



## Attracting Newcomers to Canada's Prairie West, 1896-1905: The Selling of the West and the Persuasiveness within the Government's Promotional Booklets

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## Attracting Newcomers to Canada's Prairie West, 1896-1905: The Selling of the West and the Persuasiveness within the Government's Promotional Booklets

### Abstract

Abstract: The prairie west of Canada was, nearing the turn of the twentieth century, considered to be empty, having not yet reached its assimilatory, and resource, economic, social or cultural potential. Many politicians, especially Clifford Sifton, sought to change this. Sifton eventually made Canada's population increase a reality. He masterminded the most successful promotional campaign within Canada's immigration policy to ever stretch the parameters of inclusion for enlarging the Canadian mosaic. The largest phenomenon of human migration to the Canadian prairie west was between 1896 and 1905. Sifton's intercontinental and overseas promotional campaign became the magnet of attraction for newcomers eager to settle the prairie west. Although a great deal of work has been done by Canadian and American scholars on the topic of prairie west settlement and immigration history, none have incorporated an analysis of Clifford Sifton's promotional campaign's promotional literature, namely, the promotional booklets. This essay takes into consideration the history of prairie west settlement until 1896, shows the circumstances for favourable settlement in the prairie west during Sifton's time as Minister of the Interior, and, more importantly, analytically unpacks two Federal Government booklets' propaganda-like designs. It is within these booklets where pompous claims, pastoral narratives, first-person perspectives and romanticized conceptions showcase the acumen of the booklets' authors. As for the structure of the booklets, they were meant to be an 'easy sell' not only tactically but surreptitiously as well. This acted as a turning point for prospective and desirable settlers to choose to live in the west. The booklet's explicit use of propaganda techniques and rhetoric convinced people to buy into the incontestably lucrative agricultural opportunities and supposed charming lifestyle the prairie west offered.

### Keywords

immigration, settlement history, propaganda and rhetoric, Clifford Sifton, Canada prairie west

### Cover Page Footnote

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**Attracting Newcomers to Canada's Prairie West, 1896-1905: The Selling of the West and the Persuasiveness within the Government's Promotional Booklets**

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## Introduction

The Canadian prairie west before 1896 was, for the most part, seen as a veritable hinterland by the Canadian government. It was a territory sparsely inhabited by European settlers and, despite the large numbers of Indigenous peoples who had long occupied the land, the Canadian government still considered it unsettled.<sup>1</sup> Beginning in 1867 the government of Canada had wanted to attract thousands of new settlers, but decades later the west remained a land of uncertain possibility. The Department of the Interior, under the Liberal government of Wilfrid Laurier, began an ambitious initiative that ultimately resulted in almost three-quarters of a million people, mostly of European heritage, migrating to Canada between 1896 and 1905.<sup>2</sup> There were favourable circumstances by then, of course, for settlement in Canada, especially the closing of the American west in the early 1890s. Canada's propaganda campaign, launched in eastern, northern and central Europe and in Britain and the United States, sparked much interest about the Canadian prairie west. An epidemic of prairie west settlement fever soon spread throughout Europe and the United States. As a result, multitudes left their homelands to begin new lives in Canada.

Clifford Sifton, the Minister of the Interior from 1896 to 1905, largely masterminded a successful program of propaganda that reached a myriad of nationalities who were seeking a fresh start, wanting to expand their agricultural operations and escape such things as landlordism, poverty, and religious

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<sup>1</sup> Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987. 162-163.

<sup>2</sup> Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998. 121: "When Sifton resigned in 1905, approximately 650,000 immigrants had entered Canada during his nine-year term in office, more than 60 per cent of whom had come in the three years prior to his departure."

persecution in their homelands.<sup>3</sup> A few years into the Wilfrid Laurier era, the benefits of western Canada were well-known in parts of the United States of America and in Europe generally. Sifton's beguiling rhetorical constructs, embedded within the language of opportunity and promise, enticed those who could break the soil and establish farms in a seemingly pulchritudinous region of Canada. The prairies encompassed, from the perspective of newcomers influenced by the propaganda, most of Canada's so-called agricultural lands in the late 19th century, and Canadian politicians were keen to promote an ideal image of the region for newcomers. The selling of the prairie west, a place of assured opportunity and reward, was through the mode of propaganda. One public relations researcher and writer named Edward Bernays says propaganda's "invisible governors" dictate the "habits and opinions of the masses."<sup>4</sup> Sifton's promotional literature, particularly the promotional booklets used to attract immigrants to Canada, characterized Bernays' typification of propaganda. Some primary sources are required to be analyzed as designs of propaganda, and as persuasive pieces of promotional literature of Sifton's promotional campaign. The booklets analyzed are *Timely Remarks by Septimus Field and Letters from Western Canadian Settlers* (1898) and *Western Canada: Manitoba and the Northwest Territories, Assiniboia, Alberta and Saskatchewan* (1899).

The two booklets of promotional literature were designed by the Department of the Interior and the Government Printing Bureau during Clifford Sifton's tenure as Minister of the Department of the Interior. They boldly portrayed the west in its idyllic nature, and implied that a can't-be-missed

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<sup>3</sup> Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, 249-250.

<sup>4</sup> Edward Bernays, *Propaganda*. New York: Ig Publishing, 1928, 37-38.

opportunity was awaiting the newcomer. They appeared accurate, highly researched, sharp in their experience-based descriptions and pastoral in narrative. However, as Ronald Rees writes, much of the writing within Canada's promotional literature highlighted only the good, and not the real struggle one had to wrestle with day in and day out.<sup>5</sup> The pieces of promotional literature chosen for this thesis therefore represent ideal prototypes for the Federal Government's promotional campaign that hid the fact that Canada's prairies would take a lot of fortitude, and that nothing about migrating to a new land augured success for all newcomers.

*Western Canada* was published by the Canadian government and *Timely Remarks* was written from an agriculturalists' opinion named Septimus Field.<sup>6</sup> Other historians have used Sifton's more well-known promotional pieces like *The Last, Best West* in their research, but not the two particular pieces used for this essay. Both *Septimus Field and Western Canada* unveiled the prairie west as a veritable gold mine awaiting the male and female newcomer, using a number of linguistic structures and rhetorical devices common in propaganda to persuade them. Techniques such as card-stacking and the bold assertion are evident in both publications. Claims about the prairie's rejuvenating climatic effects on people or the westerner's superior aptitude, workmanship and quality of life were described in the literature in ways that dispelled notions of uncertainty and unconquerability.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ronald Rees, *New and Naked Land: Making the Prairies Home*. Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1988. 1.

<sup>6</sup> It is possible that Septimus Field was 'created' from the imagination of a propagandist author. No records of any sort currently exist of Mr. Field, save for his location Asessippi, Manitoba. He wrote an earlier booklet that was published in 1895 titled *The Canadian North-West*, but it essentially relays much of the same information as *Timely Remarks*.

<sup>7</sup> Q.v. The essay does not shed much light on women's experiences in the prairies, nor does it include a feminine framework because of the lack of reference to these themes in the booklets. For a two-way appraisal of

The literature's prose presents its information in a "gendered experience," but it is really targeting the male newcomer.<sup>8</sup> The narrative of the literature -- however obvious Sifton's bias comes across with regards to favouring males -- is replete with masculine representations of the prairie west. This was, back in the day, a common way to uphold an idea or position of power (i.e. the vocations of farming or ranching) reserved only for a man which, in turn, relegated women as role-players confined to limits and boundaries regard where they could go or what work they involve themselves with. In the profession of history, ignoring that this ever existed as a historical ideology negatively affects a woman's perspective and place in history. In prairie west history today, this has had an impact on historians and has resulted in incorporating and filling historical gaps; seeking out and formulating new questions and creating interconnections for today's gender historians; to further advance the gendered template of study; defining the parameters of inclusion; and in viewing a woman's historical significance as a settler (and not just as a farm wife) in relation to her environments (domestic, social and consumerist environments). Indeed, a more in-depth study could further this essay's analysis. Added further, a more gendered outlook on the feminine ideals of Canadian expansionism, the individual female-settler achievements and their place in the settler environment could be expounded upon. These perspectives characterize the uniqueness of the Canadian prairie west, and they need further investigation as a subject of study in history. Unfortunately, this important matter cannot be delved into in this essay. A Canadian prairie west settler woman has a unique place in settlement

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masculinity and femininity in the context of women, colonial and gender history refer to Anne McClintock's *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

<sup>8</sup> Anna Green and Kathleen Troup, *The Houses of History: A Critical Reader in History and Theory, second edition*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016. 269.

history, though, and I acknowledge their place in the history of the prairie west. If it were possible, their perspectives would be included in a longer version of this essay because there is more to just a generic impression of women in history through a masculine lens that portrays women as “universal subject...defined in [her] particularity”<sup>9</sup>

In the 1890s and 1900s, both genders familiarized themselves with the prairie experience discussed in Sifton’s booklets. They read about homesteading experiences on the prairies, the country’s rules and regulations, religious freedoms, job types, the tax structure, provincial education systems, types of game to hunt, the grain varieties and various agricultural-lifestyle advantages, and societal, climatic and geographical features unique to the rural landscape. However, these booklets were only one aspect of the promotional literature that comprised the Federal Government’s campaign towards prospective newcomers. That material (advertisement posters, pamphlets and postcards) contains a plethora of broader historical connections to propaganda and addresses broader topics on Canadian immigration history and economic theory but their affiliation to these topics and themes will not be explored in great detail in this essay.

Immigration and national policy and the expectations of and reactions to the prairie west in examining the factors of selling the west are considered first in this essay, before it turns to the consideration of the types of persuasion found within the promotional literature. This thesis in toto investigates the prairie west’s settlement evolution from Confederation, the favourable circumstances for bringing in many newcomers during the Laurier era, and then seeks to understand what made the booklets (within in the context of the promotional

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<sup>9</sup> Green and Troup, *The Houses of History: A Critical Reader in History and Theory*, second edition, 268- 269.

literature campaign) so persuasive and appealing that they contributed to a huge influx of newcomers. Canada's favourable circumstances are only a relatively minor component of the thesis; most attention is focused on the themes that pertain to the promotional literature's depiction of Canada. It should also be noted that, despite the role of race and colonization theory and Indigenous displacement in the settlement process, these important themes are not covered in this thesis, in part, because the pieces of promotional literature examined did not include, for one thing, an Indigenous perspective or their reaction towards settlement, nor does the literature provide a critique of the immigration policies as they existed in the late 19th century. Yet, I understand that these themes can have an impact on the way Canadian history is written and intergenerationally passed down orally, and that these very types of history can act as personal but powerful statements for those historians who continue to write more inclusively.

