States history, so that summer I started out having read [Samuel Eliot] Morison's *History of the United States.*[15]

Question: Did you like it at Harvard?

Lewis G: Oh very much, yes—I was always about to leave—I had two years and I liked it. Merk was my supervisor, a saintly man and a superb presenter of material. His lecture style was very low key. Lecturing wasn't as good at Harvard. Nobody touched George Smith. Morison was quite showy but you didn't feel he had the careful preparation that George Smith had—which would shock Morison. … As it turned out it was the Tercentenary of Harvard—and so Morison's seminar was overcrowded and I had a man called Fulmer Mood—a nice man but perhaps of less distinction. I got to know Morison fairly well. You couldn't fault them on that. They knew the graduate group. Of course, Morison took a great deal of interest in graduate students. Canadians always had it made.

Question: Were there other Canadian specialists in your time there?

Lewis G: No. Nobody. Gerald Graham[16] had just left and they didn't fill his appointment ever again until after the war when [John] Conway[17] was appointed.

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[13] Herbert Eugene Bolton (1870–1953) was a prominent American historian who wrote about the Spanish-American borderlands.

[14] Frederick Merk (1887–1977) was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and would go on to study with Frederick Jackson Turner at Harvard University in 1916. Upon Turner's retirement in 1924, Merk took up his position with Turner's support. He taught at Harvard until 1956. His most famous works were *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History: A Reinterpretation* (1963), and *History of the Westward Movement* (1978).

[15] Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Growth of the American Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1930).

[16] Gerald Sandford Graham (1903–1988) was born in Sudbury, Ontario and was educated at Queen's University (Kingston) (B.A. 1924, M.A. 1925), Harvard (A.M. 1929), and Cambridge (Ph.D. 1929). In 1930 he was appointed instructor and tutor in history at Harvard University. He remained there until he was appointed assistant professor at Queen's University. In 1949 he was appointed Rhodes Professor of Imperial History at King's College London, a position he held until he retired in 1970.

[17] John James Conway (1916–1995) was born in Toronto and educated at the University of British Columbia (B.A. 1935). He entered the law profession there but the war intervened and, after the war, he went to Harvard University. He earned

Question: And there were no students pursuing Canadian topics?

Lewis G: Yes, there were. Maurice Careless[18] was there just after, and we have often compared notes. There really wasn't much Canadian history. There was [Roger B.] Merriman[19] in English history—I did know more English history, it's true, than the other graduate students, who knew basically North American history. This so impressed Merriman that he insisted that I be passed, Merk told me later. The Americans thought I should go back and do it again, not the thesis but the candidacy exams, for there was much stress placed on them in those days…. Cambridge was lovely, and I made a great many new friends in New England and had a nice time. It was a very interesting society and it was on its last legs, I suppose. But I felt right at home. … It was fading away just the way pre-war southern Alberta was fading away when I was an undergraduate. The New England society, the old Brahmin structure had indeed faded.

Question: Why did you choose to come back to Alberta?

Lewis G: I was the only person in my group at Harvard who was offered a job. And I had completed my candidacy exams. I'm sure it was one of the reasons why I was passed. It was only in Canada, it's true, but it was a job. There weren't very many going.

Question: Had you written back to Alberta?

Lewis G: Oh, I kept in very close touch. George Smith, I suppose, wrote and said, "Would you like to come and be a teaching fellow at $800.00 a year next year and teach Morden Long's[20] British history while he is on leave?" And I said I should think very much so. Then I was allowed to teach summer session and do Canadian history. That paid the princely sum of $300.00 which was really quite a lot of money. Then I sort of hung about. Then, of course, the war came and nobody had the heart not to continue to employ you until you could get in one of the services.

Question: You spent three years away from Alberta, while in the Navy, didn't you, during the war?

Lewis G: Yes, in Ottawa and in Newfoundland. Purely sedentary but interesting—a change.

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his M.A. there in 1946 and his Ph.D. in 1951 on the history of the British Commonwealth. He became a faculty instructor at Harvard in 1951, and taught until he resigned in 1962 to become the first master of Founders College at York University in Toronto, Ontario.

[18] James Maurice Stockford Careless (1919–2009) was born in Toronto, Ontario, and was educated the University of Toronto (B.A. 1940) and Harvard University (M.A. 1941 and Ph.D. 1950). He began lecturing at the University of Toronto in 1945, was appointed assistant professor in 1949 and full professor in 1959. He retired in 1984. He wrote a prize-winning biography of George Brown, and did much to popularize the metropolitan-hinterland thesis.

[19] Roger Bigelow Merriman (1876–1945) was born in Boston Massachusetts and taught at Harvard University from 1902 to 1941. He published a biography of Thomas Cromwell, but was especially known for his four-volume history of the Rise of the Spanish Empire.

[20] Morden Heaton Long (1886–1965) was born in Brantford, Ontario, and he attended McMaster University earning a B.A. in 1908. He attended Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar in 1909 and was awarded a B.Litt. in 1912. Beginning in 1913, Long taught at Victoria Composite High School in Edmonton before joining the University of Alberta in 1918. Long served the University as a lecturer of history (1918–1920), assistant professor of history (1920–1924), associate professor of history (1924–1935), and professor and head of the Department of History (1935–1952).



Thomas as a Naval Officer during the War

Question: When you came back to Alberta in 1945, were you a full-time appointee in the History department?

Lewis G: Yes, I had been appointed in the interval. The university did that for people who were on overseas service—they held the post open. I didn't have a full-time appointment when I joined the Navy, but I was given one while I was in the Navy and it was sort advanced along. I came back actually as a lecturer—I always remember that I made a mild complaint about the size of the salary to Dr. Robert Newton, who was then the President, whom I liked very much, and he said, "Well, Mr. Thomas, you must remember that this is a university; we can't possibly pay as much as you were paid as an officer in the services." But I really wanted to go back to the University and to Alberta.

Question: Did you have a sense of service to your province? Was there a kind of provincial patriotism involved in this?

Lewis G: No, I don't think so. I think the war made me much more Canadian and I became much more aware of Central Canada.

Question: What was your relationship to the rest of Canada?

Lewis G: Well, I knew about it, obviously, and I think what first interested me in history and in Canada was an interesting old lady who came to live in Okotoks with some cousins—the squire's family—the Wyndhams. Miss Seymour was a cousin who had to make her own way; she was born in St. Kitts, and … was part of the West Indian planter society. She led most of her life in straitened circumstances in

Ottawa but, thanks to the patronage machine of John A. Macdonald[21] was able to keep body and soul together. She retired about 1910 from the Canadian Civil Service and came to live in Okotoks. … She was full of tales about life in Ottawa and about her family background. Mrs. Wyndham's mother had watched the Americans burn York [Toronto] from the veranda of "Rosedale"[22] (they were related to the Jarvises [a leading family]). Miss Seymour was full of tales. … She'd known everybody, especially John A.—she dated him. Of course he had been extremely good to her. So you got a very different picture of John A., in the eyes of a devoted Tory; their dog was even called Tory.

Question: And you weren't therefore estranged from Central Canada?

Lewis G: No. It didn't strike me as a place of great interest, at least not Ontario, nor indeed, to be perfectly honest, Manitoba and Saskatchewan. The real centres seemed to be in the northeastern United States and particularly, London and Britain.

Question: And yet, you did teach the Canadian history survey course and presumably followed the classic staples and constitutional approach?

Lewis G: Yes. I think it was just at this point that Creighton's *Empire of the St. Lawrence*[23] was published. I remember it struck me as being exceedingly interesting and fresh and vivid—much more interesting than my lectures—which I think were considerably enriched by it.

Question: You launched in 1949 one of the first "History of the West" courses in Canada. Why did you do this?

Lewis G: So I'm told—at least the first undergraduate course. Well, the department thought it was high time that I taught some Canadian History at some time other than evenings and in summer school. I think it really was intended to give me some opportunity to teach Canadian history in regular session without impinging on vested interests. I think it was premature, in many ways—this has been the experience of other people who have taught Western History.

Question: Was it hard to teach?

Lewis G: Not especially, except for the unevenness of the literature. When you think back, there really wasn't much that you could put in the hands of an innocent and trusting undergraduate. There was some good primary-secondary material, the travel books and so on. There was very little in the later period—there really wasn't much except the Canadian Frontiers of Settlement series,[24] and one did use that a lot. And then you'd try to somehow make it hang together.

Question: Over this whole period, from 1936 or 1938, to the early '50s, from time to time, you must have been occupied with your doctoral dissertation.

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[21] John A. Macdonald was Prime Minister of Canada from 1867–1873 and 1878–1891.
[22] This was the house that gave its name to the neighbourhood just at the end of the then village of York.
[23] Donald G. Creighton, *The Commercial Empire of the St. Lawrence, 1760-1850* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1937).
[24] The Canadian Pioneer Problems Committee, the offspring of a project on the world's "pioneer fringe" directed by Isaiah Bowman of the American Geographical Society, published eight volumes in the Canadian Frontiers of Settlement series between 1934 and 1940.

