

Exposition of the Economic and Social Problems of Northern Saskatchewan

By

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Transcribed by David Morin

We hope to portray people and conditions as they are and not as it has been pictured by the flamboyant publicists of the tourist industry who see in the native inhabitants of the North as quaint denizens of the bushland (sic) as incidental color against the background of tall evergreens and the romantic haze of tepee smoke We hope (to) tell of the northern people their struggles past and present We also voice their hopes for bettered social conditions for new trends of progressive though (sic) and a plea for the social and economic planning which can rescue the first Canadians from their backward (sic) isolation from the main stream of Canadian life And provide a new approach to the many complex problems of social economic and political development which inescapably lies (sic) in the future and which must be solved to guarantee our racial survival

To the Euro Canadian * the Indian and Metis have remained in great measure foreign In Northern Saskatchewan there are an estimated _____ people of Indian and Metis stock out of a total population of _____ In the older established prairie communities of rural Saskatchewan there a wide spread lack of knowledge of our Northern frontier In many cases a total unconsciousness of the existence of an Indian and Metis element in our population (sic) prevails In addition even on the frontier language creates a barrier between the races We do not have one single member in our Saskatchewan legislature who can speak to the Indians in their own tongue The percentage of Cree and Chipwyan (sic) speaking Euro Canadians is infinitesimal (sic) Of the Native races a relatively (sic) large portion of the population have learned some English Within the larger context of the meaning which defines a nation the Saskatxhewan (sic) Natives now lacks a common territory and a distinctive mode of life whilst still retaining the remnants of a forcibly suppressed culture and the residue of subdued psychological characteristics

which distinguish the separatenss (sic) of a collective national entity They no longer (sic) have a national identity which is uniquely their own

Today the Metis are "Breeds" – a nuance of Euro Canadian expression that speaks for itself –and to Metis minds and epithet of opprobium (sic) and rejection similar to the stereotyped allusion (sic) by Anglo Saxon race supremacists of Gook or Wog to the colonial peoples of the East Clearly (sic) there are difficulties involved in finding a basis for mutual understanding between the people of Regina and the Native people of La Ronge This statment (sic) by itself does not explain the bitter tensions and resentments that darken any preliminary approck (sic) to a "Bonne Entente" The school of well meaning "Paternalistic social uplifters" (sic) invariably reduce the problem to one of "Misunderstanding" on the part of the Native of course which fails alike to explain our internal conflicts and the inability to suggest solutions – with an end result of wishful thinking and the glowing platitudes of after dinner speeches to momentarily allay the pangs of guilty conscience

The problem of the Northern Native can only be understood by searching behind the well concealed veil of past and present history – by rejecting surface conceptions and baring to ugly view the actual unfolding of the social and economic forces which have temporarily subjugated the North American primitives and by tracing their historical development and social role in contemporary society

All former concepts of the Canadian of Aboriginal stock require revision Their lives have been and are being subjected to profound change – the transitional requirements of today cannot be evaluated by the static concepts of yesterday—already there are expressions of a new re orientation affecting deeply the old attitudes of life

For nearly three centuries the relations btrween (sic) the Euro Canadian and the Aboriginal people have been recognized as an issue of major importance in our national life Since Wolrd (sic) War II the past terms in which it has presented itself has undergone a significant change with the rise of national liberation movements in the colonial world of Asia and Africa The fact remains that the satisfactory integration of the Native people into the franework (sic) of Euro Canadian society is still a task that is crucial and necessary to the Canadian nation In essence it is a matter of prime necessity of Canadian democracy When we have been drawn closest together has always been in the course of a struggle to defend our national independence

The Euro Canadian rarely understands – the (sic) measure of our histoical (sic) contribution to the national unity of Canada is still not understood by all of Canada’s citizens. That comprehension and understanding is vital if our survival is to be assured. And the aims of an uncompleted struggle are to be realized.

It is noteworthy that all governments direct their appeal toward the economic aspirations of the masses of the people. Even the C C F government in Saskatchewan was elected on the slogan “Humanity First” – more recently the Tories reinforced it with a subtle and subdued appeal to latent nationalism – (sic) A dual theme which proved remarkably successful. Two World Wars have thrust to the forefront the problem of National security – and especially the future of our present systme (sic) of economy and the place of the welfare state therein. There is a new urgency among the ruling circles of the Western world based on a high powered cynical demagogy directed to negate by force if necessary the economic and social aspirations of the backward stratum of society.