### **Methodology, Historiography and Literature Review**

The promotional literature is a component of Canada's national policy after 1867, which emphasized immigration as one feature necessary for national economic development. The process of immigration was complicated and complex. One of its essential elements was the continental and overseas advertising campaign. The methodological approach of this thesis distinguishes between the organization of smaller themes and their connection to more complex subject topics in a broader historical paradigm. Breaking down components or connecting parts can be referred to as "method-reductionism."<sup>10</sup>

Reductionism on the whole should not be understood in a pejorative way or seen

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<sup>10</sup> Richard H Jones, *Analysis and the Fullness of Reality: An Introduction to Reductionism and Emergence*. Middletown, Delaware: Jackson Square Books, 2013. 16.

as the sin of simplification.<sup>11</sup> Richard H. Jones in *Analysis & the Fullness of Reality: An Introduction to Reductionism and Emergence* presents an approach to the subject of method-reductionism remarkably to avoid such a sin. His definition of method-reductionism brings to mind an analogy which might help better understand the reductionist methodology as it is taken here in examining the enticing nature of Sifton's propaganda. Such an analogy evokes an image of taking apart a large Lego figure to inspect its smaller assemblages – seeing exactly where and how certain pieces fit and connect. Jones describes method-reductionism as:

an analysis as the method for studying phenomenon, i.e., disassembling a complex whole into its simpler component pieces or identifying the lower level bases of a phenomenon and then studying the features and organization of the component parts or bases to see how it works.<sup>12</sup>

In this essay the *phenomenon* explored is featured, or perceived, through the booklets; within the contexts of politics and policy the Federal Government made Canada west's features appealing to immigrants, especially that of the prairies, all the while embracing a farmer's experiential perspective of the land. The method-reductionist approach, therefore, earmarks the fact that these booklets were one key component that greatly helped to fill the prairie west with

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<sup>11</sup> Jones, *Analysis and the Fullness of Reality*, 10: "Not every attempt to bring order or simplicity to a situation is a reduction: reduction involves a relation between levels." The Federal Government's promotional literature created a 'multi-layered reality' of the prairie region by showcasing its complexities and particularities yet describing it ever so elegantly. This is written in a reductive fashion (rhetorically speaking): "a reduction of structures [and] phenomena on one level or sublevel...explained in terms of realities on what is deemed a more basic level or sublevel." This basic level, after it is 'taken apart' or deconstructed, is, from a professionally-sounding but highly touted point-of-view, given over, sold or advertised to newcomers. For them, immigrating to and ensconcing themselves in Canada, through the lens of the literature, legitimized the prairies; it was portrayed as having unlimited potential, and as a beautiful and bountiful place where one could work hard enough to attain his/her goals while experiencing the best Canada had to offer. The 'basic level reality' within Sifton's propaganda campaign (and within the bigger-picture historical context of 1896-1905 immigration policy) highlight the sublevel phenomenon this thesis attempts to uncover: a portrayal of the western prairies as having the highest quality arable lands, scrupulous law and order, an ethic-inclusive environment, exceptional institutions, plenty of natural resources, etc., and that it was the best decision of one's life: to move to Canada's prairies. As a result of a person's made decision, the underlying persuasiveness within the literature, I find, also sort of ties into psychology: that reality the promotional literature portrayed created euphoric sensations and positive perceptions resulting in engagement in certain types of behavior – which is what propaganda persuades one to do – which therefore ultimately burgeoned into the whole phenomena of people imagining themselves migrating and actually implementing their plans to move to Canada, specifically to the prairie west.

<sup>12</sup> Jones, *Analysis and the Fullness of Reality*, 16.

newcomers during an era where economic growth and population increases bred a new kind of optimism for political think-tanks and for newly arriving immigrants.

This essay builds on the extensive literature on the prairie west, especially those scholars who have long written about settlement history, immigration policy and the overall growth of Canada at the turn of the twentieth century. Many of those histories have focused on policymaking and regional and agricultural development. As a *histoire totale* framework, shifts in ideas about the prairie west have impacted historians differently in their contributions to the writing of Canadian history. By studying the internal lives of the prairie west individuals and their mentalities allows one to trace not only the unique, set-in-the-past cultural aspects but also the intellectual shifts and paradigms of the prairie westerner at the time as compared to today. In the last fifty years, the building blocks of narrative, content, ideological structure and methodology in historical consciousness for prairie west historical writing has changed and it, too, is thematically inclusive. Many genres of Indigenous history, geography, policy, politics, economic features and movements and historical phenomena are more historically-appropriate and inclusive than in the distant past.

In approximately the last thirty years, the primary historiographic approach for prairie west settlement historians is structure-reductionist: attention was not given only to “higher level causal properties”<sup>13</sup> of historical events or people but “explanatory extensions”<sup>14</sup> for interpreting lower level components within broader events in order to fuse history with, for example, personal experience stories and various ethnic perspectives (including Indigenous peoples). As an aspiring scholar, appraising the need to be more objective is as

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<sup>13</sup> Jones, *Analysis and the Fullness of Reality*, 46-47.

<sup>14</sup> Jones, *Analysis and the Fullness of Reality*, 46-47.

important to the subject of history as is gauging its multi-layered but thematically relevant approaches to its contemporary importance. Indeed, new ingredients are needed to be able to expand upon any historical subject's perspective as new histories continue to be written by new scholars.

The political intentions between building the west -- defining who the country wanted to attract -- and seeing how best to effectively and efficiently promulgate a favourable image of Canada were competing priorities for the Canadian government. Ninette Kelley, Michael Trebilcock and Gregory Marchildon have helped place immigration policy priorities with Canadian governmentality in context. More importantly, they have fleshed out the major periods of immigration policy from the pre-Confederation period through the twenty-first century, giving their own responses and perspectives to questions on just how various regions, communities and metropolises in Canada have changed and have been affected over time, and from various perspectives, as a result of the evolution of immigration policy. Books and articles on the prairie west history offer historical chronologies, primary source documents, and other great compendiums of Canadian history. This has been true of Gerald Friesen's *The Canadian Prairies* and R. Douglas Francis' *Images of the West* which offer various multi-layered and inclusive accounts. Douglas and Friesen are generally chronological and cover large periods of prairie west history. They present their interpretations as micro-histories of the prairies; variant historical perspectives that were hitherto (in the last 30 years or so) choice themes rarely synthesized into one textbook. Their goal was to inspect the sui generis-like elements of the Canadian prairie *landscape*: its unique ethnic make-up, culture, economy and Indigenous histories of the region -- situating the prairies' history apart from the rest of Canadian history. Ronald Rees is among other scholars who also provide

important historical connections and interpretations of the Prairie's evolution from a developmental point-of-view, especially his recognition of a distinct cultural and social history of the prairie west.

The prairies has its own unique story that is told differently than the rest of Canada. Those authors argue for the uniqueness of the western prairies as they highlight some of the important and lesser known themes, such as a settler family's journey or personal life and historical sites of memory. Collectively, those authors will help to unfurl two important aspects in relation to this essay: the Laurier Liberal government's tapestry of political positionality and the life and times of Clifford Sifton as Minister.

The tools and techniques used to chisel down the booklets' language in order to uncover the persuasive feature within the context of how the prairie west was 'advertised' and 'sold' will be extracted from works by Garth Jowett, Victoria O'Donnell and Randal Martin. These books are not truly history-related, but they do make important connections to help complete the nexus of the propaganda analysis. They provide a critique, or, rather, a backdrop of interpretation for studying the various patterns of persuasion identifiable within the two examples of promotional literature considered in this thesis. Martin reinforces these basic parameters for studying propaganda -- i.e. theory, origin, language manipulation identification and the history of propaganda -- while Jowett and O'Donnell dissect the differences between persuasion and propaganda, their similarities, and their history.

Propaganda allows and reckons new belief systems which, in turn, seeks to engage people in certain types of behavior.<sup>15</sup> The Department of the Interior's

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<sup>15</sup> Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion (sixth ed.)*. Los Angeles: Sage Publication Ltd., 2015, 315.

promotional booklets are, as in Jowett and O'Donnell's analysis, examples of Integration propaganda. This term recognizes the importance of the original creator's attempt to balance informed choice of the public with the "positions and interests represented by officials" who sponsor, seek out and "sanction propaganda messages"<sup>16</sup> with which audiences are exposed. This type of propaganda also parallels a more mild ideology of Joseph Goebbels' during the time of Nazi Germany: ideological structures within propagandic messages that attempt to conquer masses are not without purposeful rhetoric.<sup>17</sup> Effective appeals project a propagandist's true message which probes the "hearer [sic] for weaknesses, needs, desires, unfulfilled dreams"<sup>18</sup> which are used to "pierce the emotional armor"<sup>19</sup> of the target. The concept of rhetoric is intertwined with the concept of propaganda. The booklets' rhetoric unveiled a spectrum of self-important choices while propaganda demanded attention to its vision - so direct, choice actually became limited.<sup>20</sup> The promotional literature campaign was rife with calls to action and "appeals to the need to act now."<sup>21</sup> For newcomers who were nearing their destinations, awaiting new opportunities, the land had to be lived on to be believed.

The works of Martin and Jowett and O'Donnell help to shine a heavy light on the propaganda analysis section. Both promotional booklet's prose uses, ideally, appealing and descriptive language mixed with 'proven' hard fact/statistic-checker language. Depicting the west in this way creates legitimacy

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<sup>16</sup> Jowett and O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*, 315.

<sup>17</sup> Jowett, O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*, 315.

<sup>18</sup> Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell (eds.), *Readings in Propaganda and Persuasion: New and Classic Essays*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 2006. 68.

<sup>19</sup> Jowett and O'Donnell, *Readings*, 68.

<sup>20</sup> Jowett and O'Donnell, *Readings*, 68

<sup>21</sup> Jowett and O'Donnell, *Readings*, 68.

and a pleasant idea in the mind of a reader. Just as important, though, Martin and Jowett and O'Donnell highlight the important role rhetoric plays in propaganda. Although the booklets are, at times, written in a manipulative fashion<sup>22</sup> -- by definition, "masked by highly skilled technique...excluding competing ideas," -- they, like most of the other pieces of promotional literature used in the promotional campaign, otherwise romanticized some aspects of the prairies and communicated "knowledge discovered by logic and science."<sup>23</sup> Ultimately, the booklets linguistically emphasized "technical competence in written composition" while their rhetorical pulls were subtler but definitely not subdued.<sup>24</sup>

### **The Early Years of Prairie West Settlement**

After Confederation in 1867, the Canadian government largely failed in its efforts to attract immigrants to the prairie west despite the enactment of the Dominion's Lands Act which was designed to encourage new settlement. Until 1878, there was not a simple travel route to the west nor was there any direct access (from the west) to eastern markets for farmers and ranchers. In 1885, the completion of the first major railroad (the Canadian Pacific Railway) set the precedent for transportation advancement. Isaiah Bowman averred to it as the "forerunner of development, the pre-pioneer, the base line of agriculture."<sup>25</sup> Before the 'last spike' was driven in Craigellachie, British Columbia, in November 1885, settlers by and large did not hasten to grab up land in unbroken regions of

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<sup>22</sup> Jowett and O'Donnell, *Readings*, 57: The authors opine that one can find an example of this in Socrates' first speech in Plato's 'Phaedrus': "manipulative rhetoric is designed to deceive, to hide the true intentions of the rhetor."

<sup>23</sup> Jowett and O'Donnell, *Readings in Propaganda and Persuasion*, 59.

<sup>24</sup> Jowett and O'Donnell, *Readings in Propaganda and Persuasion*, 59.

<sup>25</sup> P.L. McCormick, "Problems in the Expansion of the Frontier of Saskatchewan and Assiniboia" in Gregory P. Marchildon's *Immigration & Settlement 1870-1939*. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 2009. 86-87.

the plains around rail districts.<sup>26</sup> After 1885, however, railroad communities began to pop up and grow in number and population, which regulated the ebb and flow of rural settlement in the prairies into the 1890s, in turn making immigration flourish.<sup>27</sup>

Canadian land speculators between 1883 and 1890 were the primary buyers of land in Manitoba and adjacent parts of the North-West Territories and the Districts of Saskatchewan, Assiniboia and Alberta.<sup>28</sup> Homestead entries (in most cases British) averaged under three thousand a year and the number of cancellations was equal to new entries “partly because of the provision for relocation if the initial homestead proved disappointing” (which could be a haphazard and slow-moving process at times) and partly because established farming operations were scant.<sup>29</sup> There were some eastern Europeans, like Ukrainians, but not many other groups. These were real concerns for Sifton, a Manitoban with some experience in the legal profession. When he became the Minister of the Interior in Laurier’s new government in 1896, he ensured remedial action would be taken to mend the fences of the prairie region’s ethnic make-up and land-attaining powers for newcomers. The Dominion’s Lands Act, however, was an important, fundamental contributor as it defined exactly how and in what sort of pattern the rich land in the Canadian plains would be filled with homesteaders.