Lewis G: Yes. When I left Harvard I hadn't selected a topic, and it took me a little while before Merk, who liked the idea of a history of Alberta conceived very broadly, had managed to sell it to my committee. They took those things seriously in those days. … It was accepted as a topic and I started to research soon after I got back in 1938, or maybe 1939. I think I was too busy making lectures, trying to teach my two courses. Then of course, the war came and that was a little unsettling. You really didn't know what was going to happen. Well, finally it became evident that we weren't all going off to be infantrymen right away, and I did a fair amount of research to about 1942. And then I just dropped it during the war, I did almost nothing—although it was silly, I was in Ottawa and had free time. I think about others who always seemed to have free time and beetled off to the archives. I seemed to never get past the Chateau pub or the Wardroom, or some other place. I had a desk job, but it rather preoccupied one and I didn't do anything on the thesis. … Then of course we came back after the war to be confronted by these enormous classes of veterans—very exciting teaching but the work load was incredible. I think I had something like 700 students in about five different versions of the introductory course, which was then in British History, in the calendar year after I returned in 1945, and I marked all their papers.

Question: But it would take a couple of years before you could even think of working on your thesis.

Lewis G: Yes. It was about four years. … But, then I managed to write a little book called *The University War Effort*.[25] By that time, it was apparent that it was high time I finished my thesis.

Question: You did narrow your sights, of course, to that first twenty years of Alberta politics.[26]

Lewis G: Yes. The thesis was meant to stay within that time. The thesis was much broader than the book, and not nearly as political. I still think it was a pity that I accepted the advice of the editorial committee (of the Social Credit in Alberta series). If I'd been older, tougher, and more knowledgeable about academic life, I would have fought back. One of the editors, my friend, Bill Morton,[27] I think it was, thought that the book should be more like the thesis, and I've come to the conclusion that Bill was dead right. S.D. Clark[28] took a neutral position, but I think Brough MacPherson[29] wanted it to be a political science work. … I think it would have been a more useful book if it had had more of the social and economic history in it.

Question: Were you a Canadian nationalist in your outlook upon teaching questions?

Lewis G: That is a very difficult question, I find now, because I grew up in the 1930s [when] we were very worried about the war. After all, George Smith, who perhaps had more influence than anyone else on me and on my fellow students at Alberta in the early 1930s, was one of the first Canadian academics to be serious about the threat of world war. … He knew the people … people like Lothian,

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[25] Lewis G. Thomas, *The University of Alberta in the War of 1939–45* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1948).
[26] L.G. Thomas, *The Liberal Party in Alberta: A History of Politics in the Province of Alberta, 1905-1921* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959), vol. 8 in the Social Credit in Alberta series.
[27] W.L. Morton was not an editor of the series, but he did write the first volume of the series., W.L. Morton, *The Progressive Party in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1950).
[28] S.D. Clark was the general editor of the Social Credit series. See previous interview with him.
[29] Crawford Brough (C.B.) Macpherson (1911–1987) was a Canadian political scientist. He was born in Toronto, Ontario, and was educated at the University of Toronto (B.A. 1933) and the London School of Economics (M.Sc.1935). He joined the faculty of political economy at the University of Toronto in 1935, and in 1956 he became a professor there. In 1953, he published *Democracy in Alberta: The Theory and Practice of a Quasi-Party System* in the Social Credit series.

Lionel Curtis, Halifax—I don't think Halifax was an intimate friend but he knew him well; Lothian was a very close friend; Curtis was of course father of them all. And he [Smith] spent every summer abroad, maintaining his contact with the outside world. But to be in his classes was an experience … and the groups were relatively so small then—you saw your professors quite a lot outside the classroom. You were still able to gather groups together and have them to dinner or lunch or tea or whatever and to spend a great deal of time talking to them. And in that atmosphere, George was regarded by many of his academic friends, and certainly by his quite extensive acquaintance among Edmonton's leaders—the equivalent of Winnipeg's Sanhedrin,[30] which existed in Edmonton (a group called The Little Club)—George was regarded as eccentric but he was also, of course, respected as an authority. Well, he was trying to warn Canadians that they had to think internationally. So my view of the world was formed, I think, in the 1930s. It was a view that Canada was part of the world and that it behooved Canadians to understand what was happening to the world. We read international affairs and, certainly, when I began to teach, it seeped into my teaching and into my whole approach to the process of education.

Question: Did you have fears about American influence in Canada?

Lewis G: Not so much fear of American influence, as a fear of American failure to appreciate the realities of the world as we saw them. Our point of view, I think—the point of view that we learnt from George Smith—was very much influenced by his own relationships with the United Kingdom. … Now it's very hard to recapture, because the world was shaken. It was really still the world before 1914 that people thought about. After the war, my own thinking was so completely dominated by the bomb … this imminent, total destruction that man seemed to be able to inflict upon himself. I think I was at first concerned that Europe wouldn't be able to pull itself together.

Question: What strikes me is that you were still thinking in the 1950s and early 1960s about international power relationships and that your teaching was placed in an international perspective.

Lewis G: Yes, I think that we felt a responsibility to teach Canadians about their place in the world, even if we were teaching Canadian history; I think we were still internationalist.

Of course, this is just in the beginning of the television period. Immediately after the war the veteran students had a visual image of Canada because [they] had moved about a great deal in the country. They also had some overseas experience. They knew something of the shape of the world. And of course, they'd been involved in a cataclysmic world experience. But this fell away as time went on and, more and more, the Alberta student was dependent for his vision of the rest of Canada upon what he saw on television. … The difficulty, I think, of this post-war period was that the old images of my youth were created by books, by reading. And the old curricula were based on the assumption that there was a lot of reading going on and it was reading at an appropriate level and that people passed very rapidly to reading seriously. Then of course, the film, I don't think anyone has ever really explored the influence that the film must have created. … One was struggling to communicate some sense of the world outside the experience of these youngsters which seemed to us to be narrow. I think it really was a narrow experience. Now my own sons were growing up in this period [the 1950s] and we were, I think, trying consciously to transmit this sense of the richness of the outside world. And to transmit, as far as we could, the culture. All of this, of course, against this background of the

[30] The Sanhedrin (or Sanhedrim), a small group of influential Winnipeg citizens under the informal leadership of newspaper editor J.W. Dafoe, was named after the highest court of justice in ancient Jerusalem. Murray Donnelly, *Dafoe of the Free Press* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), 78-79.

extreme delicacy of the international position. One knew in the 1930s that very unpleasant things were happening in Europe and could happen to you individually and could happen to your country, no matter how remote you were. And you wondered how Americans could be so blind to this. But we really then didn't visualize the total destructiveness … the total oblivion. I mean, one was rather inclined to laugh at the idea of Armageddon, of the end of the world, before 1945, but it was certainly an idea that one couldn't reject after 1945. And this goes on haunting us.

Question: What approach did you take to Canadian history and to French Canada?

Lewis G: Now that is a change of focus, I think. It comes back to the question of people with a limited experience and people with, as we hoped, a less limited experience, trying to transmit to them some sense of the outside world. … I suppose I still talked quite a lot about the Commonwealth relationships of Canada and I would emphasize the difficulties of these in my lectures, and be increasingly frustrated by the difficulty of engendering any kind of response in the students because they had no idea really what these countries were like and how they had gotten to be there. … I would think that it was again a sense of frustration on the part of the educated person with a sympathetic view of cultural difference and someone who found cultural difference exciting rather than disturbing—the incredible frustration of watching the climate of public opinion becoming more and more provincial, more and more eager to wipe it out and make everything into a nice homogeneous and, in the case of Alberta, English-speaking world. I think that was one's real sense of mission, doing what one could to counter that. But then of course, the emergence of the post-Duplessis Quebec obviously was very exciting and very satisfactory, and very acceptable. And of course [Prime Minister Pierre Elliot] Trudeau somehow managed to communicate a sense that this was acceptable. …[31]

Question: What was your impression of Canadian nationalism and of regionalism in Alberta …?

Lewis G: All this is based on a response to an interesting difference. This is the key to the kind of excitement that I suppose one could call patriotism. It's based on an ability to feel that there is a tremendous human and physical variety in the country that is very loveable. Let's put it that way. I suppose, all my life, I've resisted the tendency to wipe out difference and replace it by some kind of homogenized pattern. And this, I think, is why I find nationalism as it's usually understood and practiced, distasteful. No matter what region or country or province or whoever, is practicing homogenization, [it is] going in a direction which I find personally extremely distasteful and depriving. And it's spoiling my world. It's reducing my capacity to love, in effect—of course, that's a theological way of looking at it.

Question: Another interest of yours that was developing at this time, the 1950s and 1960s, was Church history.

Lewis G: When I went back after the war, my wife and I started to go to a church near us. The Rector was the present Dean of Rupertsland, Bill Harrison, and we got to be great friends. It was a very active, lively, growing, thriving parish. I got involved in that and then got involved in the affairs of the diocese because of Walter Barfoot, Bishop of Edmonton. He was one of this country's great saints and I admired him very much and enjoyed him very much. His idea of a perfect way to spend an evening

[31] Maurice Duplessis was the Premier of Quebec from 1936 to 1939 and 1944 to 1959. The province changed significantly during the "Quiet Revolution" of the 1960s. Pierre Elliott Trudeau was Prime Minister of Canada from 1968 to 1979 and 1980 to 1984.

was to gather together a group of young academics, a bottle of scotch and just chat. Then I found the church archives. This was in the early days—even the Saskatchewan archives were barely established. The ones in Manitoba were pretty moribund. B.C.'s were much better than the others but again a bit scatty. Alberta—there was damn all. It crossed my mind that if I wanted to go out and study Western history, the largest body of witnesses, literate witnesses, with a relatively objective and definable position, were the missionaries, and the Anglican ones came to hand. Now I found them very sympathetic. By this time I was embroiled in all sorts of Anglican in-fighting in the days when you cared whether the Bishop wore a biretta every second Thursday or not. So I formulated a proposal. It was fairly honest as academic proposals go—simply to examine the missionary records available in the United Kingdom. They weren't at that point available on microfilm and there was very little even in the Public Archives of Canada—and nothing in the West. In England you could go around the corner and find whatever else you needed. So off I went with a plan of seeing what they had to say about the West and with a view to writing more about the West and about Canada. … It was really just to familiarize myself with the material. Church history was continuous as an interest, but to me it's social history. It's still one of the best bodies of material for western social history—especially the early period when there were very few others. And the Anglican archives of course are rich because it's the kind of church which generates, by its structure, a lot of records. …

Question: During your teaching career, the University of Alberta became a centre for graduate studies in Western Canadian history. Was that a conscious decision?

