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Article abstract

James Gardiner devint le premier chef de gouvernement en Saskatchewan à perdre le pouvoir alors que le parti libéral qu'il dirigeait détenait le plus grand nombre de sièges. Après sa défaite, en 1929, il mit un temps considérable à déterminer la meilleure ligne de conduite à suivre pour son parti : il devint chef de l'Opposition en choisissant de l'être sans s'allier à aucun autre des partis en cause.

Au cours des années qui suivirent, toutefois, les circonstances furent telles qu'il dût, en deux occasions, considérer la possibilité d'une coalition avec M.J. Coldwell et ses partisans. De plus, en 1932, il fut également sollicité par le gouvernement de J.T.M. Anderson en vue d'une coalition qui aurait permis à trois libéraux, dont Gardiner, de siéger au Cabinet. Cependant, rien dans tout cela ne cadrait avec la conception qu'entretenait Gardiner du rôle de chef de l'Opposition. Pour lui, ce rôle sous-entendait, à la fois, la préservation du système parlementaire et le maintien de celui des partis.

Cette politique s'avéra d'ailleurs d'une grande importance dans l'histoire des partis politiques en Saskatchewan et pour le sien en particulier. Le talent qu'il mit à y maintenir une organisation politique vigoureuse, et ce, en dépit du fait qu'il était démuni de toutes les ressources financières dévolues au parti au pouvoir, fit en sorte que, dès 1934, la coalition qui gardait Anderson au pouvoir fut non seulement défaite mais détruite.

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Oppositions and Coalitions: James Gardiner and Saskatchewan Provincial Politics, 1929 to 1934

NORMAN WARD

The Right Honourable James Gardiner is well remembered as the only man who captured the premiership of Saskatchewan twice, and afterwards set the Canadian federal record for longevity in a single portfolio, Agriculture, exhibiting in both areas a partisanship now celebrated in stone and metal on a plaque unveiled in 1978. He himself, when preparing the copious notes used by Nathaniel Benson for a mediocre biography published in 1955, all but forgot that he not only served with distinction as Leader of the Opposition in Saskatchewan from 1929 to 1934, but as such established a precedent for vigorous sustained effort that helped spare his province both prolonged periods of coalition government, as in Manitoba, and virtual one-party monopolies in the legislature, as in Alberta.

Gardiner was also the first premier of Saskatchewan to be defeated at the polls, and under circumstances so confused that he spent several weeks in 1929 satisfying himself as to whether he had in fact lost, and if so to whom.[1] The Liberals had been in power from the province's creation in 1905, and in June 1929 emerged from the election as still the largest group: when the delayed polling in the north was over, the Liberals had twenty-eight seats; the Conservatives under Dr. J.T.M. Anderson twenty-four; the Progressives five, but the man considered by Gardiner to be their leader, M.J. Coldwell, had not run; and there were six Independents, a mixed bag of irresolute political migrants which included one man whose career eventually included contesting seats consecutively as Progressive, Independent, Conservative, Unity, and Liberal.[2] No great acumen was needed to convince Gardiner that he could remain in power with the help of any four other members, and it was not in his nature to abandon his post without due attention to all the relevant possibilities.

He had no hope of wooing successfully any of Anderson's Conservatives and little confidence in anybody so lacking in conviction as to run as an Independent. According to information brought to Gardiner through the party organization, the six

1 See Nathaniel Benson, *None of It Came Easy* (Toronto, 1955), pp. 159-60; Saskatchewan Archives, Gardiner Papers (hereafter GP), A. Murray to Gardiner, 7 June 1929, #9664-6; Gardiner to A. Murray, 12 June 1929, #9661-3; to H.D. Leitch, 12 June 1929, #9668; to W.R. Motherwell, 15 June 1929, #9576-8; to C. Endicott, 20 June 1929, #9863-5; to J. Fowler, 20 June 1929, #9874-5; to A. Shinbane, 20 June 1929, #10077-9; to The Editor, *The Witness and Canadian Homestead*, 19 September 1929; see also untitled speeches, #19365-74 and #19647-53.

