

VI.—MANITOBA, SASKATCHEWAN AND ALBERTA.¹

Historical.—On the prairies there have been two distinct trends of historical and political development—that of the Red River and that of the Territories. The whole region was originally under the sway of the Honourable Company of Adventurers trading into Hudson's Bay. In the case of Red River, responsible self-rule came with the transfer to Canada. The Territories possessed absolutely no form of government prior to their incorporation in the Dominion.

On September 4, 1812, Captain Miles Macdonell, in the name of Lord Selkirk, took formal possession of the District of Assiniboia at the forks of the Red and Assiniboine rivers. This was the first act of government in what is now western Canada.

The district was governed for several years by a governor and council appointed by Selkirk, and although it was responsible to only a slight degree to those whose interests it was expected to regard and foster, its membership was largely representative of the leaders in the community. In 1841, the Municipal District of Assiniboia was formed, its establishment marking the beginnings of self-government in the west.

The series of Dominion Acts relating to the west begins with "An Act for the temporary government of Rupert's Land and the Northwestern Territory when united with Canada," June 22, 1869. This Act sought to prepare for the transfer of the Territories from the local authorities to the government of Canada. A year later the Manitoba Act (33 Vict., c. 3) launched upon its independent constitutional career the old district of Assiniboia, now in possession of complete self-government. For a short time there was a temporary government with two ministers and the Legislative Assembly. After this, government was carried on with the Legislative Assembly and a Legislative Council, but without a premier. At the end of six years the Legislative Council was abolished. Without a Legislative Council but with a premier and a Legislative Assembly the province assumed the constitutional form which has endured to the present day.

On the establishment of the province of Manitoba, the Territories were not at first given a separate government. They were administered from Fort Garry by the Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba with the aid, first of a small executive council of three, and then with the aid of a more formal but still provisional Northwest Council. The charter of the separate political existence of the Territories is the Northwest Territories Act, 1875 (38 Vict., c. 49). The development of the country had already become a rapid one. The construction of the Canadian Pacific railway exerted a powerful influence on its growth and tended to a great extent to determine the course of settlement. While the capital was still at Battleford, in 1881, Chief Factor Lawrence Clarke was elected to represent the district of Lorne on the Northwest Council. Three years later the elected representatives of the people became numerous enough to exert an influence upon legislation. In 1886 a territorial judiciary was established. Then followed a parliamentary struggle for the control of the purse. In quick succession came the Advisory Council, the Executive Committee, the Executive Council. In the contest between representatives of the settlers and the Dominion officials, victory lay with the people and with the cause of popular government. It was not, however, till 1897, on the eve of a remarkable growth in population and economic development, that the government of the Territories, which for half a decade had been giving expression to the

¹Adapted from the article by Rev. E. H. Oliver, Ph. D., F.R.S.C., in the 1921 Year Book.