Lewis G: Oh yes, very much so, but not just for Western history. We were lucky at Alberta in the early years of expansion, which happened to coincide with the period in which I was chairman, roughly from 1958 to 1964. We did get really superlative people. Bill Eccles[32] perhaps was the best known among them because he was the one who remained in Canadian history, but it was an extremely exciting group. It seemed to us that, because there was pressure from the university, which wanted to see graduate studies developed in the Arts disciplines, we should go ahead. The University gave us a certain amount of support. I always thought the real core of the department's work was the honours programme, and if that's healthy everything else will look after itself.

Question: But the program did achieve recognition as a centre for Western Canadian specialists?

Lewis G: Yes, the supply was there, the opportunities were there, and nobody else was doing it of course. I yield to no one in my admiration for Hilda Neatby,[33] but I think she rather held it back in Saskatoon. She was very cautious about graduate studies. I could never understand why there weren't

[32]William John Eccles (1917–1998) was born in Thirsk, Yorkshire. In 1930 he moved to Canada with his recently widowed mother, Jane, to escape scrutiny by his father's solicitors. He briefly enrolled at McGill but dropped out after a year and then enlisted in the air force when the war broke out. Returning to Montreal after the war, he reenrolled in McGill University making New France his specialization. He completed his B.A. in 1949, and then finished his MA in 1951. He spent the year of 1951-52 at the Sorbonne in Paris and returned to Canada in 1953 to take up a teaching position at the University of Manitoba. At Manitoba he completed his PhD thesis (McGill 1955) which was published in 1959 as *Frontenac: the courtier governor*. In 1957 he received a permanent job at the University of Alberta and he began teaching there in 1958. Eccles moved on to the University of Toronto in 1963, in large part he said, to be nearer the archives in Quebec. He taught for another twenty years in Toronto, retiring in 1983.

[33] Hilda Marion Neatby (1904–1975) was a professor of history at the University of Saskatchewan. She received a B.A. (1924) and, while working as a sessional instructor, earned a Master of Arts degree (1930). She completed her PhD (1934) at the University of Minnesota. From 1934 to 1946 Neatby was an instructor at various secondary and post-secondary institutions in Saskatchewan. She returned to the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon in 1946 and remained in the Department of History until 1969.

more in Manitoba, which in my view had more eminent and distinguished Canadianists than we had. And the other place was B.C. It would have been the obvious place but it didn't flourish there either. One of the great disappointments to me, and I don't feel it's any fault of hers, was that Margaret Ormsby didn't have more graduate students of high calibre and didn't have the opportunity to develop British Columbia history as it should have been developed. I think we were lucky. There was a little core of people who cared—who felt that it was important to have a high level of scholarship in whatever graduate work you did. It had to be just as high in Western Canadian history as anywhere else. …

Question: Why did you decide to do the re-editing of A.S. Morton's *History of the Canadian West to 1870-71*?[34]

Lewis G: Because Hilda Neatby asked me and I didn't dare say no! [Laughs] No, I was terribly flattered by the suggestion and I really looked forward to the opportunity of getting into the Hudson's Bay Company material without having any particular plan. I think all the time I was feeling my way towards more emphasis on social history. I didn't quite know how to go … after all, it was some years ago and there wasn't much. Arthur Lower[35] had written that really remarkable book, but everybody had been a little unfair, unkind, quite unwise about it, and so social history didn't have a good image.[36] I think that is perhaps why: I really did want to look at the Hudson's Bay Company stuff.[37] And then you do get hooked on fur traders, especially when you discover that the interesting thing is the social history of the fur trade, which isn't in the forefront of Morton but is certainly lively. … I was interested in the blending of race and class, especially of race, in the early west. This is to me a terribly interesting thing and hasn't been seen very accurately. I haven't myself done much on it but … [graduate students did].

Question: Did you have an initiating role in pushing graduate students … in that direction?[38]

Lewis G: I would say yes. I did feel that there was a tremendous need for an on-going study of the mixed-blood and particularly of the neglected—in my view—mixed-blood whose speech was English. This is really how, to return to my childhood, how one's early years can affect one's whole life.

I told you we had a house in Okotoks, in town. Now friends of ours were the grandchildren of quite a celebrated Hudson's Bay trader, Richard Cornwallis King; his grandchildren (there were four of them) lived further west than we did—so far west that once they exhausted the resources of the local school at grade 8, they had to go away … so the two youngest came to board with us in town. This went very well for a year and then their mother died and my mother became a kind of surrogate mother. We were all very close—these two kids and my sisters and I. And, of course, they were actually

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[34] In 1973, the University of Toronto published L.G. Thomas's re-edition of Arthur S. Morton, *A History of the Canadian West to 1870-71* (1939; 2nd edition, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973).

[35] Arthur Reginald Marsden Lower (1889–1988) was born in Barrie, Ontario, and studied at the University of Toronto and Harvard University where he received his Ph.D. Lower would teach at Wesley/United College, Winnipeg, for eighteen years until 1944, when he became a professor of history at Queen's University (Kingston). He would remain there until he retired in 1959. Lower was interested in Canadian economic history, and was influenced by Innis's Staple Theory, and the Frontier Thesis. His best-known publications included *The North American assault on the Canadian forest: a history of the lumber trade between Canada and the United States* (1938), *Colony to Nation: a history of Canada* 1946), and *Great Britain's Woodyard: British America and the timber trade 1763–1867* (1973).

[36] Arthur R.M. Lower, *Canadians in the Making: A Social History of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1958).

[37] The Hudson's Bay Company archives were then at the company's headquarters in London, England. The HBC moved their archives to the Archives of Manitoba (Winnipeg) in 1974, and they opened to the public in 1975.

[38] Our conversation here touched on the work of Sylvia Van Kirk, Frits Pannekoek, John E. Foster, and several other scholars of the pre-1870 West.

I suppose by blood, one-quarter Indian. Now, I was interested in the Kings. They really were very snobbish, in a nice way, but they were very old Calgary, very old southern Alberta— old, meaning that Hudson's Bay Company chief traders don't have grandchildren everywhere. He was terribly well connected—their English connections were very grand indeed—Admiral Duckworth King and the Cornwallises—and they had exactly the same sort of attitudes as we had. We were, I think, sometimes the subject of a certain amount of criticism, "Who the hell do those hayseeds think they are"—that sort of thing, and that interested me. Why would they adhere so closely to these loyalties? They took great pride in their Indian ancestors; their grandmother was a very remarkable woman.

And I was curious. All the time I'd been working on Western history, I had been wondering why some people—especially of course Trader King—why did his children turn out so well, in terms of the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant ethos, and why did those of his colleague, Trader Moberly, who was recruited from the same background (Moberly, son of a post captain, Cornwallis King, son of a general in the Indian Army), turn out relatively poorly? Well, of course, there was only one King and there were a lot of Moberlys. Mr. King, the father of my friends, went to school in England for eight years, where he was moulded by his English relations. He came back, went to work for the HBC himself, married a lady of genteel background. The key was his mother, Charlotte Flett, almost a full-blooded Indian, but culturally a product of the Red River educational system, a very devout Churchwoman. …

Question: What are you working on now?

Lewis G: There are so many unfinished projects which keep catching up with me. I have started another line of inquiry because, of course, the really exciting things for me have been, first my involvement in local history and, then, the way in which it has led me into social history. And, perhaps … intellectual history. But, I must say, I am very interested in the way in which the privileged sector has affected the West. It has not been fully recognized by most of us; we see the West as a product of the frontier. And even people who don't think this way still have a vision of the West which is very different from my vision.

Question: One of the questions I asked Professor Morton[39] and would like to ask each of the historians: do you see a kind of architectural design in the way your work has gone or your interests have developed?

Lewis G: I'd be very interested in what Bill said to that, I must say. … I find it a very difficult question to answer. As you know, both Bill and I have given a certain amount of thought to Anglicanism. It's not a thing we ever discussed very much, except in jest, which is usually, I think, the way Anglicans converse about their faith. I think you do see some kind of structure in my work. I've always been interested in relationships and the way in which, in Canada particularly, these things are very important. I think they're enhanced by the isolation in which the immigrant finds himself. I don't think perhaps we've realized how isolated the British immigrant was—that is, what I've called the privileged sector, the individual settler who comes out more or less on his or her own, and who is accustomed to a very supportive and elaborate network which includes the family, and is obliged to find a group to replace the family. The privileged British newcomer has a freedom of movement; he has no language handicap, isn't broke—at least not desperately broke … he finds, of course, that there's a society just made to order for him, and he reinforces that tremendously. I wonder sometimes if it hasn't caused a great deal of anguish for other people who have found this kind of genteel society difficult. Not only

[39] W.L. Morton. See following interview with him.

is it difficult to enter, but it's difficult to relate to because it doesn't correspond to anything in their tradition. I've always been struck by the intensity of friendships between families that are not related to each other. … In the case of settlers of my parents' generation, it was your friends you depended on, not your family, because your family was thousands of miles away. And this is peculiar to this group. …

Question: What are the things of which you are most proud in your career?

