

Expansion Northward

MANITOBA LAND SURVEYORS



**ASSOCIATION
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LAND SURVEYORS**

The boundary debate remained relatively calm until the early twentieth century. The expansion of the railway system and the increased influx of settlers prompted the Manitoba legislature to renew its bid for extended provincial boundaries. In 1901 a resolution was passed in the Manitoba legislature to ask the federal Parliament to allow for the extension of the boundaries to Hudson Bay. As eastward expansion had been categorically denied, the provincial government also suggested that the western boundary be extended.

The following year, Premier Roblin approached Premier Haultain of the North-West Territories to discuss the possibility of westward expansion. The people of Assiniboia, just beyond Manitoba's western border, did not welcome the proposal. They did not want to share the burden of Manitoba's increasing deficit, and felt that they could probably exact better terms from the federal government on their own. So final was their refusal that westward expansion was all but ruled out. The Manitoba government's final hopes were dashed in 1905, when the Laurier government created the two new provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Manitoba quickly revised its claims for territorial expansion to the north. Encouraged by the building activities of the Canadian Northern and the Hudson Bay railways, the province hoped to tap the riches of the opening frontier. The demands for the northward expansion of Manitoba's boundaries fared little better than the western proposal. Indeed, counter claims by Ontario for the extension of its western border directly north to Hudson Bay compounded the difficulties. The Roblin government also charged that the position of Manitoba's Official Opposition was detrimental to the hopes of expansion. In allegiance with the Liberal government in Ottawa, Manitoba's Liberals had gone on record as being willing to accept a much smaller portion of territory than that claimed by the Conservative government.

In 1908, the campaign for the extension of the northern boundary took a positive turn. Wilfrid Laurier, Canada's Prime Minister, introduced a boundary extension bill in Parliament which would have increased Manitoba's western boundary north up to the 60° north latitude and its eastern boundary to the point at which the 89° west longitude cut the shore of Hudson Bay. The possibility of Laurier exacting a final

settlement was largely thwarted by the federal election of 1911.

The defeat of Laurier and the return of Borden's Conservatives to power generally assured Manitoba expansionists of their extension. Borden's promise to extend the boundaries upon his election helped to guarantee the Conservative leader eight out of ten federal seats in the province. On 15 May 1912, the Manitoba legislature passed an act calling for the "Further Extension" of the provincial boundaries. The proposal recommended by Laurier in 1908 became the final settlement for the boundary question.

This last extension added 458,291 square kilometres to the province and increased its population by 6,000 people. Though it was heralded as Manitoba's "coming of age," the final scene in this drama did not take place until July 1930 when the federal government finally granted Manitoba control of its own public lands and natural resources.

After a long and hard-fought battle, the final boundary extension and the much delayed granting of resource control by the federal government in 1930, eventually brought Manitoba into a position of equality with its peers in Confederation.