2 Saskatchewan Archives Board, *Saskatchewan Executive and Legislature Directory, 1905-1970* (Regina, 1971), p. 158.

alleged Independents elected in 1929 included three known Conservatives and two former Liberals, one of the latter on his way out of the Progressives, the other a man who had compromised on an Independent nomination after declining a Conservative.[3] That left the Progressives, most of them considered to have been Liberal or Conservative in previous incarnations. Gardiner had fought the Progressives throughout the 1920s in Manitoba, to the considerable irritation of federal Liberals who hoped for their support; and in Saskatchewan, where his record was such that, with the federal election of 1930 in sight, he was after the provincial contest offered five hundred dollars from Ottawa with the suggestion that he take a well-earned and preferably long holiday.[4] Nonetheless, the Progressives in 1929 were his best bet, even though in 1928 that party had put itself on record unequivocally as "opposed to any arrangements or negotiations with either the Liberal or Conservative political parties in the selection of a candidate or the conducting of an election." Gardiner observed that the resolution was passed before the unsettling election of 1929 and referred only to pre-election activities; he decided to approach M.J. Coldwell.

The recollections of the two men about what happened next were at first so different that, subsequently, extended negotiations were required to produce a statement both could sign. In retrospect the episode appears as a classic example of what happens when men of strong convictions try to make a deal on matters which divide them deeply. One side has to take the initiative and do it in such a manner as to minimize early concessions or signs of weakness. The other, assessing the approach with a different set of assumptions and expectations, assigns its own meaning to key words. The two separate with divergent interpretations of what has transpired and in due course, with their memories having refined the interpretations, they resort to public accusations of misrepresentation, and worse.

Until nearly four years later, when he broke the story as a relevant part of the background to the birth of the CCF, Coldwell's recollection of the summer of 1929 was that a trusted emissary from Gardiner, regarded as a man of unimpeachable integrity, offered him the Education portfolio in a Gardiner cabinet. Gardiner at the time wrote to a concerned colleague to assure him that "the fact is that no offer was ever made to Mr. Coldwell direct or indirect to enter a Liberal Government", and publicly said that while he did not doubt Coldwell's word he had no recollection of either the emissary or the offer. The emissary himself then emerged to confirm to Gardiner that he had indeed, in the heat of immediate post-election excitement, gone from Gardiner to Coldwell as an envoy, but merely to canvass possibilities, not to make a specific offer. Gardiner asserted that he did not doubt his colleague's word and, after a conversation with him, conceded that he now did remember the incident. After Gardiner and Coldwell had reflected in public on each other's poor memories, the former drafted a statement to "set down the particulars" which the latter endorsed. The incident is important because it constituted the only attempt by Gardiner to secure

3 GP, Gardiner to A. Shinbane, 28 July 1929, #8356-61.

4 *Ibid.*, A. Haydon to Gardiner, 25 November 1929, Gardiner to Haydon, 1 December 1929, #17566-70; Public Archives of Canada, W.L. Mackenzie King Papers, MG 26, J4, vol. 123, Gardiner to King, 27 January 1930, pp. 148234-7.

a legislative majority between the election of June 6, 1929, and his resignation on September 9.[5]

It is not difficult to accept Gardiner's memory lapse following the election for (apart from the absence of any motive for concealing his passage with Coldwell) the summer of 1929 was for him a phenomenally busy time. The Liberal cabinet, after a lively caucus, within a week of the election concluded "that responsible self-government calls for a decision by the Legislature itself, not by informal group caucuses held behind 'closed doors'."[6] That announcement was a response to a united caucus of Conservatives, Progressives, and Independents which met after the election to affirm their unified intent to throw the Liberals out of office, and the Liberals' decision to meet the legislature was followed in turn by a petition from the combined anti-Liberal groups to the Lieutenant Governor.