Lewis G: I think we've finally managed to produce the hideously-entitled volume, *Our Foothills*, without actually breaking the community and breaking my heart.[40] That was a very interesting exercise and consumed a great deal of time—not only mine but that of dozens of other people. It brought me back, of course, into relationship with my childhood and my early associations. It's really at the root of all the things I've been doing since. I think that's one of the reasons why I find it so hard to settle to writing a rather conventional book about the prairie provinces because there are all these other fascinating things. …

Question: Do you still enjoy living in Alberta?

Lewis G: Yes I do. A great many aspects of it are nasty, but then you find those everywhere and you're bound to find them in a society that suddenly is thriving at a time when others are not. I confess I'm a little … I would have hoped that Albertans would have been less quick to turn in on themselves as they appear to have done in a great many cases. It's very hard, of course, to form an opinion; but my Alberta childhood and my life in Alberta has always been a very open life. I felt that Alberta opened all sorts of doors to me, all kinds of opportunities, and I somehow find it disturbing to feel that people don't realize that Alberta isn't the centre of the world—it never crossed our minds—I mean, we knew we were provincial, and I always felt that was our great advantage over those unfortunate people from Ontario who thought Toronto was the centre. We knew it was London of course. London wasn't the only centre. … I think that's very peculiar to me—to the Anglo—[though] it was adopted by a great many Albertans. It was a transplanted Canadian version of the British myth that we all flourished in during the 1920s, or were comparatively comfortable in.

Question: Was there a sense among the many Western historians we've talked about of protest … a feeling of being outside the mainstream?

Lewis G: No, I don't think so. I think really rather less than there is today. … As generations proceed, they tend to grow further and further apart. Relationships become more distant, cousins become second cousins. This is central to any view I have of the country, of Canada. That is, for my generation, if you were relatively comfortable economically (you could be very poor but as long as you had some degree of security) and an Anglo background and bourgeois aspirations, then it was easy to plug into the Canadian structure. This was facilitated by the fact that people were related to each other. So you could come, as my parents did, from Britain, and my sisters and I could grow up in a community where almost everybody had come from Britain, and you inevitably developed connections with people spread across Canada because you did have friends who had come from Ontario, the Maritimes. And this is why people like myself, Margaret Ormsby, Lewis H. [Thomas],[41] Roger

[40] Millarville, Kew, Priddis, and Bragg Creek Historical Society, *Our Foothills* (Calgary, 1975).
[41] See previous interview.

Graham[42] (who was a bit younger), Bill Morton,[43] Hilda Neatby, it was really very easy for us to feel comfortable in the Canadian structure. We might not approve of the structure, we might be quite radical in our political attitudes, but, socially, we were quite at home. We were brought up to know how to cope with it. We might be a bit gauche at first but we learned quickly. A teacup was handled in much the same way from Victoria to Newfoundland. George Stanley[44] was another. We were all without exception from relatively comfortable, educated, middle class families and, all but Lewis H. and Roger Graham, from Anglican backgrounds. It was easy for us. Our parents were well-educated, though not well-off.

Question: What's the difference now?

Lewis G: I think what has happened is that these networks that existed then have been attenuated, and there have been two generations of change, maybe three, and the personal links are no longer strong. And of course, the whole thing is much larger and much more complicated so it's difficult, I think. … I see communities as interlocking; and if the communication networks between them have broken down, people find themselves uncomfortable. Today, it's harder to lock in to a community than it was in my generation. Especially in Alberta, society is placed in a position of strain by the dominance of particular groups, and the special privilege of particular groups, and the assumption that those are the values which should be preserved—and if you want to join us, we may let you marry our daughters. At the same time, of course, we pretend to be egalitarian and we also live in an atmosphere which is (in terms of much of what provides people's basic education) dominated by promotion of material standards which represent a different kind of aspiration, I think.

Question: You flirted, I think, with the radical left in the 1930s. Do I hear strains of that?

Lewis G: Oh well, yes, but I am enough of realist not to think that the real radical left will ever go anywhere in this country and I am not sure that I would want it to. Because really, I am extremely conservative.

Question: How is it that the Canadian "left" can find so many conservatives in its fold, so comfortably in its fold?

Lewis G: Well, I think that essentially the Canadian "left" *is* "small c" conservative. A violent revolution wouldn't, I think, appeal to too many people in the Canadian left. We may be post-Christian but we're still living in a Christian age. When I observe the young people—all the things they appear to live by—they are still using the standards of judgment that are essentially very close to what I would like to think were Christian standards, though I am afraid that more formally-attached Christians don't value the values that they are supposed to value very much.

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[42] William Roger Graham **(**1919–1988) was a Canadian historian who specialized in biography and political history. He was born in Montreal, Quebec, moving first to Chicago and then to Winnipeg, where his father became principal of United College. He was educated at United College (B.A.) and Toronto (M.A. and Ph.D.). He was hired by the University of Saskatchewan in 1946, but by 1947 was moved to the Regina campus (Regina College). He taught there until 1958, when he accepted a position in the Department of History at the University of Saskatchewan (Saskatoon). In 1968 was chosen as the Douglas Professor of Canadian History at Queen's University (Kingston). He taught there until 1984, when he retired. His most important work was a three-volume biography of Arthur Meighen published between 1960 and 1965.

[43] See next interview with W.L. Morton.

[44] See first interview in this manuscript with George Stanley.

Question: …. Is history as a discipline important in a liberal arts education?

Lewis G: I think it is vital really. In fact, I think liberal arts education should really be "in history"; you may pursue other disciplines, but rooted in history. The liberal education, I think, was an entrance into the whole past experience of man. [History] gives you a vertical as well as a horizontal view of the world around you, and without that I don't think you have a liberal education. I would say that a liberal education is "history."

Interview with William Lewis Morton[1]

Fall 1979



W.L. Morton 1908–1980

William Lewis Morton was the dean of western Canadian historians from the late 1930s, when his first distinguished essays appeared, until his death in 1980. A man with an enormous capacity for work, he made his mark as a teacher and scholar dedicated to community service, as a defender of civil liberties, and as a firm conservative. He was English in cultural outlook and historical sympathy, a monarchist, and a strong defender of a federal, bilingual state. He believed in the advantages of immigration and a plural community. And he believed in the necessity of a distinctive Canadian nation within

[1] The following interview was conducted in the fall of 1979. An abridged version appeared in the first issue of *Manitoba History*, no.1 (1981), 17-20. This longer version appeared in *Heritage of the Great Plains* 23, no. 1 (Winter 1990), 20-35.

North America. His words articulated a vision of Canada that found a response among an entire generation of Canadians.

Morton was born in Gladstone, Manitoba,[2] in 1908 and grew up on the family farm. He attended the Anglican church-affiliated St. John's College at the University of Manitoba, won the Rhodes scholarship in 1932, and returned from Oxford to lecture at the same College three years later. With the exception of a brief stay at Brandon College in western Manitoba between 1940 and 1942, he taught at Manitoba's provincial university for the next thirty-one years. He joined the faculty of Trent University in Peterborough, Ontario in 1966 and returned to Manitoba after his retirement in 1975.

Though he occupied a number of administrative posts and accepted several important public responsibilities, he will be remembered especially for his writing. Morton was the author, co-author or editor of twelve books and over sixty articles and booklets. He adhered to a daily regimen that involved rising very early to write before the rest of the day's work commenced. What stands out in retrospect is the depth of research and breadth of vision in his work. His writing was marked by sensitivity to place, character, and institutional context.

Question: What was your childhood like?

Morton: My childhood, I think, was a happy one. At least, I look back on it as being happy. All sorts of things intervene over so many years, of course, and I suppose one tends to forget some things and over-remember others. But it was a happy childhood and I look back on it with great fondness. I think this was owing partly to the fact that it was a country childhood and there was always lots to do both in the form of work and the form of play. It was also owing to my parents who were loving and fond though basically strict. I think we were well brought up without it being oppressive. There was a quiet insistence on being truthful which I particularly remember; that is so basic to all good living because without truth what else stands up? Also we were always urged to be brave. I remember this because I think I was a natural coward, I was always staggering from panic to panic but that too was a good thing. …

I was the eldest child and I was a boy and the next two were girls. So, in many ways, I was isolated in that for some years. I was the only child, you see. Then, after my sisters came, I was still in a sense an only because I was an only boy. It wasn't that my sisters and I didn't play together and get along very well; I think in a rather silly way they looked up to me as a wonderful being and I hope I wasn't too oppressively rude to them. There were four and six years between us.

Question: Did you have more chores to do around the house than they did?