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<sup>26</sup> John C. Lehr, John Everitt and Simon Evans, “The Making of the Prairie Landscape” in Marchildon, *Immigration & Settlement 1870-1939*, 30: “The completion of the transcontinental railway in 1885 opened an all-Canadian route to the west but the expected rush of settlers did not materialize, and those who did arrive clung to the base of the parkland crescent – areas where wood, water and hay were readily available – to those districts which were easily accessible by rail or which had good prospects for the imminent development of rail communications.”

<sup>27</sup> Lehr, Everitt and Evans, “The Making of the Prairie Landscape,” 30.

<sup>28</sup> Lehr, Everitt and Evans, “The Making of the Prairie Landscape,” 30.

<sup>29</sup> Lehr, Everitt and Evans, “The Making of the Prairie Landscape,” 30.

The Act, ratified in 1872, provided for the subdivision of the territory into townships six miles square, and further subdivided lands into mile-square sections which were, finally, quartered into one-hundred and sixty acre homesteads.<sup>30</sup> The Act underwent few changes after 1872. Originally the Act only accommodated private investors and corporations, like the Canadian Pacific railway, in bargaining for land plotting and performing surveys. With the election of Wilfrid Laurier as Prime Minister, this changed. Under Sifton these monopolies had less jurisdiction regarding what sections of land they could have, and the Federal Government came to define what sections were to be set aside for the bona fide homesteaders -- ensuring that the process of allocating land to these newcomers was executed in a straightforward fashion.<sup>31</sup> The Dominion's Lands Act, then, facilitated an immigrant-centric approach to economic development and settlement growth in the western prairies by the late 1890s. Thus, it was new policies like these which contributed to the rise in grain prices, newly emerging techniques of dryland farming and the benefits of having more grain varieties and experimental farms insofar that encouraging people to settle in the prairie west became possible.

### **Populating Canada's Prairie West: Push and Pull Factors for Newcomers**

J.S. Woodsworth once called human migration a "complex social process."<sup>32</sup> It is not merely a "little decision of character to change the whole course of [an immigrant's] life" because great "powers of adaptation are

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<sup>30</sup> John Lehr and Yossi Katz, "Ethnicity, Institutions, and the Cultural Landscapes of the Canadian Prairie West." *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 26 (2) (1994): 72.

<sup>31</sup> John Lehr and Katz Yossi, "Ethnicity, Institutions, and the Cultural Landscapes of the Canadian Prairie West," 72.

<sup>32</sup> Vivienne Hall, "Coming to Canada: Land of Promise and Cold Reality." *Queen's Quarterly* 105 (3) (Fall 1997): 416.

necessary.”<sup>33</sup> Those concerns did not matter much to Sifton and Laurier as they sought to populate the west. Sifton’s propaganda campaign painted an “idealized version of life in Canada”<sup>34</sup> and covered up the notion that one’s transition to a new country was unavoidably difficult. During the Laurier era, the vast and menacing prairie landscape was seen by Canadian politicians as too empty and a population increase was the answer.

The prairies were advertised as consumerist fodder for the rural-goer. Its resources, economic and market growth, the government said, were commensurate with the main goals of its policy to accommodate a great many social classes and ethnicities<sup>35</sup> quickly filling in the west. The construction of farm buildings, purchase of farm machinery and livestock, enlargement of industrial plants and equipment, provisions for urban facilities (streetcars and rails, roads, water works, sewage and electrical lighting systems), and, most importantly, the expansion of railways, kick-started the “resumption of immigration” on a bigger scale than Canada had ever seen.<sup>36</sup>

The ‘investment boom’ of the late 1890s – readily available capital at a low cost<sup>37</sup> – contributed to Canada’s growth in both the east and in the west. The decline in federal interest rates and investments pouring in from Great Britain both aided in the various undertakings of a rapidly expanding nation.<sup>38</sup> What resulted for the Government of Canada was that federal revenue rose sharply. Almost five million dollars were invested in capital goods, and rapid construction

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<sup>33</sup> Hall, “Coming to Canada: Land of Promise and Cold Reality,” 416.

<sup>34</sup> Hall, “Coming to Canada: Land of Promise and Cold Reality,” 417

<sup>35</sup> African, Jewish, Italian, and Asian born ethnic groups were not included in this list, among a few other groups; as times changed, Frank Oliver, who proceeded Sifton, did not want lazy urban Englishmen, for example, because of their supposed lousy work ethics and perceived tendency to flock to the cities upon arriving to Canada.

<sup>36</sup> Donald Creighton, *Canada’s First Century: 1867-1967*. Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1970. 103-04.

<sup>37</sup> Creighton, *Canada’s First Century*, 103.

<sup>38</sup> Creighton, *Canada’s First Century*, 103.

and extraction of resources all augmented the economy to stimulate more jobs.<sup>39</sup> Increasing capital and market growth for the Laurier liberal government fulfilled a vision which “vindicated the hopes and plans of Confederation.”<sup>40</sup>

Sir Wilfrid Laurier (1841-1919), a French-Canadian Liberal statesman and Prime Minister of Canada from 1896-1911, heartily promoted a sense of Canadian unity and strengthened imperial relations. He was an impressive and dignified politician who was courageous and deft, daring to zealously claim that Canada welcomed both those who it had previously shunned (in terms of ethnicity) and disallowed any one religion to dominate the country. Of French Canadian descent, he was not wont or predisposed to favour French Canadians, English Canadians, Roman Catholics or Protestants -- although he sometimes got into trouble with his fellow members in Parliament over these matters<sup>41</sup> -- and would indeed remain steadfast with his view on inclusivity and national unity. His intention was no more evident than in one of his many statements to the House, seeing it as his right to “occupy the position [of] duty to take a stand upon any question whatever...from a point of view which can appeal to the conscience of all men.”<sup>42</sup>

Before 1896, there was a scarcity of public information about the west.<sup>43</sup> By 1897, encouraging immigration to Canada was a component of the strategy for theorizing economic development. What resulted was that a politically strong-bonded ideology propelled the shared public image of acceptance towards Canada’s immigration policy. An all-welcoming Canadian mosaic of culture was

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<sup>39</sup> Creighton, *Canada’s First Century*, 103-04.

<sup>40</sup> Creighton, *Canada’s First Century*, 105.

<sup>41</sup> George Tait, *One Dominion: The Story of Canada from 1800 to 1900*. Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1962. 394.

<sup>42</sup> Tait, *One Dominion*, 395.

<sup>43</sup> Klaus Peter Stich, “Canada’s Century: The Rhetoric of Propaganda.” *Prairie Forum*, 1 (1) (1976): 19.

conducive to the growth of the prairie west. While the French Canadian Prime Minister may have been a pragmatic political practitioner, he felt generally uneasy about Clifford Sifton stretching legal parameters to bring over immigrants.<sup>44</sup> Nonetheless, the growing gossip about Canada in the 1890s gave rise to the idea of 'sunny days ahead' for all who came.

Favourable circumstances for success in Canada echoed tones of home for many countries. In Britain, newspapers enthused and seized the attention of many people. Extravagantly decorated super-structures demonstrating the "wonder" of the west,<sup>45</sup> and exhibits made stately first impressions of shared values and nationhood. In the United States, during the Chicago World's Fair in 1893 (plenty of notice was given to Canada and its dairy-business opportunities, with a huge display of cheese called Canadian Mite made in Perth Ontario on display),<sup>46</sup> F. J. Turner's Frontier Thesis greatly (even unintentionally) helped to direct steady flows of prospective agriculturalists and ranchers towards Canada. Turner's declaration made it seem that the American frontier was closed for settlement because all the good quality areas of settlement were already taken. The prairie west, therefore, seemed to be all that was left in the ways of land availability. Between 1896 and 1905, the prairie regions of Canada's west were ripe with hopes and prayers for success.

Settlers and immigrants, urban and rural, upon deciding to come to Canada, whether from Europe or America, left their homelands behind for many

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<sup>44</sup>Mabel Timlin, "Canada's Immigration Policy, 1896–1910." *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, 26 (4), (1960) 517-518: "Laurier seems to have been the man with an ideology and Sifton a man who thought of theory only as an interference with effective practice. Though in general he supported Sifton's position respectively, the types of immigrants whom Canada allowed made Sir Wilfred Laurier always appear uncomfortable at any proposal that the Dominion Government should use legal [but seedy] means to override the theoretical right of free entry."

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.historymuseum.ca/cmhc/exhibitions/hist/advertis/ads3-02e.html>

<sup>46</sup>The town of Perth, Ontario pays historical homage to the exhibit on their website <http://www.urbanmarket.com/all-about-perth/mammoth.html>

reasons. These included the British and Americans and the “polyglot” throngs of immigrants from the Ukraine, Poland, Iceland, Germany, Belgium and France.<sup>47</sup> The pull factors are a strong reminder of how powerful the propaganda was in creating, in the minds of prospective migrants, a well-rounded notion of the Canadian west. Businessmen, artisans, the poverty-stricken, agriculturalist-driven, or even the rambunctious individual seeking a better life for themselves or their families came from many places both near and afar. Canada’s west heralded vast tracts of space for Europeans and Americans alike. Some of whom were discouraged from their homelands because of population increases, persecution, and ever increasing rents for small plots of land. These factors encouraged some prospective newcomers to be vectored towards Canada for bettering their living situations, which lay in a free country with freedom of mobility and religion, and new and exciting opportunities awaiting. For others, escaping from rural poverty, urban unemployment, land hunger and religious oppression were also reasons to move and enjoy Canada’s freedoms.<sup>48</sup>

The Imperial Preference, which targeted Great Britain, finely tuned trade and commerce for Canada to forge a symbiotically “strong bond among the nations and colonies of the empire.”<sup>49</sup> In London, the largest hub of Canadian propaganda visuals and immigration information, there was a pervasive acknowledgement of the idealism of Canada’s west. Posters and pamphlets became ubiquitous in urban and rural England, as were live lectures which orated pompously about the benefits one could reap in the west. A standard was

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<sup>47</sup> Lehr, Everitt and Evans, “The Making of the Prairie Landscape” in Marchildon, *Immigration & Settlement 1870-1939*, 33.

<sup>48</sup> Daniel Francis, *Selling Canada: Three Propaganda Campaigns that Shaped the Nation*. Vancouver: Stanton Atkins & Dosis Publishers, 2011. 24.