For this reason the need of studing (sic) the “Native” question is urgent. What is involved here is an objective appraisal and comparative analysis of the dominant and inferior groups and their relationships within the framework of Canadian society with particular emphasis on the sitiation (sic) of the minority group so little known and understood by Euro Canadians. Such a study must of necessity recall some unpalatable truths about our history which official records tend to obscure. If we cannot view our past objectively and without bias, how can we expect to face the thorny and vexatious problems which confront us and inexorably demand an immediate solution.

The issue of “race language and religion” which provoked furious controversy in the early days of Metis history have subsided into a well deserved limbo of historical obscurity. Economic and political factors have engendered the present day causes of friction. The philosophical and psychological factors havr (sic) only a secondary bearing. The problems to be considered and which have a bearing on the relations of Euro Canadian society vis avis (sic) the Native element are

- () The special conditions of life of the Native groups
 - (A) The nomadic peripheric (sic) non acculturated group
 - (B) The semi sedentary semi acculturated group
 - (C) The permanent superior acculturated group

- () The roots of our alienation from the community The historic and social origins of the regressive factors in Metis history The psychological weaknesses of Metis character
- () The present strengths and progressive potential of the Native communities in Northern Saskatchewan
- () The origins and position of the dominant administrative group
- () The immediate pressing questions relating to the present economic social and cultural stages of development

* The term Euro Canadian is employed to differentiate between Canadians of White racial origin and the Indians and Metis of Aboriginal descent This differentiation is employed as an anthropological term reference: The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science Vol XX No Feb "Some Problems of the Metis of Northern Saskatchewan V F Valentine University of Toronto

While no one today can predict the phases through which northern co-operatives will evolve (sic) some indications are available from experience. It is an interesting theme for students and political thinkers. The first point is to clarify the direction of that evolution. Up till there had always been a certain underestimation of the role of co-operatives in Native rehabilitation. Among C C F Governmental apparatus (sic) Even today (in) there are reflections of mistrust in federated co-operatives. With such thinking the new role of Northern (sic) co-op trading makes no sense.

We must attract the trapper of higher productivity returning to them the profit from their superior production. The principle of economic stimulation maximum (sic) returns to the trapper of good management (sic) – Orientation (sic) must come from experience rather than (sic) from any systematic thinking on the subject. Co-ops must get together, establish direct ties, work out certain forms of co-operation and collaboration and to combine resources where necessary for greater primary production and increased sales volume.

Re-put here and there, particularly in political circles, the reproach was heard that this change was purely empirical, dictated by the pressure of economic (sic) events and the urgency of practical political problems.

The most potent weapons at our disposal are those of (sic) democratic initiative, organized action and persuasive example.

It must be seen not as a denunciation of specific errors and methods of government but as a development of thought and of theoretical positions.

It is a characteristic of dialectical thought to move not through abstractions but in the wake of practical experiences (sic) and hence to be somewhat lagging. But this does not always account for certain hesitations in disinterested study. One must never retreat into the camp of the dogmatists; dogmatists exist everywhere, hindering the work of renewal. They have positions (sic) of influence and they impede not only studies but also the application of correct line.

The resources of a people can be capitalized only through studies of the problems constantly arising as the country advances; hence, through debate, research, the (sic) struggle of ideas.

The law of harmonious development of co-operative society imposes criteria on the planners which cannot be violated without creating harmful disequilibria.

True participation in management lies in the consciousness of the general interest.

LIVING CONDITIONS

The dominating item in all family budgets is food. There is no question that the Euro-Canadian eats better than the Indian and Metis. I am speaking (sic) of the fringe communities of Northern (sic) settlements. The Native eats a lot of starch. He eats less vegetables, milk and butter. He eats less processed meat. A minimum of wild game is available to the peripheral (sic) group whose productive efforts are confined strictly to the semi-nomadic way of life. He also dresses worse than the Euro-Canadian. The climate, of course, constrains the

Native to wear heavier clothes which look shabbier and are usually of inferior quality and very expensive compared to those procurable by the ordinary urban worker

The level of education and culture is lower. Education and culture are part of a truly civilized standard of living. The Euro Canadian has greater opportunities for education and can use them to the full. Furthermore he has access to all cultural areas. The greatest lack in their standard of living is housing. He is badly housed. Households often live in one room. There are three additional factors to consider not always included in the concept "standard of living"

The low income level stultifies a rational and equitable distribution of desirable consumer goods and reduces and reduces their per capita consumption as a social grouping. If someone tells you that the average consumption of beef is 10 lbs per person. The statistic is not the result of having eaten a porter house steak while the Indian ate fish. Averages have an unrealistic content. They are more applicable to well settled communities and have less validity as one descends the social scale. Geography is also a factor. Colonial peoples of the East