Morton: Oh, yes, I think I worked a great deal, looking back, but it didn't bother me—I was a glutton for being helpful. I remember one of my vivid memories of childhood was washing the dishes when I had to stand on a chair to be high enough to come up to the sink. Then I became in charge of the

[2] Gladstone, Manitoba, is a farming village ninety miles northwest of Winnipeg. It was founded in 1871–1872. Morton discusses his early years in "Furrow's End," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 21, no. 3 (Automne 1986 Fall), 3-31.

wood. Of course, our house was heated entirely by wood and all the cooking was done with wood. Our farm was heavily wooded and we were dependent on it for subsistence. And I used to bring the wood in and then I kept the fire going. When I was younger, I got the kindling, then in time I was big enough to split the wood, you see.

Question: Was your father a farmer at this time; would he have been farming himself?

Morton: Oh yes, all this time.

Question: And did he have hired hands?

Morton: Yes, one or two always. And there was always what we called the hired girl. … She was a very important member of the family because she *was* a member of the family. She would always be a local girl from the neighbour's farm and so there was a bond there. And she would be congenial, as a farm girl herself.

Question: Did you have much time away from the chores to read or play?

Morton: Oh yes, I played a great deal by myself, with a dog and all that sort of thing. And when I learned to read I remember reading all day on occasions.

Question: In "An Unliterary Landscape" you noted that you read avidly.[3] Would say that you were a bookworm in your younger days?

Morton: Well, I was, except that I was spared from it by the farm life, and the fact that when I got bored reading I could go and play, and that regularly I had to stop reading and do the chores.

Question: Did you play with other children?

Morton: Well, when there were other children to play with, yes. I wasn't a recluse or anything like that but normally I had to entertain myself.

Question: Would you spend much time in town?[1]

Morton: Well we went in at least every Saturday night, you know, and sometimes oftener; my mother had a sister in town and she had a family and I used to go in and visit them and so on … we would renew acquaintances. There was always the shopping to do and eventually we would come home, drive home through the darkness.

Question: Would you eat in town?

Morton: Not really.

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[3] W.L. Morton, "On Seeing an Unliterary Landscape," *Mosaic,* vol. III, no. 3 (1970), 1-10; A.B. McKillop, ed., *Contexts of Canada's Past: Selected Essays of W.L. Morton* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1980), 15-25. A full discussion of his historical thought is in Carl Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History: Aspects of English-Canadian Historical Writing since 1900,* Second Edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 238-258.

Question: Why?

Morton: People didn't eat out.

Question: What was the local school like—the primary school?

Morton: There was a little one room school; it was quite a good one. It had been built in 1914, just a year or so before I began to attend, I guess. It was a very old school district, number eight, I think. Palestine, as it was called then, was a very old settlement and my great grandparents had had a large family and were very active in organizing the school early on. Well, it was a one-room school with one teacher, ungraded, everything from grade one to grade eight.

Question: The same teacher for much of your earlier years?

Morton: Yes. The teachers tended to stay quite a while, often they were local girls, you see. They lived with their families or they came from elsewhere and boarded around, boarded with one family or another in the district. It was a great experience for me. I enjoyed school very much and ate things up and I could always do the work so quickly that I'd be left alone with a book.

Question: Were you a scholar in primary school?

Morton: I never thought of it that way. I suppose I did my work faster. I was always very careless, as I still am. I do things quickly. And I never learned to write. I still haven't. I remember labouring over it—trying to master calligraphy.

Question: What was your strong suit in primary school? Were you good at math, for example?

Morton: Well, I never had any difficulty with math as long as it was arithmetic. I ran into great difficulty later in high school with algebra. I never mastered it. But you see, from the age of twelve until I left university, I never opened a term. I had to work on the farm till the harvest was in before I could go to school or even before I could go to university.

Question: What was it like in the school yard outside class hours?

Morton: Well, it was part of an old field. It was level, well cultivated … lots of playing room. There was a little bluff[4] that ran to the north the length of the school yard and we used to climb the trees there and play hide and seek. The old school, the original school, had been made into the stable. A good many of the children came so far they had to drive, you see, and the horses had to be stabled all day. Then there was a slough in one corner which in spring was a rather lovely bit of water, and then just a quarter-mile to the south there was another quite large slough which would have water most summers.

Question: Did you play on the ice when it was melting in the spring?

Morton: Oh yes, we used to run on the ice and the ice would go up and down.

[4] "Bluff" usually denotes a steep cliff or headland but on the Canadian prairies the term denotes a grove of trees.

Question: Was there organized sport?

Morton: Oh there were games but they weren't organized. The teacher didn't teach them; they were passed on from child to child—prisoner's base and so on.

Question: Not baseball or hockey?

Morton: Yes, we played baseball though we had no equipment. Any equipment we had I supplied; I happened to have a bat and a catcher's mitt and a mask, I think. I was given them by relatives and I just took them to school and everyone played with them.

Question: Do you remember how you felt as a school child? In a given group, there may be school bully and a scholar, and a number of other types; did you fit a particular role in primary school?

Morton: Oh, I used to get beaten up quite a bit because in ways I wasn't aware of, I was different. I would have to speak of the place of my family in the neighbourhood to explain this, but I was different, and I suppose I made other people impatient and got into scraps.

Question: How were you different?

Morton: Well, I talked differently for one thing and I was interested in things the other children knew nothing about. Books, notably.

Question: England?

Morton: Yes, we were English, you see, and my family was English though they'd been Canadian for quite a while; we were Anglican[5] and we rather stood out. Though my father was always popular, he was very careful never to let any difference arise. We had to develop a kind of dual way of living; we had our own way of living and then we conformed to the neighbourhood way of living.

Question: What was that neighbourhood way?

Morton: Essentially, it was very simple; any form of pretension was instantly seized on, put down; difference was thought to be a form of pretension, you see. I think this was the root of the trouble I had. I don't mean to exaggerate.

Question: It wouldn't be significant in terms of daily contact?

Morton: No, no, it would just blow up every often.

Question: Did you have fights then?

Morton: Oh yes.

Question: In the school yard?

[5] The Church of England in Canada was officially renamed the Anglican Church of Canada in 1955.

Morton: Oh yes.

Question: Did you win?

Morton: Sometimes.

Question: Were you strong?

Morton: I was a farm boy.

Question: Did Gladstone have a good high school?

Morton: Yes. It was an old one too; it had a good tradition and we had some very good teachers. I always remember Cameron Langel who was the language teacher—very good in French though I never became very good in French. He was a very charming man. Students were devoted to him.

Question: Do you remember being attracted to history in high school?

Morton: I took it in my stride. I liked it and was good at it. The only time I wasn't good was once I was caught out and I peeked at my book—I copied. I failed on that paper, the only time I ever failed. I suppose it was because I was caught short by not being at school or something. I was always good at history, but I don't remember any special fondness for it….

Question: Did you stay with your aunt in town?

Morton: No, no, we went in three and half miles—in and out every day.

Question: With a horse?

Morton: With a horse, yes. I walked occasionally when I got bigger but that wasn't feasible. It took too much time.

Question: Did you find the farm work and especially the harvests becoming more onerous as you grew older?

Morton: I first drove a stook team—that is a team of horses with a rack which picked up the stooks and took them to the threshing machine—when I was twelve but I was just filling in at the end of the season. Someone had gone away and there was a neighbour in distress who had to be threshed. We all thought he had a problem. He was very hard up. We had to thresh the crop that hadn't been bound because he had no money to buy binder twine.

Question: So you were almost a regular farm hand in your early teens?

Morton: At thirteen I was, which was normal for the neighbourhood.

Question: You said in "Unliterary Landscape" that you were conscious, when you started to work behind a plow, of being the last generation to plow virgin land. Could you elaborate on this?

Morton: You must realize that by this time, to be big enough to hold a breaking plow, I must have been fifteen or sixteen at least. Well, for one thing the farm we lived on—the original quarter—had been homesteaded by my grandfather Morton and the first fields were broken by him. And then my father, when he came back to the farm after his college days, broke too. And every summer we would break so much land. The Indians would come down in the spring, clear the bush off it and then, in July, there would be the breaking. It was part of the season, like haying and harvesting and so on. So I was conscious of it in that way. Then, I think, talk of pioneer days and so on in the family circle and in the neighbourhood circles made one think of it too. It was a general activity that everybody participated in more or less. And finally, I suppose some of my reading must have made me super-conscious, so to speak, and given me a perspective that one wouldn't acquire by the actual experience or by local talk.

Question: Were you conscious of making history?

Morton: I think, in a sense, one always was—being of a pioneer family and of a family that had organized the local institutions or taken part in organizing the local institutions. My great-grandfather had been a justice of the peace, for example. He on one occasion had to send a man after a murderer, in his flamboyant way ordering him to bring him back dead or alive.

Question: Where was that?

Morton: In Palestine [the original name of the district now known as Gladstone, Manitoba]. Oh yes, and in the Fenian invasion of 1871 my same great-grandfather set off to walk to Winnipeg with his rifle to rally to the cause. Well, all these things came down and so one was conscious of being in history.[6]

Question: Did your family have a distinct consciousness of community responsibility?

Morton: Yes, that was very definite. My father you see was always in politics almost from the first—municipal politics and later provincial politics.

Question: When did he leave home to become a politician resident in Winnipeg?

Morton: Oh, not until my university days, about 1930.

Question: There was a brief gap between the time when you completed high school and went to university at the age of twenty?