<sup>49</sup> Tait, *One Dominion*, 397.

set by the Liberal government that would focus on giving due attention to educating the young in Britain about Canada. The distribution of Canadian atlases and essay contests focused on Canada were also effective methods for attracting the young to at least spread the word about certain parts of Canada that appealed to them - like the much discussed prairie landscape.<sup>50</sup> James Smart, a former mayor of Brandon, Manitoba and, later, deputy Minister of the Interior under Sifton, improved on this educational approach -- donating maps and atlases of Canada to British schools.<sup>51</sup> To Sifton, Canada, in an ideologically and politically similar way, was not just an extension of Britain. He went one step further: to see Canada as connected to England through not only shared heritage, but national sentimentality and superiority:

We have a Canadian sentiment, but...it is also a British sentiment. It is the sentiment that we are engaged in overcoming a great many national difficulties for the purpose of building in what we believe will be outside of England, perhaps, the greatest British community in the world...that as [Canada] grows...becomes stronger, and develops in wealth and strength and population, so [Canada] will become a stronger bulwark of British ideas and supremacy.<sup>52</sup>

The grain and stock agriculturalists of the United States, on the other hand, perceived the Canadian west as a fairer image of their own homelands. People in the ag-business in the 1890s in the United States saw that the “glowing myth of the American west was beginning to fade.”<sup>53</sup> To American farmers or ranchers, the supposed closure of the frontier and Manifest Destiny (a renewed force in U.S. foreign policy in the 1890s that was a type of expansionism) meant they had to expand their operations. This depended on first scouting out and, then, buying up quality land at a reasonable price, or finding steady work on the railroad or in

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<sup>50</sup> Francis, *Selling Canada*, 31.

<sup>51</sup> Francis, *Selling Canada*, 31.

<sup>52</sup> D.J. Hall, *Clifford Sifton: A Lonely Emergence 1901-1929*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1985. 83.

<sup>53</sup> Creighton, *Canada's First Century*, 104.

the forests and mines of Canada. With this kind of push factor in mind, Canadian and American plains historian John Herd Thompson reflected that both countries definitively “proclaimed its own self-image”, but the perpetual “myths [of them] were poles apart.”<sup>54</sup> The unfolding parallel narratives of settlement patterns in the American northern plains and the Canadian prairie west before the 1890s were “remarkably similar...[almost] depressingly similar.”<sup>55</sup> Growing interest in a rural region that actually had space for American newcomers would give rise to Canada’s west coming out on top from the predominant favouritism that the American plains once held in the settlement race.

F. J. Turner’s predilection of rural society helps to further clarify why rural Americans came to Canada’s west in the first place. In 1893, Turner’s Frontier Thesis alleged that rural American societies were, like Canada, spread out and “sparse...customarily many miles west of settled civilized communities.”<sup>56</sup> Americans would have, in all probability, imagined, upon reading or hearing about Canada’s western prairie, that it would be similar in rural character but with more options and space (not to mention the allure of close proximity of Canada to the U.S.A.) It reflected the notion that a rural American acknowledges that there is a valued, underlying verisimilitude of the rural “moral fabric”<sup>57</sup> to be able to live out in the country. One would learn, from the promotional literature provided by the Federal Government, about the growing Canadian economy and would relate to the similarities of a Canadian agriculturalist’s lifestyle, work ethic, values and beliefs.

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<sup>54</sup> John Herd Thompson, “Canadianizing the Myth of the West.” *Canadian Issues*, (December 2005): 40.

<sup>55</sup> Thompson, “Canadianizing the Myth of the West,” 38.

<sup>56</sup> Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, 308-309.

<sup>57</sup> Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 130.

For most Americans, Canada allowed the same freedoms for the ambitious, innovation for the self-sufficient and the total continuance of unrestricted mobility and love of the land.<sup>58</sup> These were special qualities of the rural ideal because country folk become acquainted and appreciative of the landscape which is thereby tamed. They, as technocrats, envisioned their place in the world where they could take charge and order the “fate of what surrounds [them].”<sup>59</sup> However, country people did respect the landscape that surrounded them, says Ernst Dimnet: “Anybody familiar with country people...realizes that they appreciate natural beauty, a landscape, the last smile of autumn on a wood, a sunset...quite as much as a professional artist or versifier.”<sup>60</sup> Once in Canada, an American agriculturalist’s conceptions and personal values on maintaining an appreciation for the land was met with the same stoic work ethic they had had out in the pastures or grain fields back home south of the forty-ninth parallel. It was traits like these which proved to be useful in Canada, especially on an isolated homestead. Thus, the ‘rural relativity’ of the au fait American agriculturalist recognized a shared, transnational notion of rural principles to live by in a rural setting on Canada’s prairies.

For central, eastern and northern Europeans, commoner families and individuals hoped for a better life in Canada. They were the less wealthy, escaping not only poverty but the “vulgar sarcasms too often hurled at [them] by

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<sup>58</sup> Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, 309.

<sup>59</sup> D.J. Hall, “Man and Nature in the Modern West: A Revolution of Images” in *Canadian Plains Studies 6: Man and Nature on the Prairies*, edited by Richard Allen. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1976. 81-82. A person could label a technocrat as an outsider in an environment not familiar to them, but keep in mind that technocrats create keen understandings of themselves in forging relationships and familiarizing themselves with their new environments. Once a technocrat has ensconced themselves and adapted to their new surroundings (in the context of familiarizing themselves with the prairie west) they become a “master of nature...[a] way of [concretely] understanding... [a] vision of [oneself] as master of their environment.”

<sup>60</sup> Ernest Dimnet, *The Art of Thinking*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1928. 31.

the purse-proud, commonplace people of the world.”<sup>61</sup> In some of these parts, there was an abundance of underdeveloped regions where no chance for monetary gains existed. Communal religious groups were treated poorly and marginalized from public life. Economic prospects were limited where they lived; poverty was the norm for many of these people who came to Canada. In some countries, peasants worked for low wages, paid high rents and were subjected to high interest rates - all of which spelled these peoples’ doom.<sup>62</sup>

In Canada’s west, though, not all who arrived were escaping from persecution, or slum-dwelling, poverty-stricken situations. Some were agriculturalists seeking a new form of agronomy while others were opportunity-seeking families, individuals, and adventurers. By the late 1890s, the Galatians -- those who were from the province of Galatia and Bukovyna in the Austro-Hungarian Empire<sup>63</sup> (from the modern day countries Ukraine and Poland) -- Icelanders, Romanians and Dutch were considered desirable immigrants just as much as the British and Americans.

The religiously persecuted, particularly the Mormons, Hutterites, Mennonites and Doukhobors, came to Canada from the United States, Europe and Russia. When they heard that the Canadian west was open for settlement, these groups deemed the vast prairie landscape untamed and theirs for the taking. This desire for mastery, in differing from the technocrat, is religiously-based; the story of creation in Genesis I, being the most concrete example of how God instructed his followers to believe that any lands would be given over to

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<sup>61</sup>Susanna Moodie, “The Fever of Immigration.” In *The Immigration Experience*, edited by Leuba Bailey. Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1975. 16.

<sup>62</sup> Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 128.

<sup>63</sup> Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 130-1. A huge number of Galatians came to Canada between 1896 and 1905. Thirty percent of the total number of immigrants who came into Canada during this time period were Galatians, most of them situating themselves in either Alberta, Saskatchewan or Manitoba.

them, gave these people hope that they would “fill the earth and subdue it” and “have dominion over” all other creatures.<sup>64</sup> When the religious-folk arrived to Canada’s west, they saw it as a gift from God -- given over to them as a kind of sent Providence to “reclaim the waste places of the earth.”<sup>65</sup> This made them want to undertake the journey and encouraged others to do the same. Susanna Moodie (1803-1885),<sup>66</sup> a British settler who lived in one of the first “migrant colonies” in Upper Canada, said that when the religiously persecuted came to Canada “the infection became general” back home.<sup>67</sup> For these types of newcomers, the opening of the west created what Moodie calls ‘Canada mania’ in the prairies: “[They had] nerves [of] iron by patient endurance, by exposure to weather, coarse fare and rude shelter...their labour is wealth not exhaustion [because] He chooses such [people] to send forth...to hew out the rough paths for the advancement of civilization.”<sup>68</sup>

### **Clifford Sifton: Appraising the Prairie West**

Clifford Sifton, the epitome of a politician with “tireless energy,”<sup>69</sup> walked a risky plank off the Laurier ship of grounded Liberal ideas about immigration policy. He ushered in a new approach to policy-making. Beginning in 1897, Canada’s immigration policy under Sifton showed off his own “sober calculations

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<sup>64</sup> Hall, “Man and Nature in the Modern West: A Revolution of Images” in *Canadian Plains Studies 6: Man and Nature on the Prairies*, 83.

<sup>65</sup> Moodie, “The Fever of Immigration.” In *The Immigration Experience*, 19

<sup>66</sup> More on Moodie’s experiences as a pre-Confederation, pioneer-day settler woman can be found in her own book called *Roughing it in the Bush, A New and Revised Edition*. London: 1852. (Date of first publication unknown, originally published in London in 1852), found within Alison Norman’s chapter called “‘Fit for the Table of the Most Fastidious Epicure’: Culinary Colonialism in the Upper Canadian Contact Zone” in the book *Edible Histories, Cultural Politics: Towards a Canadian Food History*, edited by Franca Iacovetta, Marlene Epp and Valerie Korinek. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012.

<sup>67</sup> Moodie, “The Fever of Immigration.” *The Immigration Experience*, 19.

<sup>68</sup> Moodie, “The Fever of Immigration.” *The Immigration Experience*, 19-20.

<sup>69</sup> Francis, *Selling Canada*, 25.

of realities... [a man who] understood that public opinion must be carefully cultivated if it was to identify liberalism with the good times."<sup>70</sup> Gauging the good times meant strengthened western representation which depended heavily on aggressively promoting immediate interest in the seemingly, infinitely promising and conquerable prairie west with the help of the promotional literature.<sup>71</sup>

Sifton was originally from Ontario, but it was in Brandon, Manitoba when he first became recognized as a political figure with bold opinions, "strict self-discipline [and] dynamic intelligence."<sup>72</sup> After having experienced law school and the newspaper business in the mid-1890s, he rebranded himself for being a genius of organization, and was considered for political office. However, historian Daniel Francis says in his book *Selling Canada* that Sifton, upon entering politics, operated in an "aloof manner:" He had a tendency to flaunt his substantial wealth, towering ambitions, an odour of corruption that trailed behind him for most of his career, an antipathy towards French Canadians, and an arrogance that won him few friends, but many enemies.<sup>73</sup>

D.J. Hall, on the other hand, who wrote about Sifton extensively, portrayed him differently. Hall saw Sifton as a man with "hard-nosed optimism" as well -- but more often than not, Hall said Sifton acted as an astute businessman with high standards; envisioning the progress of a nation to Sifton meant it could not be governed "by precedents or by past theories in regard to policy."<sup>74</sup> Even

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<sup>70</sup> Hall, *Sifton*, 78.

<sup>71</sup> Hall, *Sifton*, 78. Sifton saw that "Western representation in the government was inadequate [sic] given the expanding strength of the region." Only direct government intervention was to handle the process, procedure and promotion of settlement, according to Sifton -- especially the west's 'portrayal as promotion'. Sifton differed from Laurier (and this being an extension of footnote 44) because Laurier was a pragmatic, laissez-faire Liberalist of 19th century ideals whereas Sifton was a new kind of Liberal who "saw no contradiction in defending the authority of the state [for] the collective interest" of settling the West for the greater good of Canada.

<sup>72</sup> Francis, *Selling Canada*, 25.

<sup>73</sup> Francis, *Selling Canada*, 25.