Morton: Yes, you see I failed my grade 11 or at least I threw it up because I had so much trouble with algebra, and I was dubious as to whether I wanted any more education. I really thought I might stay on the farm, you know. My whole life had been on the farm and I was a competent farmer. I could have stayed on. In many ways I thought I was better than my father, I was a better workman than he was. Of course, I had no experience in managing a farm. I was to have that before I left. So, I was doubtful and I pulled out of school. Then, that made me realize that in fact I did want to go on so I

[6] The context is provided by Morton's history of the district: W.L. Morton and Margaret Morton Fahrni, *Third Crossing: A History of the First Quarter-Century of the Town and District of Gladstone in the Province of Manitoba* (Winnipeg: Advocate Printers, 1946).

took a year to stagger through algebra.

Question: So you became interested in going to college?

Morton: I suppose I did. Going to university was an almost unheard-of thing in the countryside at that time. What was most talked of—and more talked of than done—was going to agricultural college. Still [even that]… was a comparative novelty and people thought it was the proper thing to do to improve oneself as a farmer in a farming community you see. But in my family one of my mother's sisters had gone to university and got her degree and had become a school teacher, (first-rate one by the way). Then one of my cousins in Gladstone went on to university and I started reading all her books you see, so in a sense I'd taken university before I ever got there. That roused in me the ambition to go on, too, and here the miraculous thing was that there was no opposition in the family. I don't think they were particularly pleased but they didn't oppose and an uncle of mine, who was childless, made it financially possible. I didn't know this for many years.

Question: I see. Now when [and where] did you begin…?

Morton: I went to St. John's College in the North End [of Winnipeg] in the fall of 1928.[7]

Question: Did you live in residence?

Morton: No. I lived in another uncle's house for a while and lived in residence part of the time. There were two years there before my family moved in, then I lived with them.

Question: How was St. John's as an experience in college life, did you enjoy it?

Morton: Oh very much, my family had always gone to St. John's because we were, as I think I said earlier, Anglicans, and all my uncles had gone there. My father had, though he didn't stay. It was my grandfather's belief that every son should have a profession and the one chosen for my father was medicine and he didn't like the operating room—he didn't like the dissecting room. He just walked out and never went back, something I think which grieved him in a way because he was always too modest about his education. I am quite sure he could have been Premier had he cared to assert himself at a later date, but he wasn't sure that he had the training for that kind of job and he let a man, Doug Campbell, (who in his own way was very gifted, of course, and made a first-rate Premier), have a job that he might have had himself.

Question: He gave up medicine then but did not suggest that that would be the right track for you to take?

Morton: No, there was no suggestion of any kind.

Question: Did you consider at that point, say first or second year of college, what direction your career might take?

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[7] The University of Manitoba was established in 1878. One of its founding institutions was St. John's College, a Church of England school that first opened in 1849, and was reestablished in 1866. W.L. Morton, *One University: A History of the University of Manitoba* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1957).

Morton: I don't remember any goal at all; I just wanted to go to university and take Arts.

Question: Did you think in terms of a bachelor of divinity program?

Morton: I did at one time at St. John's, yes, one was under considerable influence there—no pressure but influence. Most of my friends were what we called theologs, you see.

Question: So you considered this?

Morton: Oh yes.

Question: But chose not to. Why?

Morton: I think I was only playing with it and I don't suppose I would have gone on with it anyway because I didn't think I was quite that kind of person, but this was one point at which my father did intervene. He was horrified and very stern about it. It made me stop and think.

Question: And what happened?

Morton: I just went on to take my degree in Arts.

Question: You won a Rhodes scholarship at the University of Manitoba for 1932. Had you thought in terms of winning that scholarship in the year coming up to it?

Morton: Oh no, never dreamt of it.

Question: But you were active in the student council. Did you play university sports as well?

Morton: I played college football and I raced.

Question: What kind of running?

Morton: Half mile and mile.

Question: What about football; what position did you play?

Morton: I played left inside, forward.

Question: Did you enjoy that kind of thing?

Morton: Oh yes, yes.

Question: And social life on campus, what was that like?

Morton: Well, in my first two years it was all at St. John's really, and that was very quiet. There were dinners and dances occasionally and there was a very intense life among the students within the college which was social but not, I think, in the sense you intend. There wasn't very much actually but when I got to the university there were bigger, more frequent and gaudier things to attend and I very much

enjoyed them.

Question: You were editor of the paper?

Morton: I edited *The Manitoban*[8] in 1930–1931.

Question: Was that an enjoyable experience?

Morton: Oh I had a wonderful time. Indeed, I thought of journalism at that time.

Question: You then went to Oxford. What impact did those years have on your career?

Morton: Well, two things happened: throughout my four years in the general course I thought my principal interest was in English (and I think it was) but in my fourth year—and having to decide what I would do at Oxford crystallized this—I decided I didn't have what it took to be good in English. I didn't think I had enough imagination or enough critical sharpness. So I switched to history where I found myself more at home. This was partly influenced by the lack of any very strong personalities among the teachers of English at that time and by the presence of a very strong personality in Noel Fieldhouse[9] in history. He influenced me very much. So did R.O. MacFarlane,[10] who had just come in from Harvard.

Question: This experience in Manitoba turned you toward the study of history at Oxford?

Morton: Towards history, but not decisively, because what I read at Oxford was not history but Modern Greats which left a way open to journalism, you see. Actually, while at Oxford, I did some writing and sent things back to the Winnipeg *Free Press*. I interviewed some farmers, for example, about English farming and when I was in Italy, I wrote a screed of articles on Fascism which they didn't print. I was so interested they thought I was tainted, at least I think so. They may just have been too long.

Question: Were you struck by the intellectual power of your teachers and of the scholarship that they exhibited?

Morton: I suppose I should say yes, but I cannot honestly say so, no. I was grateful to them for their

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[8] *The Manitoban* is the official student newspaper of the University of Manitoba. It was published from November 1914 to the present.

[9] Horace Noel Fieldhouse (1900–1983) was a prominent Canadian historian. He was born in Gibraltar to British parents in 1900, and served as a pilot in the Royal Flying Corps during the First World War. After the war he was educated at the University of Sheffield and Oxford University (D.Phil. 1930) studying British foreign policy, and imperialism. He joined the University of Manitoba in 1928, as a lecturer in history, but quickly rose to the rank of professor. At Manitoba, Fieldhouse focused on European and British history. He succeeded Chester Martin as head of the Department of History around 1929, serving in that role through the 1930s and 1940s until his departure in 1945, when he joined McGill University as the Kingsford Professor of History.

[10] Ronald Oliver MacFarlane (1904–1971) was born at Carlton Place, Ontario, and was educated at Queen's University (Kingston) (M.A.) and Harvard University (A.M. and Ph.D. 1933). He began teaching history at the University of Manitoba in 1930, and remained there until the outbreak of World War Two. During this time, he served as president of the Manitoba Historical Society (1934–1935 and 1938–1944). After the war, he was appointed Deputy Minister of Education in Manitoba—a position he held until 1953. In that year he became the founding director of the School of Public Policy and Administration at Carleton College/University. He held this position until his death.

learning but they were all very quiet and modest people. No one was overwhelming.

Question: What did your Oxford instructors give you?

Morton: They gave me a great reverence and care for simple and direct thinking and speaking. That was the essential thing at Oxford. Then they did lead me to decide not to be a journalist but to be a historian if I could be. So it was all a period of resolution.

Question: In the article on an "Unliterary Landscape" you said, "at some point I set myself to reconstruct the actual landscape of the West." When was that?

Morton: After I came back and began teaching history here.

Question: So it was then that you determined that the West would be your first field of history writing?

Morton: I think so, it was largely due to … having been away for three years, you see, and coming back and seeing it all afresh, with something of an outside perspective now. And I decided that I did want to come back, you see.

Question: Not to Canada generally but to Manitoba?

Morton: Manitoba yes.

Question: What was it about Manitoba that made you think you should come back here?

Morton: Oh I think it was the result of my experience as a child, my whole upbringing.

Question: But with the whole country at your disposal, would it not seem unusual to go back to the place of your birth?

Morton: I think it did to some people, you know, because it seemed to them I was giving up a lot of opportunities and so on. It didn't seem odd to me. It was what I wanted to do.

Question: Did you feel a responsibility to the province?

Morton: Oh yes … Manitoba … as a community. Mind you, to be realistic about coming back, it was the only place I got a job. This was in 1935 you see, amidst the Great Depression and jobs were exceedingly hard to get. At least as hard to get as they are now in academic life.

Question: You devoted much time to the Manitoba Historical Society over the next 25 years. Why?

Morton: Well, the Society would do what I was trying to do myself and therefore I had a professional interest in it. Secondly, I have always held as an academic historian that history is a social enterprise and is to be encouraged as such. As Trevelyan[11] said, men will always make up their own history and it is therefore the duty of the scholar to try to see they make as good history as they can. Also I was

[11] George Macaulay Trevelyan (1876–1962) was a prominent English historian and professor at Cambridge University.

very much influenced by two men: one was R. O. MacFarlane, whom I've already mentioned, and who tried, too, to revive the Historical Society. The other was J. L. Johnston, the Provincial Librarian,[12] who was almost grief-stricken that the society had ceased to function and thought it very important for the province that it be revived and made active again. I attribute the revival that did eventually take place in the 1940s more to Johnston than to anyone else.

Question: What are historians' responsibilities to their community?

Morton: Well, a historian's first responsibility, of course, is to his craft, his science, and he may not feel he has any to his community. I think he may properly feel that such a sense of obligation is in fact a detriment. My own view was different. I think the historian functions best as a conscious member of the community. He may be a stern mentor if he has that particular temperament and outlook. He may tell people what he thinks they ought to do and, you know, a historian like Donald Creighton[13] will always be listened to when he takes that role. But my own feeling was—it's a job of increasing historical consciousness and informing it well. That, I think, is the commitment to the community that the historian—if he does undertake one—should undertake.

Question: What is your own role in public life?

Morton: Well, in a sense I'm not conscious of ever having had one. I've always been very much the academic scholar, nor have I said very much publicly. I've always felt free to, when I felt that I had anything to say, and occasionally I have written to the newspapers or spoken out.

Question: Did you ever think of running for public office?

Morton: No. Well I suppose I thought of it but I never thought of it seriously.

Question: Why?

Morton: Well, you see, I could have done it because I was a very successful university politician and I think I shied away from that because I felt it would lead me astray and I think it would have exhausted me. Public life takes things out of one and in a way of which I am sufficiently conscious to make me charitable towards public men. The constant demands, the draining out of energy—I don't know how they endure what they do. I suppose I was afraid of it. I shied away from it in any case. I made a deliberate choice not to pursue that line. The nearest I came to it was in journalism, you see, and I decided against that too.

Question: But your talents might have fitted you for public life. Did you think in those terms?

Morton: I suppose I did in a way but then I thought I was serving the country by being a historian—

[12] John Leslie Johnston (1898–1955) served as the Provincial (Legislative) Librarian of Manitoba from 1936 until his death in 1955. His contributions included the expansion of the Legislative Library and Archives of Manitoba, and the revival of the Manitoba Historical Society in 1944.

[13] Donald Grant Creighton (1902–1979) was born in Ontario and studied at the University of Toronto and Balliol College, Oxford. He was hired by the University of Toronto's Department of History in 1927, and became professor in 1945. He retired in 1971. In the interval, he became the foremost historian of Canada publishing *The Commercial Empire of the St. Lawrence* (1937), a two-volume biography of John A. Macdonald (1952, 1955), *Dominion of the North: A History of Canada* (1944), and *The Road to Confederation: The Emergence of Canada, 1863-1867* (1964).

as I think I did. I don't think there's anything incompatible for the historian being a public figure as a historian. That's a well-established tradition in Canada. A.R.M. Lower[14] and Donald Creighton were public figures as well as great historians. And I even carry that to the point of saying that a historian may be, as I have been myself, a declared partisan in politics. I think it is quite possible to separate the two roles, the role of objective scholar and the role of a declared partisan. So at one time I did some work for the Conservative Party which I joined in 1947 after the spy trial which I thought was shockingly handled.[15] Therefore I thought that if this tradition was to have any hope of survival it would be best done—most likely to happen—through the Conservative Party. I may have been quite wrong but I was thinking in terms of the British tradition of fair trial and all that sort of thing. So I did do some work and spoke out and I wrote a few articles trying to clarify what I thought. I actually did some political writing and even some political work. I was very keen on it at one time and in a sense I still am. I decided it was very important for Canada to have an active and occasionally, at least, successful Conservative party. My reason for thinking so was that I thought the Conservative party had something to offer that no other party had. Namely, it is not a class party; it's a party of the whole community. And that means you can't have a simple reactionary Conservative Party. Above all you can't have a Conservative Party that is really a nineteenth century liberal party which is what the NDP and the Liberals say the Conservative Party is. It can be a very progressive humanitarian party and, indeed, if it's to have any success, as well as if it's to live at peace with itself, it has to be just those things. It's conservative in the sense that while it accepts change now, it firmly believes that you should never do anything for the first time and whatever you do you should do it slowly, more or less when driven to it, but not just for the sake of change. If the old will work at all, for heaven's sake, stay with the old because heaven knows what the new will do.

Question: What was your goal when you founded University College at the University of Manitoba in 1963?

Morton: In the late '50s when we all saw that there was to be enormous University growth, (even the least projection was enormous and actually the highest wasn't great enough) we were all thinking about the nature of the University and how it should be led in its enforced growth. I took up the college idea. That, of course, was natural to me, because I had been a college man, both here and at Oxford, but I attempted to rationalize a personal preference. I argue that in University, and particularly in the large Arts and Sciences faculties, students need opportunities to meet one another and to meet their instructors. Well, when classes get large and faculties get very large, these opportunities diminish. What do you do? Well my answer is, you subdivide, and the obvious and traditional way of subdividing is to organize colleges. It was as simple as that. I was very much influenced by an article published by Tom Symons and [Ronald] Watts of Queen's, now principal of Queen's, on the subject of colleges. It helped me think perhaps the thing was feasible—even in this country, even in this century—so when we began talking about a new Arts building, George Broderson of St. John's and I said: "Well, why

[14] Arthur Reginald Marsden Lower (1889–1988) was born in Barrie, Ontario, and studied at the University of Toronto and Harvard University where he received his Ph.D. Lower would teach at Wesley/United College, Winnipeg, for eighteen years until 1944, when he became a professor of history at Queen's University (Kingston). He would remain there until he retired in 1959. Lower was interested in Canadian economic history, and was influenced by Innis's Staple Theory, and the Frontier Thesis. His best-known publications included *The North American assault on the Canadian forest: a history of the lumber trade between Canada and the United States* (1938), *Colony to Nation: a history of Canada* 1946), and *Great Britain's Woodyard: British America and the timber trade 1763–1867* (1973).

[15] This refers to the "Gouzenko affair" that broke in Ottawa in 1945. A cipher clerk at the Soviet Embassy, Igor Gouzenko, had defected and claimed that his former employers were operating an espionage network in Canada. Twelve suspects were interviewed during Royal Commission hearings in 1946, and some were subsequently tried and convicted.

just the building? Why not a building in which there would be a college?" And that's where it came from.

Question: What about the ideal? St. John's is Anglican; St. Paul's is Roman Catholic. What was your concept of a unity or a heart to University College?

Morton: Well, I think it had to be brought about simply by "selling," to use that hateful term, simply disseminating the idea of a college. The college doesn't have to be denominational, the college has to be a fellowship, and that comes about by doing certain things together. It's very important to have as much residence as you can; it's very important to have a dining hall, where there is a daily meeting; and it's important to do things as a college. There's a great many things that can be done outside the curriculum which are still helpful to the life of a university and even to the way one deals with the curriculum. Well, we went at it that way and for two years we had a great deal of success. It was a great deal of work. These things had to be worked at.

Question: I don't know if it failed or whether you want to go into its record.

Morton: I think it had to come down from the heights on which it was. There was a tremendous impetus, largely from the students, when the College was launched. Well, that obviously would come into the light of common day and all that sort of thing. So I'm not prepared to be critical, to say that the college is not now as it was once nor do I wish to say anything further.

Question: You left Manitoba to go to Trent University (in Peterborough, Ontario) in 1966 and I assume a similar kind of experiment, is that true?

Morton: Oh yes.

Question: Did you have a hand in the founding of Trent?

Morton: No, it had been going two years before I got there but I had been in touch all along.

Question: It would have accorded with the kind of college ideal that you had in mind at UC?

Morton: Oh very much, more so, you see, because in addition to the college as such there was the tutorial system, "small group instruction" as we called it to avoid these hateful Oxford terms. It had extraordinary success, you see, in the scholarships won and all that sort of thing. Trent, which is the smallest university in Ontario, is up there with the big fellows. It's a good, first-degree university.

Question: Did you yourself handle tutorials?

Morton: Oh yes.

Question: Did you enjoy it?

Morton: Oh yes, it's the only way to teach. Incidentally, I also had to give lectures, which have their place but the real teaching experience is the tutorial one, I think.

Question: Do you enjoy lecturing?

Morton: I can, though, I think like everybody, a long course of lectures can become a bit humdrum or at least one can.

Question: Are there things you have not done which you would have liked to do in your career?

Morton: It seems both arrogant and smug to say no but I honestly can't think of anything. I suppose what has really happened is that my ambitions have narrowed over the years and I'm complacently rounding off what I regard as a well-finished life.

Question: But you are still writing and working at what seems to me to be a furious pace.

Morton: In my own line, yes.

Question: Do you think of the Donald Smith biography, which you are now writing, as fitting into a corpus of historical work that you have consciously designed?[16]

Morton: No, that's my basic trouble. My work really came to an end with *The Critical Years*[17] because that started out to be a book about the place of the West in Confederation. When the Centenary series came up, I simply reshaped it somewhat to make it fit in. It didn't quite come off; I meant it to crown my work and it has been a rather disappointing book. I don't understand why because I think I did what I set out to do, to show how Confederation was possible only because the larger scheme was followed and these outlying places like the Maritimes and the West were brought in to resolve the conflict between Upper and Lower Canada, between the French and the English. So anything I have done since has been just done for itself and not as part of an architectural scheme. The biography of Donald A. Smith is in that position.

Question: When did you first think in terms of a larger design for your writing?

Morton: I think it began to take shape—the design of having so much work and then calling it complete—when I was working on *Manitoba.*[18]

Question: That would be in the early 1950s?

Morton: Yes.