<sup>74</sup> Hall, *Sifton*, 78.

though Sifton was opposed to including foreign labour in Canadian industry and simultaneously favouring immigration control values like the Chinese Head Tax or the Alien Labour Act of 1897 -- both of which, it was maintained by the state, were enacted in part to protect certain job contracts and filter out certain types of immigrants -- his external regulation of immigration policy was minimal.<sup>75</sup>

One of the most contentious but biggest promotional forces was Sifton's N.A.T.C (the North Atlantic Trading Company). Created in 1899, one of its primary goals was to be more selective and encouraging (i.e. ethnicity, age, gender, families versus individuals) of Canada's immigrants. The N.A.T.C. had complete reign over choosing those who should be deemed appropriate for Canada, and especially "to bring Canada to the attention of people residing in continental European countries...to furnish reliable information regarding Canada and...to point to Canada as a desirable field for settlement."<sup>76</sup> Conniving W.R.T. Preston and James Smart ensured the company would be Canada's dominant overseas agency that would lure possible newcomers.<sup>77</sup> Delivering tens of thousands of newcomers to Canada's west, says Daniel Francis, supposedly helped the N.A.T.C. gain recognition across the Atlantic. However, there are no full or conclusive historical accounts of its successes - only speculations.<sup>78</sup>

The company was financially sound and had many hired men who worked towards persuading possible immigrants. Even less than impressive immigrants (i.e. poor or peasant-like) were chosen because it was not a priority (for Sifton) to heavily regulate quality over quantity. The N.A.T.C. gave Canada

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<sup>75</sup> Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 120.

<sup>76</sup> N.A.T.C. to W.R.T. Preston. Cited in Canada, House of Commons, Debates 20 April 1906, col. 1796., in Jaroslav Petryshyn's "Canadian Immigration and the North Atlantic Trading Company 1899-1906: A Controversy Revisited." *Journal of Canadian Studies* 32, (3) (Fall 1997): 60.

<sup>77</sup> Francis, *Selling Canada*, 39-40.

<sup>78</sup> Francis, *Selling Canada*, 39.

the best advantage for persuading persons who were of “full value for the cost that continued to be translated into immigrants.”<sup>79</sup>

Though unfortunately for Sifton, the Company folded in 1906 because it came to be seen as something of a pernicious business venture which was bypassing legal boundaries. As a meretricious political entity of the Federal Government, the N.A.T.C. came into a most unfortunate limelight of corruption. The company always ran apropos alongside the Minister of the Interior’s commitments. Sifton’s lecturers, North Atlantic Trading Company travelling agents and spokesmen, exalted Liberal national and international policy while exercising considerable confidence in their capabilities to sell the west. Once the company terminated though, Sifton immediately became labelled as a man with a depreciative reputation, which left a bad taste in the mouths of his fellow Liberals. The company operated, from day one, “by and large to take advantage of this massive commerce in human flesh to monopolize the governmental bonus system”, syphoning money into company coffers for its “propaganda work” for the Liberal Government.<sup>80</sup>

Federal spending on the overseas and intercontinental promotional campaign grew in the late 1890s. By 1905, increasing federal capital came partially from Sifton’s enlarged promotional campaign which, for example, raked in sixteen thousand dollars (a purchasing power differential of roughly five hundred thousand CDN dollars today).<sup>81</sup> Sifton improved advertising through the introduction of stylized marketing surveys, brochures, promotional booklets and

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<sup>79</sup> Petryshyn, “Canadian Immigration and the North Atlantic Trading Company 1899-1906: A Controversy Revisited,” 60.

<sup>80</sup> Petryshyn, “Canadian Immigration and the North Atlantic Trading Company 1899-1906: A Controversy Revisited,” 70-71.

<sup>81</sup> Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 118.

pamphlets.<sup>82</sup> London's plethora of immigration offices and Canadian parades fiercely spread the word about the prairie west's world class agriculture which was sold as uniquely Canadian. In the United States, immigration offices first opened in the Midwest and spread from there as agents provided rail tours of Canada and disseminated "information on Canada through mailings, lectures, personal interviews, ads in newspapers and farm journals, and at state/country fairs."<sup>83</sup> In Europe and the United States, booklets especially were plentiful in immigration offices, making them available in prime, high traffic locations.

### **Propaganda-mania: An Analysis of the Selected Literature**

The government's booklets began with general introductory remarks, then moved on to sections describing the regions of the west, providing specifics on the types of agriculture, climate, soil, crop types, the means for locating a homestead, a how-to-get-started guide, transportation facilities and social and cultural traditions.<sup>84</sup> Sifton's penchant for the attraction of immigration policy, at the booklets' core, was evident: "Our desire is to promote the immigration of farmers and farm labourers."<sup>85</sup> Ultimately, though, the propaganda campaign's literature attracted all "persons able, fit and willing to endure the rigours of frontier life on the prairies."<sup>86</sup> It had to be rhetorical -- exemplary in fact-telling and persuasive with its 'expert advice' -- enough in ways that would give prospective immigrants notions of self-advancement and gratification. The concept of the west as a wide open, saleable area of Canada, impelled the promotional

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<sup>82</sup>Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 119.

<sup>83</sup>Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 119.

<sup>84</sup>R. Douglas Francis, *Images of the West: Responses to the Canadian Prairies*. Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1989. 109.

<sup>85</sup>Timlin, "Canada's Immigration Policy, 1896-1910," 518.

<sup>86</sup>Timlin, "Canada's Immigration Policy, 1896-1910," 518.

literature campaign's authors to pair a persuasive linguistic strategy with a desirable mental image of the west.

Persuasion snubs out any hint or smidgeon of doubt so rhetoric can emulate fancy prose or the formal tones of a legal expert giving sound advice. Persuasive rhetoric can, in some cases, exaggerate the truth of a statement or refigure an objective under observation. On a more positive note re rhetoric, though, and with the selling of the west (in the booklets) in mind, one should note that rhetoric -- as a just or ethical concept -- embodies the very essence of a sort of 'trust me' relationship one has with a close and trustworthy friend.<sup>87</sup> The "selling" aspects appeal to the reader because of the "intellectual acuity and technical competence" of the rhetor and, more importantly, because of the rhetor's "basic decency and fairness and sensitivity to the audience's own hopes and fears" in attempting to validate a claim.<sup>88</sup>

The personalized format of both booklets were indicative of mirroring a reader's conceptions of and receptivity to the descriptions and depictions of an auspicious life in the Canadian prairie west -- in a *verstehen* type way<sup>89</sup> -- which roused public opinion by mimicking a kind of hypnotist who dominates and

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<sup>87</sup> David Foster Wallace, "Tense Present: Democracy, English, and the Wars over Usage." *Harper's Magazine*, (April 2001): 44.

<sup>88</sup> Wallace, "Tense Present: Democracy, English, and the Wars over Usage," 44

<sup>89</sup> Jones, *Analysis and the Fullness of Reality*, 133-134. Propaganda language often presents itself as being apt to mirror a reader's wants and needs -- especially when it attaches importance of the "subjectivity" of people eager to seek new lands to live in with an intent to persuade and objectify the perceptions of the masses. Jones states that we must "enter into and 'relive' the subjectivity of the people under study by reflecting on those experiences of our own that we think are analogous to the experiences of the people being observed." In the case of this German word meaning "to understand", and in the context of the promotional literature, both of the booklet's language fashioned a *verstehen* concept, from a psychological standpoint, for a reader to understand from an experienced settler's P.O.V. (point-of-view). A reader's "intuitive understanding" -- and one that they can justify from a third-person (narrator/author) and a first-person (settler/homesteader) perspective -- thereby allows them to freely choose from the options available in Sifton's promotional literature and to be able to enter into the perceptions, interpretations and situations of someone who knows first-hand about the prairies. It is like the saying goes: put yourself in another person's shoes, walk a hundred miles in them, then tell your story to that person. In this sense, then, the promotional literature reflected back out reassurances of Self and Sameness

conditions his/her subjects.<sup>90</sup> Political propaganda's persuasive language only sounds lucid when it simultaneously authenticates a cause with an effect. Metaphorically, propaganda transmits a particular political agenda by generating conceivable causes and conceptions of ideas that sound "good, just and true" – which arguably becomes the outcome or effect.<sup>91</sup>

A core tenant of the government's underlying motive was, after all, to see the west's "development of natural resources and the increase of production of wealth from these resources"<sup>92</sup> which went hand-in-hand with the global campaign to sell the natural resources and material gains of the west. Canada would accept both eager individuals and entire families who were born on the soil. Once their eligibility was confirmed, they could obtain a 160 acre homestead for an administration fee (of ten dollars) and be approved upon arrival, but not before realizing that the free home declaration of Sifton's propaganda was not all that it said to include upon coming to Canada.<sup>93</sup> Officials and booklets may have instructed prospective immigrants what to bring, but food, supplies, raw materials and household items were never easily attainable, nor readily available. For example, in a land where the nearest country store, let alone neighbour, could be ten kilometers away, the scattershot nature of farm locations was less a gift -- to newcomers -- than expected. However, there were even certain rules, regulations and policies to follow upon arrival.

Each settler had to reside on the homestead for at least six months a year for three years while overseeing cultivation and other duties all while a certain

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<sup>90</sup> Martin Randal, *Propaganda and the Ethics of Persuasion (second ed.)*. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2013. 29.

<sup>91</sup> Martin, *Propaganda and the Ethics of Persuasion*, 25.

<sup>92</sup> Timlin, "Canada's Immigration Policy, 1896–1910," 518.

<sup>93</sup> John Lehr and Yossi Katz, "Crown, Corporation and Church: Role of the Institutions in the Stability of Pioneer Settlements in the Canadian West 1870-1914." *Journal of Historical Geography*, 21 (4) (October 1, 1995): 416.

portion of their land also be under cultivation, and not lying fallow.<sup>94</sup> For well-established American farmers, for example, who may have been wanting more money, one common line of thinking proved to be beneficial for them: they could simply head south after the Canadian harvesting season came to a close and could take turns staying on their Canadian farms – rotating the duties from year to year until the three years was up. Many middle, low and peasant ranked families and individuals from Europe, however, felt bereft when they realized they could not see their homelands again.<sup>95</sup> Only a few options sufficed: staying in Canada and toughing it out on their farmsteads, working for other established agriculturalists, or heading south themselves in search of different work in America. They quite simply could not sail home again because a good deal of their money was invested in, or had been spent on, the initial trip to Canada.

The Federal Government conducted a highly dispersed low density settlement pattern across the west, sending its surveyors to survey the land with “blind disregard.”<sup>96</sup> The vicissitudes of prairie life were not usually forgiving. Of all the four seasons, winter lasted the longest. Homesteads were far away and isolated from one another. Survey lines disregarded harsh, un-idyllic terrain and geographic pleasantries. A great deal of the newcomers coming from across the Atlantic Ocean did not know they would be geographically “separated from the social benefits of congregation” on the prairies.<sup>97</sup> However, these traits of the prairie west were not sellable, and thus they did not materialize within

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<sup>94</sup> Lehr and Katz, “Crown, Corporation and Church,” 416.

<sup>95</sup> Hall, “Coming to Canada: Land of Promise and Cold Reality,” 420. Vivienne Hall comments on Ronald Rees’ *New and Naked Land*, a secondary source referred to in this essay: “Shattered by the unexpected harshness of their new environment, they soon found that they had lost more than their European homeland; they had also left behind their feeling of belonging. Rees notes that many immigrants suffered what psychoanalysts now recognize as deep traumatic depression – a condition actually recognized over 2,000 years ago by Hippocrates, who noted that migration to a distant place caused ‘terrible perturbations’ – nostos and algos which we call ‘nostalgia.’”

<sup>96</sup> Lehr and Katz, “Ethnicity, Institutions and the Cultural Landscapes of the Canadian Prairie West,” 4.

<sup>97</sup> Lehr and Katz, “Ethnicity, Institutions and the Cultural Landscapes of the Canadian Prairie West,” 4.

government literature; winning over potential newcomers and creating a pedestal of attraction for the west lay in the methodical way the propaganda was written -- in a considerate, reassuring and genial manner. A showcasing of the west's myriad of opportunity was supposed to read like one would a fascinating but familiar novel. This also complimented Sifton's literature, for its appealing imagery and language of the most "realistic-cum-romantic interpretations" of prairie life in Canada's west were of utmost importance.<sup>98</sup>

To Jacques Ellul, a twentieth century French philosopher, theologian and sociologist, propaganda's primary and most effective technique is its principles of persuasion.<sup>99</sup> Persuasion filters in pertinent interests for certain target groups. It does not merely put something fancy or mildly attention-grabbing in front of a reader for them to partially acknowledge, glance at, and toss aside. Randal Martin said that propaganda "in the form or guise that appears to satisfy" can do away with "simply appealing" and showing-off so that the "art of persuasion [can] show [audiences], sometimes only implicitly, that a proposed program, ideology, way of life, commercial object, or whatever will contribute to their happiness"<sup>100</sup> gratifies and resonates with each person deeply and profoundly. The pleasant-sounding descriptions of the prairie west were 'primed' for prospective settlers -- as in, the authors bruted about the idea of the west's "easy prosperity... [which] usually appears in typical...government prose."<sup>101</sup>

Pre-propaganda comprises these sections of the booklets wherein prairie familiarization is discussed in terms of the time, effort required and preparation a certain course of action could take or has been taken already by other settlers.

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<sup>98</sup> Stich, "Canada's Century: The Rhetoric of Propaganda," 19.

<sup>99</sup> Martin, *Propaganda and the Ethics of Persuasion*, 25.

<sup>100</sup> Martin, *Propaganda and the Ethics of Persuasion*, 92.

<sup>101</sup> Stich, "Canada's Century: The Rhetoric of Propaganda," 23.

As a metaphor, pre-propaganda is the premix to the cake in which a cake, being propaganda, results if directions are followed and carried out properly. Pre-propaganda's instructive language prepares persons for particular courses of action to take - as a step-by-step guide does for a recipe towards creating a delicious and appetizing result.<sup>102</sup> On the very first page of *Timely Remarks*, the language induces readers to believe that an auspiciously opportunistic way of life is waiting for them in the west:

...the purpose [in this resourceful booklet] of giving reliable information to those who may have a desire to seek 'fresh fields and pastures new' [is for those] who have neither the means nor the time to spare to see it for themselves and make a choice of locality, and this kind is now available that it might be supposed that there could be no more to write and little more to learn of the resources...<sup>103</sup>

In this booklet the narrator perpetuates the success-for-all-who-come rhetoric with reassurances. Individuals can become more confident and, thus, ebullient in knowing that there is indeed reliable information about the prairie west. The agriculturalist author Septimus Field exclaims he is writing from the point of view "being the result of three years' close personal observation...backed by a previous practical knowledge of agricultural pursuits."<sup>104</sup> For the newcomer, the decision to migrate to the west was principally a tradeoff between certain justifications for certain courses of action. What better way than to sit and read about a supposedly real settler stolidly explain his experiences of a new country he has acquainted himself with, and its opportunities that could be had. The author validates -- almost overemphasizing -- his experiential knowledge, which legitimizes (from the reader's standpoint) his capacity for making believable

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<sup>102</sup> Martin, *Propaganda and the Ethics of Persuasion*, 25.

<sup>103</sup> *Timely Remarks by Septimus Field and Letters from Western Canadian Settlers*. Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1898. 3.

<sup>104</sup> *Timely Remarks*, 3.

claims. Both of these factors help to solidify the “desirable objectives”<sup>105</sup> within the booklet, for the reader who is shown the steps towards an objective is given an explanation in an *a posteriori* way – experience-based knowledge which comes from direct observation.

The second booklet *Western Canada: Manitoba and the Northwest Territories, Assiniboia, Alberta and Saskatchewan* packs its pages with topical, statistical and geographic information. Crop prices, tax and bylaw information, types of game and other assorted facts about the prairies are alluded to. *Western Canada*’s rhetoric blends the assumed risk factor of moving to a new country with the meaning of migration in a different context than *Timely Remarks*: that all people who are coming to Canada are arriving from some kind of unproductive part of the world. Readers of *Western Canada*, in all probability, pondered the rationality of the authors’ and settlers’ desirous descriptions. Besides, who could tell if they, the authors and settlers, were distorting some of their descriptions with half-hearted truths and dubious claims? The booklet is, though, almost too virtuous in characterizing the west in the introductory pages:

...it will be interesting to refer to the extent of this vast territory, which still holds out inducements to the man who is dissatisfied with his present lot, who has but little prospects of relief from burdensome taxes, from unproductive farms and excessive rents, and with no hope of ever owning a home that he may call his own; or the man who lives in a congested district, whose family is growing up, his sons and daughters approaching manhood and womanhood, and he with but little in the way of temporal acquisitions.<sup>106</sup>

Soon thereafter, the literature contextualizes the fairness of the west in that it creates a more munificent mini-declaration welcoming those who have little

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<sup>105</sup> Martin, *Propaganda and the Ethics of Persuasion*, 25.

<sup>106</sup> *Western Canada: Manitoba and the Northwest Territories, Assiniboia, Alberta and Saskatchewan*. Ottawa: Department of the Interior, 1899. 3.

to no experience farming, and 'beckoning'<sup>107</sup> them to come to Canada's prairies: "Here are to be found millions of acres of rich, fertile lands, which require but little previous knowledge of farming on the part of the settler in order to obtain handsome returns for his efforts in tilling the soil."<sup>108</sup>

One way the Department of the Interior's authors can be labelled as propagandist authors was through their use of morally evaluative language. This "morally loaded language"<sup>109</sup> incorporated rhetoric that would call upon good impressions of an idea, relative to one's own "overall moral assessment [and] justification...of a given idea [or] activity."<sup>110</sup> This comparison juxtaposed the potential for a newcomer with how the land that lay waiting was to be expected (upon arriving) and how it is for established persons. In a "favourable overtone,"<sup>111</sup> evaluative language has the persuader convincing his or her audience insofar that the persuader's opinions, rather one-sided, should be judged as truthful observations and not as contestable statements. Sifton's authors had the ability to make a particular person or ethnic group see what was true and not true to the extent that they, hopefully, blocked out competing opinions about the prairie west. Therefore, the language in the booklets attempted to mold a reader's imagination with impressions of a region they had never seen firsthand.

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<sup>107</sup> Francis, *Images of the West*, 128. A parallel meaning of the word 'beckoning' in the context of the promotional literature can be derived from a picture of one G.L. Dodds -- a Saskatchewan pamphleteer, prairie poet, clay and coal-plant advocate, real estate dealer and appraiser for the North of Scotland Canadian Mortgage Company, Limited, happily extolling Canada's prairies -- standing with a tall sheaf of rye, holding a bold-lettered piece of paper in his left hand proclaiming WESTERN CANADA IS BECKONING TO YOU NOW! This was a man who bravely denounced Rudyard Kipling's claim in *The London Times* in 1897 (Rudyard criticized Canada's harsh climates), getting even with Kipling with artistic powers of his own by creating a poem entitled "Lady Bountiful not the Lady of Snows."

<sup>108</sup> *Western Canada*, 5.

<sup>109</sup> Martin, *Propaganda and the Ethics of Persuasion*, 97.

<sup>110</sup> Martin, *Propaganda and the Ethics of Persuasion*, 96.

<sup>111</sup> Martin, *Propaganda and the Ethics of Persuasion*, 101.

Suppose for a moment the entirety of the prairies provided shelter and shade, with no heat scorching down on its well-watered crops. This kind of reassuring rhetoric can be labelled “morally evaluative” in conjunction with its prose (use of language). It blended impressions and moral attitudes with the confidence of projecting a well-rounded appreciation and encouragement for an objective in pursuit.<sup>112</sup> Success here eschewed reasonably believable rewards as long as one grabbed onto the idea of the prairies as a paradise. Possibly, this type of rhetoric was used in Sifton’s literature because it attempted to inspire readers with the west’s “assured success [and] abundant assets at [ones] disposal.”<sup>113</sup> R. Douglas Francis says that nowhere in the literature did it note the failed attempts of settlers, or that “others regretted coming and wanted to return home...Europeans already struggling to eke out a living could not help but be attracted by an official government [booklet] that offered assurances of success in this promised land.”<sup>114</sup>

Guidance was also important because the immigrant experience of travelling was an exhausting one – it was definitely not always pleasant or stress-free. The Western Canada booklet’s opportunity-driven language, which decorated the virtues of the prairie lifestyle, sold the you’ll-never-want-to-leave-once-you-get-here idea as ‘moral insurance’ in a terrifically moving way:<sup>115</sup>

As a rule, people with means, and those satisfied with the existing conditions, do not move; and it will, therefore, not be surprising to learn that most of those who have [settled] were not accompanied by very large bank accounts. This is referred to so as to emphasize by contrast the condition in which most of them are found to-day. The farmer who has continued his farming operations for from six to ten years is in circumstances which many settlers in older countries were unable to reach after a life-time of toil.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Martin, *Propaganda and the Ethics of Persuasion*, 96.

<sup>113</sup> Francis, *Images of the West*, 109.

<sup>114</sup> Francis, *Images of the West*, 109.

<sup>115</sup> Francis, *Images of the West*, 109, 130.

<sup>116</sup> *Western Canada*, 38.

Contrasting a farmer's progress to the operations of a household's economic success was common in most pieces of promotional literature.<sup>117</sup> As leader of a household, one did not want to try their hand at something new if one was successful with their vocation. The booklets reassured men and women that a personal transformation on the prairies was possible from a vocational standpoint: from living their first years on a small, shoddy shack farm on unimproved land to a large established ag.-operation and sufficient farmhouse with many improvements such as a garden, a farmyard surrounded by trees, healthy and sheltered livestock and luscious cultivable fields.<sup>118</sup> Self-sufficiency, as a prairie virtue, in both the domestic and economic spheres of a family, implied that newcomers could (if they worked hard enough) reach proprietary responsibility over their day-to-day operations and shield one's family from hunger, destitution and monetary loss.

Clifford Sifton's literature's language pontificated about the material comforts of prairie living -- a necessary "prerequisite to spiritual well-being"<sup>119</sup> -- and pompously spoke about the west's character-building climate. These aspects channeled the growth of, simultaneously, the idea of the west as an "investment frontier"<sup>120</sup> and the cultural integration of the west -- meaning that one could retain their culture and familiar ways of life in new areas of the world, and would thrive doing so. Thus, the inevitable need for the Laurier Liberal Government was to safeguard its economic and propagandic promises while sounding as ethnically-

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<sup>117</sup> Francis, *Images of the West*, 111.

<sup>118</sup> Francis, *Images of the West*, 111.

<sup>119</sup> Francis, *Images of the West*, 110-111.

<sup>120</sup> Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, 303.

inclusive as possible. It was a governmental guarantee that any newcomers' "special interests would be looked after" in Canada.<sup>121</sup>

However, broaching the subject of Canadian culture-as-mosaic requires further inspection in the context of the literature's portrayal of settler-success in an "age of radical theories"<sup>122</sup> near the turn of the twentieth century. Both booklets emphasized a unique kind of prairie culture: self-sustainability, cultural suitability, improved vitality and work ethic all stressed the "positive effects on people's physical well-being."<sup>123</sup> Stretching and reinterpreting their meanings, though, was the strongest rhetorical undercurrent most effective for molding the imagination of the reader. Both booklets' descriptions on the possibilities and probabilities of success in the west could at times morph into overzealous-sounding claims which then 'metastasized' throughout the booklets as character-building and impressive prerogative-like language of the west. These were, more often than not, presented in the form of letters and personal descriptions, purportedly created by established farmers or ranchers.