Question: Now how did you see "Clio in Canada"[19] when you were writing it?[1]

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[16] Morton finished a draft of one volume of this biography of Donald Smith (Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal) but it was never published.

[17] W.L. Morton, *The Critical Years: The Union of British North America, 1857-1873* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1964). This book was part of the nineteen-volume history of the Canada Centenary series published between 1963 and 1987. W.L. Morton was also the editor of this series.

[18] W.L. Morton, *Manitoba: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957).

[19] W.L. Morton, "Clio in Canada: The Interpretation of Canadian History," *University of Toronto Quarterly*, vol 15, no. 3 (April 1946), 227-234. This article reviews some of the interpretations of Canadian history and asserts that the Laurentian/Nationalist thesis has had a deleterious effect in shaping historical thought in Canada and the place of the west, and other hinterland regions, in the nation. "Clio in Canada" was a manifesto of sorts, and argued that the western Canadian community be included as a significant aspect of the national story.

Morton: … I suppose that was part of my preparation for working seriously in western history and trying to make it a significant part of Canadian history.

Question: Had you already at that point contracted to do *The Progressive Party*?[20]

Morton: Oh yes, sometime before then. You see, *The Progressive Party* came out in 1950 if I remember.

Question: That's right, and so you were well at work at it?

Morton: From 1944 on.

Question: When did you decide to write the history of Manitoba?

Morton: I didn't decide—I was asked by George Brown[21] to do it. That really touched off the line of development that we've been talking about.

Question: When was that?

Morton: I would say about 1950. He had a design for a set of provincial histories. Mine was the only one that ever got written as part of that design.

Question: Does *The Canadian Identity*[22] fit into this same development of your thought?

Morton: Yes, that's right. It's out of the same line of thought. Again, it was something I was asked to do. Because my interests were known by that time I was asked to do it. In many ways it was an offshoot of my being at the University of Wisconsin for a semester as the Paul Knaplund lecturer. But it was an offshoot really of what I was doing along the lines we have been discussing. I'd written my Presidential Address,[23] you see, in which I summed up what I thought about Canadian historical writing. Then I went to Wisconsin as they said in the letter "to lecture." Well, I thought that meant giving lectures to students. Actually, it meant giving free public university lectures so I had to rally round and do some late work to present these. They liked them and decided to publish them provided I could round them out a bit so I included the Presidential Address with permission from the Canadian Historical Association. Then when I was over in England, I suddenly got a cable from them saying, "What shall we call this book?" I pulled the rather silly term, "The Canadian Identity," out of the air and sent it back. It wasn't thought out.

Question: Did your perception of Canada change in the late 1940s?

Morton: I think in a sense that is true. There was a difference of perception between how I saw the

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[20] W.L. Morton, *The Progressive Party in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1950), examines the "farmers' revolt" of 1919-26.

[21] Brown was an historian at the University of Toronto and also editor at the University of Toronto Press.

[22] W.L. Morton, *The Canadian Identity* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961).

[23] W.L. Morton, "The Relevance of Canadian History," read before the Canadian Historical Association, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, June 11, 1960. Published in *Report of the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association,* vol. 39, no. 1 (1960), 1-21.

country in the 1940s and how I saw it in the 1950s. I was an actual separatist in the 1920s, you know, a Western Separatist; feeling was very strong down to 1936 and I suppose I just stayed in that position. Then things got very trying indeed because of the Depression and because of Mitch Hepburn[24] in Ontario who was outrageous, you know, a selfish, arrogant, mean individual. So, it all led up to "Clio in Canada." But in many ways that was a carry-over. I had actually changed when the federal-provincial income redistribution was introduced.[25] That seemed to me to alter the whole picture. I made a great deal of it and I began to become less a regionalist and more a nationalist.

Question: So that really happened in the 1940s?

Morton: It happened after 1947.

Question: Do you regard certain achievements with particular satisfaction?

Morton: I look back with some satisfaction on certain things. One was I think *The Progressive Party in Canada* signaled the beginning of serious scholarly or professional Western history. I don't quite know why that's so, because George Stanley's book was really the landmark, but I felt my book somehow or other—perhaps because of the time—made a difference that *The Birth of Western Canada*[26] hadn't done. That's a matter of opinion. So I look back on that with satisfaction. Then I take great satisfaction in the *Manitoba*, which I think is a good book; it's a well written book. And I like to see the way my work shaped up. I think it has a body, a coherence, that is satisfying. Apart from that, I take great pride in what I did at University College and at Trent, and I think while perhaps it was a typically conservative reaction—you know, a blow in the face of reality and all the rest of it, and it obviously won't transform university life, I still think it had a good effect and I think Trent University bears that out. Not that I was the only one at Trent, of course, we were a band of brothers there.

Question: Were you particularly pleased by some of the recognitions and awards you have received?

Morton: Yes, I was very struck by the recognition of my work in the late 1950s. The award of the Tyrrell Medal for this rather offbeat history I had been doing touched me very much. After all, I had been rather rude to some of my Canadian brethren in a professional sense and they took it in good part. Election to the Royal Society of Canada, I felt it the same way. I was gratified in a rather larger sense by being made a member of the Royal Society of History in England. That was a recognition that I wasn't just a regionalist—not just a nationalist—but was accepted as a historian. I had read them a paper some time before. One very special thing, though it is not quite on the same scale, [and] it has always been a great source of pride to me, of course, was the Morton Medal at the University of Manitoba.[27] They have been very careful in awarding it so that I think it is something quite significant.

The Order of Canada is, of course, an honour, but you get into competition there. I regretted that I was made a member at that time because I got what I was worth at that time, an Officership, but Creighton and Lower are Companions.

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[24] Mitchell Frederick Hepburn (1896–1953) was the premier of Ontario, from 1934 to 1942.

[25] The first formal equalization program (transfer payments) was introduced in 1957, but the Rowell-Sirois Royal Commission had recommended it as early as 1940.

[26] George F.G. Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada: A History of the Riel Rebellions* (Toronto, London & New York: Longmans, Green, 1936).

[27] The W.L. Morton Gold Medal is awarded annually to the outstanding graduate of the Master of Arts programme at the University of Manitoba.

Question: How would you describe Manitoba if you were introducing the province to a newcomer?

Morton: Well, when I did this, I happened to be a member of the Lower Fort Garry Motor Country Club—an honorary member—I only used to take distinguished visitors down there. I took them to Lower Fort Garry and I would still do that because it's eyewitness to another age and another period in history, it shows how long a history we have in spite of being a new province and indeed from there you can work your way back to Captain Button and all the rest of it. And then, from there too, you go straight-way to the Red River Settlement which I think was a real historical background for this province although the province became so different from the Red River Settlement. That leads on to the 1870[28] business and the French community in Manitoba. Then, of course, the other thing you are faced with right away, from the moment of arrival, is the fact of the city of Winnipeg; and I think perhaps the most significant thing about Manitoba at the moment is that over half its population is in this one great urban aggregation and so you have a city built for regional purposes acting as the capital of what is, in terms of population and wealth, a relatively small province.[29] I think that you can talk about all those things without being too boring.

Question: You spoke in *Manitoba* of a "superficial friendliness" that was to be found amongst the ethnic groups in the province.

Morton: Well, I suspect, though of course I'm becoming detached, that it has improved over that. I think there I was reflecting the attitude of my own kind of Manitoban, a member of the majority group who had to be decent about it all, whereas now I think there is a genuine quality to the diversity of people. I sense this in what I read about Folklorama and so on. But, as always, I shrink from the term "melting pot." I think we blended without melting—which was what we intended to do. The British inheritance is basic to all English-speaking Canada and in great part to French speaking Canada too. This is why we can use, though it is not wise to, the term "founding races." The French and English brought in our languages and our institutions and they were founders in the sense that no one else can be though that is not to depreciate what other people are and have done, it's just a historical fact.

Question: Is Manitoba very different from the other prairie provinces?

Morton: Yes, both Saskatchewan and Alberta, of course. For one reason, you see, there's a whole generation of historical development before those provinces came into being and Manitoba had to live with the consequences of 1870 down to 1916. The School Question, you see, wasn't settled even then but it was brought to a culmination by the school act of 1916.[30] Saskatchewan and Alberta hadn't very much of that experience.

Question: Are you optimistic about the immediate future of the province?

Morton: I am. I'm sorry that we seem both in Manitoba and in Winnipeg to have got into the old

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[28] Manitoba entered the Canadian Confederation in 1870 after an armed resistance led by Métis inhabitants of the Red River Settlement.

[29] Winnipeg remains the largest city in the eastern prairies and had over 600,000 inhabitants in 1990.

[30] This issue involved the rights of non-English citizens to education in their own language. These rights were abrogated, after many years of official status, in 1916. Francophone rights were of a different character and, though abolished with the others in 1916, the use of French as a language of instruction in schools was continued under the table and eventually was sanctioned by the provincial government. The official use of French in government institutions was abolished by provincial statute in 1890 but was held to be legally valid in court cases in the 1970s and was then restored.

Canadian habit of running ourselves down. I think we have a remarkable society and basically a happy one. And I think that we are a prosperous community and I think we will go on being prosperous. We may not be as prosperous as Alberta but it is a simple fact that there are no fuel oil formations in Manitoba. Winnipeg is a very livable place. And, of course, now with the roads and cars, all Manitobans share in Winnipeg's life.



W.L. Morton in 1932
On the eve of his Rhodes Scholarship in Oxford