Measured progress was not limited to the growth of the homestead; self-improvement rhetoric accentuated the myth of the "western superior" and, more oddly, the west's profound effects on molding character – physically, emotionally and cognitively.<sup>124</sup> Even the west's weather supposedly yielded invigorating effects, states Western Canada:

20 degrees to 30 degree below zero is preferable to the changeable weather which is almost always experienced in England at this season of the year. There is no comparison – the winters of Western Canada being infinitely preferable...with the steady winters here, modified by the small percentage of

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<sup>121</sup> Alan Smith, "The Immigrant Experience" in Leuba Bailey's *The Immigration Experience*. Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1975. 105.

<sup>122</sup> Francis, *Images of the West*, 110.

<sup>123</sup> Francis, *Images of the West*, 110.

<sup>124</sup> Francis, *Images of the West*, 110.

humidity, your blood has circulation; vim and energy are acquired, in contrast to which the winters of England are most enervating.<sup>125</sup>

Historian Gerald Friesen conscientiously notes that the pieces of promotional literature, at the very most “emphasized the optimism and confidence of the west.”<sup>126</sup> R. Douglas Francis contrasts Friesen with an alternative take on the literature’s depictions. He saw that the literature created a symbol of persistence for properly labelling the western person as the perfect proto-agriculturalist: superior in work ethic. A man could enhance his “fecundity and virility”<sup>127</sup> only when his life consisted of nothing but gritty hard-work on the farm. Strange, offhanded claims like these could indeed be found in the promotional literature. Since there was nothing else, in terms of competing opinions to compare these claims to, they were generally earmarked by readers.

Another noticeable trait of the booklets are their incorporative, multi-layered point-of-view writing styles comparable to that of a prairie novel. In the booklets, a typical evaluation of the Canadian prairies paired mental images of the prairie westerner’s superiority in work ethic with the hard-work-and-toil-all-day individual or family not worried about being completely isolated from civilization at times. In *Timely Remarks*, Septimus Field’s desire for his readers is for them to make the trip and find out for themselves:

I can truthfully say that this is the country to come to, where true freedom reigns and every help is given to those who will try to help themselves...I know that the country is all that one can desire, and that there is every prospect for any industrious man to maintain himself and provide a home for his sons and daughters.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> *Western Canada*, 12.

<sup>126</sup> Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, 303.

<sup>127</sup> Francis, *Images of the West*, 110.

<sup>128</sup> *Timely Remarks*, 18.

The vision or aim of the prairie novel -- at least, the one's which were published in the early twentieth century -- was to capture the inner workings of the prairie individual or family. Yet somehow informative as well, the prairie novelist's style of writing was expressed through a first person narrative -- which could be used by a propaganda author to doctor-up any given settler story -- that legitimized and gave official credence to a propagandist's authorship in the same way.<sup>129</sup> Klaus Peter Stich writes that the didactic nature of the novel and the redacted propagandic language share some qualities, and mesh together to create a kind of romantic pastoralism in the promotional literature:

...pastoralism requires little else than sustained descriptions of the lives of a few individuals to resemble some prairie novels about the poor and industrious immigrants who got rich...[because] the use of narrative voices in the form of letters add personal notes to the propagandist's official voice. Yet since the official emphasis on success precludes conflicts between settlers and the land, and between economic and moral values, the [propaganda] must be without the plots, however trivial, that we can find in comparable pastoral novels set before World War I.<sup>130</sup>

This is more noticeable in *Timely Remarks* than in *Western Canada*. Prairie novels colour-in the lives of the sun-up-to-sun-down, hard-working agriculturalist and their thoroughgoing experiments, trials and toils during the homesteading experience whereas propaganda stacked its facts in a narrated yet database style; it ultimately sold material advantages and temporal gains of moving over settler experiences. However, Sifton's propagandists attempted to infuse a novelist's style of writing in such a way that it transfigured into a "conscientious and engaging version of propaganda" which redolently "lack[ed] detachment from the single vision of a so-called tourist's view of the landscape."<sup>131</sup> A great many novels employ first-person narratives, but in propaganda literature a type of

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<sup>129</sup> Stich, "Canada's Century: The Rhetoric of Propaganda," 28.

<sup>130</sup> Stich, "Canada's Century: The Rhetoric of Propaganda," 28-29.

<sup>131</sup> Stich, "Canada's Century: The Rhetoric of Propaganda," 29.

prescriptive language is utilized for first-person narrative as it intended to give the reader a kind of revelatory feeling: settlers told of their experiences and proceeded to explain these experiences -- as if they were showy advocates of the west -- using a new-wealth-old-values tone to form opinions for those seeking more reliable information.<sup>132</sup>

There is, however, an inseparable surreptitiousness about the promotional campaign's ways of persuading potential newcomers. There exists within the sections of the booklets a rift between this essay's propaganda analysis and with the more romantic displays of selling the prairies. These areas are, to say the least, the false parts of the literature which were incredibly deceptive. In other words, the booklets could be interpersonal, use self-improvement rhetoric, or compare to a prairie novel only when they had to please or intrigue readers. Parts of the booklets typified the type of propaganda that had to lie through its shiny teeth to garner attention. The booklets intentionally avoided such things as the climatic, geographic and psychological-altering realities of the prairies that should have been truthfully explained in order to explain to newcomers how best to prepare -- physically, mentally and emotionally -- for the prairie west.

The problem of isolationism for newcomers was veiled with sound judgements of a friendly, all-welcoming and developing region of Canada:

Very naturally, an intending settler with a family will inquire: 'What are the social conditions of the country? If I locate in Western Canada, shall I enjoy any of the blessings of educated life, or shall I be forever shut out from all congenial society?' This country is, so far, settled with many of the best families of the countries whence they emigrated.

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<sup>132</sup> Friesen, *The Canadian Plains*, 303. "About 100 travel volumes dealing with Canada were published in the settlement era, and countless more articles appeared in newspapers and journals," infused with all sorts of differing forms and patterns of rhetoric and propaganda techniques this paper cannot cover in its analysis. Sifton's propaganda's persuasive language was required since the goal of the Feds was to entice all who wanted to acquire "materialistic [and] work-obsessed" gains in seeing themselves "bound for greatness" through the lens of the literature's delineation of Canada's prairie west.

In a colonized area of the world, distinctly favourable rural regions espoused “judgements of the proper place of a particular community” for all ethnicities.<sup>133</sup> This being the result of an immigrant’s “innate human tendency to assert, as circumstances allowed, self interest” based on decisions regarding the direction of their future endeavors.<sup>134</sup> Greg Marchildon’s phrase “embryonic sense of regionalism” is relatable to the promotional literature’s definition of one’s climate of success – that is, one’s loyalty to a land projected high success rates of homesteading, less down time, and, therefore, less feelings of loneliness.<sup>135</sup> The concept of regionalism was forged in Sifton’s promotional literature, which excited prospective newcomers who fully believed the lay of the land pleasantries foretold by authors and established settlers. As a distinct region, the prairies’ work conditions and job prospects showed off halcyon promise just as much as the so-called tame weather patterns, apparently, held up their end of the bargain. Described with plausibility, the statements made about the terrain, crop yields and weather were made with such earnestness (i.e. as impressionable characteristics of the west) they surely could not be ignored. There were, quite simply, many “blessings to be obtained”<sup>136</sup> from the prairie west -- from mixed farming and ranching to mining and logging as well as obtaining larger plots of land.

The prairie west’s living conditions and market stability were, usually, half-truths. These can be called bold assertions in the context of propaganda. The

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<sup>133</sup> Theodore Binnema, “A Feudal Chain of Vassalage: Limited Identities in the Prairie West, 1870-1896” in Marchildon, *Immigration & Settlement 1870-1939*, 174.

<sup>134</sup> Theodore Binnema, “A Feudal Chain of Vassalage: Limited Identities in the Prairie West, 1870-1896” in Marchildon, *Immigration & Settlement 1870-1939*, 174

<sup>135</sup> Theodore Binnema, “A Feudal Chain of Vassalage: Limited Identities in the Prairie West, 1870-1896” in Marchildon, *Immigration & Settlement 1870-1939*, 173.

<sup>136</sup> Moodie, “The Fever of Immigration” in Leuba Bailey’s *The Immigration Experience*, 17.

bold assertion deflects attention away from any given reality's less appealing characteristics and pejoratives by using exaggerated claims to create, instead, positive representations.<sup>137</sup> In Western Canada, crops were said to be "always given a good yield in favorable seasons."<sup>138</sup> Established Canadian agriculturalists knew that, even on a balanced year of clement climate, exposure to the elements, fluctuating temperatures and proper moisture levels could not always promise hearty crops and guarantee stable markets. However, the literature hid this notion: "There has never been a failure of crops, and settlers enjoy a steady home market, at which they realize good prices for products."<sup>139</sup> Settlers also spoke of natural resources like wood in abundance to build small but firm farm houses, but this resource was not always in close proximity. Many unfortunately became accustomed to calling their first years' living quarters "dens of dirt,"<sup>140</sup> and arriving newcomers quickly came to see the prairies as unforgiving. For some, who lived off the barren prairie, the first few years was by no means a luxury affair. People got lost in snow storms, or were swarmed by mosquitos. New settlers with little means for a shelter (let alone heat) for themselves suffered harshly throughout the winter months. Livestock, if unsheltered, could be lost in huge numbers from both the bone-chilling winters and its many-feet-deep snow falls which occurred out of nowhere.

Under the auspices of Sifton, the literature's confabulation of temperatures and seasons of sun and snow on the prairies were hardly accurate in their portrayals. The "effect of the almost perpetual sunshine,"<sup>141</sup> for example,

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<sup>137</sup> Martin, *Propaganda and the Ethics of Persuasion*, 107.

<sup>138</sup> *Western Canada*, 63.

<sup>139</sup> *Western Canada*, 63.

<sup>140</sup> Moodie, "The Fever of Immigration" in Leuba Bailey's *The Immigration Experience*, 17.

<sup>141</sup> *Western Canada*, 12.

provided reassurances of healthier crop growth and easier stock management. However, it avoided mentioning how strenuously the sun's hammer of heat could be brought down upon the farmer if they were, perhaps, exposed to the sun for a prolonged period of time. Phrases like "genial in its effects"<sup>142</sup> or "not more severe than"<sup>143</sup> were common linguistic threads that commended discursive discourses on prairie climate. Altering the perceptions of the prairie's physical environment created a sort of well-deserved-distinction status for Canada's west, as the weather of the frontier region was bruited about handsomely in the booklets.

The lackluster areas of the prairie landscape (the physical environments) affected many newcomers differently but directly -- not because of the subtle variances of district-to-district flora and fauna but because the descriptions within the promotional literature varied in severity of its lies. Bill Waiser gives a succinct example in his scholarly opus *Saskatchewan: A New History* of one account of a shocked settler who obviously had something different in mind hitherto, upon arriving to Consul, Saskatchewan. A female settler bitterly recalled her journey to the Canadian prairie west, which ended with desolate feelings of impoverishment upon arriving.<sup>144</sup> Within the booklets, popular rhetoric masked the level of difficulty for the attainment and achievement for any given objective or goal.<sup>145</sup> Upon arrival, they, the newcomers, found themselves feeling disheartened at an unexpected and unwanted end goal when they reached their destinations.

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<sup>142</sup> *Western Canada*, 11.

<sup>143</sup> *Timely Remarks*, 8.

<sup>144</sup> Bill Waiser, *Saskatchewan: A New History*. Markham, Ontario: Fifth House Publishers, 2018. 107: "We reached our homestead at last. I'll never forget the desolate feeling that came over me, when, with the contents of the wagon out on the ground, we sat on a box and looked around, not a sign of water, and grass. Then I realized that we were at the end of our journey, that this was to be our home. Even though I had been told it was prairie land, my first glimpse of the country...was something of a shock." Helen Shepard of Consul, Saskatchewan.

<sup>145</sup> Jowett O'Donnell, *Readings*, 57.

Similarly, this was something many had not signed up for upon their arrival to the prairies.

In *Timely Remarks*, we can see an example of this type of duplicitous rhetoric in a settler's response:

This winter has been, so far, a very fine one. Most of the time it has been a very little [sic] below freezing, and my cattle have never seen the inside of a shed, and all my horses that are not working are out on the prairie. I expect this summer to have between 300 and 400 acres ready for wheat.<sup>146</sup>

Field included letters that theorized "the most advantageous conditions" for settlers: "They all like it and speak well of it to their friends."<sup>147</sup> A propaganda technique known as card-stacking -- when an author gets too selective and ambiguous with their overall message insofar that he or she begins obscuring and even ignoring facts in order to give "the best possible case" for something else -- was also evident in the literature.<sup>148</sup> The features of the prairie west such as the terrain and weather were, from Septimus Field's view, alluded to minimally. It was as if these features hardly needed much attention because already "settlers faced the double challenge of bringing the land under cultivation and trying to survive in the meantime."<sup>149</sup> Field's progress driven rhetoric was his dialogue's façade for hiding the reality of the unforgiving and unpredictable environment of the prairies.

The coarseness of the climate also had to be "softened"<sup>150</sup> because of the "invidious winters."<sup>151</sup> Some of the prairies' more southern arid regions were damned by Americans and the English with previous knowledge of the

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<sup>146</sup> *Timely Remarks*, 20.

<sup>147</sup> *Timely Remarks*, 19.

<sup>148</sup> Martin, *Propaganda and the Ethics of Persuasion*, 105.

<sup>149</sup> Waiser, *Saskatchewan*, 108.

<sup>150</sup> Rees, *New and Naked Land*, 14.

<sup>151</sup> Rees, *New and Naked Land*, 14.

Pallister/Hind expeditions (1857-1860) which condemned the land as having slim possibility in the way of agriculturally-related pursuits. Septimus Field has very few ideal examples of how 'climate' can be used as a virtue word in describing the weather benevolently enough to entrap a reader's imagination. Field only uses the word 'climate' to make a connection with how it could be associated with one's health and happiness:

There is the same clearness and dryness which so greatly modifies the extreme frost in midwinter, and it has all the early warmth of the spring months that the eastern provinces are favoured with...many who will be too wise to overlook the less glittering but more solid advantages offered by the Canadian North-west as a field for settlement...are just now giving increased attention to...the low cost of production, climatic influences, and great fertility of soil...<sup>152</sup>

These proposed advantages may have some inkling of truth (regarding the climatic influences on the western lifestyle) within them. This quote required, however, some serious parsing and splicing in order to pass as a serviceable message. Without this reconfiguration, Septimus Field's biased selectivity and ignorance of facts would show even more egregious as he only discusses the climate of the west in three or four sentences under the heading of climate, stuffing the rest of the section with obfuscation. Truly, Field does use a card-stacking technique on pages eight and nine. His out-of-focus examples within the section on climate were definitely not relevant to weather or geography. He instead focused on the rise in cattle prices and dairy operations and compared Canada's influx of newly migrated populations to Australia and Africa in this section.<sup>153</sup>

In *Western Canada*, bold claims and healthy anecdotes of settlement in the backwoods or out on the open prairie were praised, resulting in much

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<sup>152</sup> *Timely Remarks*, 8-9.

<sup>153</sup> *Timely Remarks*, 8-9.

conversation about the west in America and Europe. The authors of *Western Canada* possessed an acumen and narrative-style which was carefully orchestrated with crafty language that “prominently set forth all the good to be derived from a settlement.”<sup>154</sup> It pompously declared the magnificence of the west’s “salubrious climate”<sup>155</sup> partially because the weather evoked a dream destination’s weather forecast:

The climate of Western Canada, as described by those who have lived there for some years, is very agreeable, and preferred to that of the east. Disease is little known, while epidemics are unheard of. Spring commences about the first of April. Some seasons [sic], however, seeding is begun early March, the snow having entirely disappeared. But spring scarcely puts in an appearance before it is followed by summer, and it is almost impossible to describe the delights of that pleasant season, with its long days and cool nights. It is in this fact we find an explanation of the extraordinarily rapid growth of vegetation, which, under the influence of this long continued sunshine, exceeds anything known in lower latitudes.<sup>156</sup>

Some of the text does indeed deserve some out loud laughter, as the claims were reminiscent of a snake oil salesman’s swindling talk:

The velocity of the wind at Edmonton and Alberta rarely exceeds twelve miles an hour, so that it is gentle, as well as warm... [in a magazine contribution:] in the crisp, dry atmosphere of Western Canada the writer has experienced temperatures of 40 degrees below zero without discomfort.<sup>157</sup>

As a timeline, the settler’s stages and progressions for attaining success were as important in telling the big-picture story of the west, rather than only showing off - in a number-crunching fashion -- hard statistics about the west’s climate records, living conditions or crop types. It is probable to believe that around the turn of the twentieth century a piece of government advertising with statistics and percentages would hardly be frowned upon by the masses. If the true numbers

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<sup>154</sup> Moodie, “The Fever of Immigration” in Leuba Bailey’s *The Immigration Experience*, 17.

<sup>155</sup> Moodie, “The Fever of Immigration” in Leuba Bailey’s *The Immigration Experience*, 17.

<sup>156</sup> *Western Canada*, 11

<sup>157</sup> *Western Canada*, 11-12.

were being skewed, who would know? Western Canada has no shortage of percentages and statistics. Hard facts about the prairie climate did not automatically constitute the validity of the information provided. In fact, sagacious Clifford Sifton banned Manitoba temperatures abroad.<sup>158</sup> He was known to act on the sly some of the time; the propaganda attached its importance to tainting much of the disillusionment other countries had of the west's extremes.<sup>159</sup> Aside from the data-information component of the literature, cover-words were used to cloak any relative connotations of cold or snow. There were expressions that were taboo in Sifton's literature, ones which were replaced with less-severe words like bracing and invigorating.<sup>160</sup> Government publications deemed certain temperatures and wind chills much too cold for public notification and instead were "buried in monthly, seasonal or yearly averages."<sup>161</sup>

## Conclusion

Around 400 B.C., Hippocrates, a Greek physician, once said that egressing from familiar landscapes can cause one to develop separation anxiety over time; to ultimately miss home and feel severely homesick.<sup>162</sup> The promotional literature produced under the watchful eye of Clifford Sifton transcended the reality of the unfamiliar, insomuch that it made prairie life seem settling and irresistible for families and individual males especially (since women could not own homesteads like they could in the United States until much later).

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<sup>158</sup> Rees, *New and Naked Land*, 14.

<sup>159</sup> Rees, *New and Naked Land*, 14. The winters of Canada's west were exposed by Americans as having the traits of a "land of ice, snow, drought and disillusionment" while many English people "knew it to be a kind of 'Siberia' of their empire."

<sup>160</sup> Rees, *New and Naked Land*, 14.

<sup>161</sup> Rees, *New and Naked Land*, 14.

<sup>162</sup> Rees, *New and Naked Land*, 1.

The literature claimed the prairies were without a doubt an encouragingly indispensable place for a new beginning. Within the selling of the prairie west's agricultural features and benefits, between Canada's thriving economy, its growing trade and commerce networks and technological advancements, romanticizing, falsifying and sensationalizing the truth about hard work and life in the west created a potential for a new life in the minds of prospective settlers. To choose Canada's prairies meant that it was the most impressionable region to start afresh to that of North America or in other Imperialist countries. Even years after Sifton's tenure as Minister of the Interior, he would opine that one ought to know about what they were getting themselves into, upon coming to the west: "Before one can know anything about the question of Immigration he must be able to correlate it with the conditions prevailing in Canada."<sup>163</sup> Through the promotional literature, the prairie west's characteristics led some people to believe they should not discriminate against the prairie west. Conquering new land in Canada was no doubt a difficult task. The promotional literature, which acted as propaganda, showcased the rewards that could be had, described with transfiguring rhetoric by creating dialogue-like vis-a-vis relationships with readers to ease the anxieties of possible newcomers. Just because one may have been a stranger in a strange land, the promotional literature ensured it did not make newcomers feel as though the prairie west would be unwelcoming.

However, could hard work always equal reward for settlers? I recently visited the Grasslands National Park in southwest Saskatchewan – a very barren and dry landscape lacking in wood and water resources – and came upon an old ranch-stead almost in shambles during my 'eco-tour.' One of the earliest

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<sup>163</sup> Sir Clifford Sifton, "Only Farmers Need Apply: The Immigrants Canada Wants." *Maclean's Magazine*, (April 1, 1922): 16.

pioneers in this region, a man by the name of Walt Larson, once owned this property. He decided to become his own boss (after leaving the '76 Ranch), and showed not a hint of throwing in the towel when times get tough. Grain farming was completely out of the question for new arrivals in this particular part of the Grasslands (as it was very accurate to the Palliser-Hind Expeditions' descriptions of the land as being arid to desert-like in certain parts of the prairies). He took ingenious, but also bold, steps to leave his historical footprint in the region: adapting to the land. Larson, a hardworking rancher known for raising Angus cattle, lived and worked on the unforgiving land, eventually buying up and then later selling 52 sections of land to the Grassland National Park.<sup>164</sup> Larson devised a plan that he would provide for himself and his area's homesteaders. He sheltered other people's horses, and provided for a large portion of the area's water needs. By sheer luck he was able to situate his homestead creek-side.

Settler stories like these were definitely not apocryphal, but those who could not essentially attain nature's gifts easily were in tougher situations and would not accept the lifestyle. The Grasslands region is a good example of what some settlers had to contend with, but Walt Larson did what he could to make the most of his surroundings. For Larson's sake, he would have agreed that a little luck, an inventive mind and determination can indeed pave the way to success, but only as much as the land reciprocates and gives back.

The Government's promotional literature's artful use of persuasion, within the booklets used for this essay's propaganda analysis, intended for prospective settlers, enticed an influx of newcomers. Persuasive language and pleasant descriptions and images of the west in the booklets was taken to heart by many -

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<sup>164</sup> The information I use for the personal history of Walt Larson is found in the Grasslands National Park's "Ecotour Scenic Drive: Self-Guided Driving Tour" booklet printed with permission by Parks Canada.

- tugging on the emotional strings and digging down to the deep desires of all different types of persons willing and able to move to Canada's prairie west. Between 1896 and 1905, newcomers had to feel they were in a place where they belonged. Home was not just a physical place that had to be tamed and managed, but a familiar place – as small as a shack, or as big as a country.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Rees, *New and Naked Land*, 2.

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### HTML Online-Only Resources

<https://www.historymuseum.ca/cmhc/exhibitions/hist/advertis/ads3-02e.html>

<http://www.urbanmarket.com/all-about-perth/mammoth.html>