The petition advised the Lieutenant Governor that "to call a special session of the Legislature in order to have your petitioners repeat in the Legislature what they have already stated over their signatures is entirely unnecessary and at the same time is an expensive procedure." The document reiterated the petitioners' intention to express their lack of confidence in the Gardiner government at the first opportunity anyway and pointed to the needless delay that was being put in the path of selecting a new ministry and permitting its members to familiarize themselves with their departments. The petition urged upon His Honour that it was clearly the government's duty to resign and concluded by praying that if it did not he should "dismiss your present advisers at the earliest possible moment and call upon Mr. J.T.M. Anderson to form a new Government."[7]

The petition played directly into Gardiner's hands. The Progressives, foes of partyism in general, were already on record repeatedly in favour of the principle that a government should be able to resign not on an issue of its own choice, but only on a clear vote of want of confidence which could come only in the legislature. The obvious unconstitutionality of the position in which the Lieutenant Governor would be placed if he accepted the advice of the Opposition to dismiss a ministry drawn from the largest single group to emerge from the election was something else Gardiner could use, and did. He could justifiably delay having the legislature summoned until after the two deferred elections in the far north were held, and he chose July 16 and August 12 for them. Meeting the legislature as soon as possible after the writs were returned gave him until September 4 to plan for his entry into Opposition.

The resignation of the Saskatchewan Liberal government in 1929 was one of the most elaborately arranged departures in Canadian history. It had a double goal: to get the combined Opposition to defeat the government on the Liberals' terms and to do so in a manner which left the incoming government with no excuse to call a snap election in which, as both Gardiner and his closest colleague, T.C. Davis feared, the Liberals might well be annihilated. The Liberals' game plan was based throughout on a false

5 GP, Gardiner to T. Wood, 10 January 1933, #17912; Letter to Editor signed by Gardiner and Coldwell, 27 February 1933, #17941-3; *Regina Leader Post*, 9 January 1933, ff.

6 *Canadian Annual Review*, 1928-29, pp. 469-70.

7 Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly, *Sessional Papers*, 1929, #5, pp. 59-61.

premise in which Gardiner was supported by his national leader, W.L. Mackenzie King, both of them holding that a resigning premier had the right to name his own successor. Gardiner, although he knew early enough that he was certain to be defeated in the legislature, could not bring himself to advise the Lieutenant Governor in cold blood to appoint an unreconstructed Tory to the premiership until all else had failed.

A less mistaken assumption of Gardiner's turned on his conviction, which he expressed frequently, that it was a particular function of an Opposition to help defend and preserve both the parliamentary and party systems. That could be a testing assignment, given the rabble he expected to see supporting Anderson's government. It was important therefore that his pending defeat be seen as a *partisan* defeat in the proper place, the legislature. The first consideration was whether that defeat would take place on the election of a Speaker, for if it did the Liberals would have no chance to get a Speech from the Throne on record. T.C. Davis, an able lawyer and Gardiner's Attorney General, with his deputy made a detailed study of precedents and concluded in two memoranda that "there being no organized House until the Speaker is elected; therefore there can be no defeat in the House without the Speaker in the chair." Davis pointed out that if anybody on Anderson's side knew that, the anti-Liberal forces might conceivably defeat all Liberal nominations "and thus prevent the House from functioning at all." As an insurance measure he suggested the Liberals have in reserve' the names of a Tory, a Progressive, and an Independent who could be nominated in turn if the need arose.[8] In the event, "to emphasize", as Gardiner said, "the fact that politics should in no way enter into the matter of constituting the House", two Liberal backbenchers put forth the Liberal nomination, which allowed the government to claim that the vote on the Speakership "cannot be accepted by the Government as in any way affecting the present position of the Government, either in relation to the House or in relation to the Crown."[9] Several opposition members had already announced that they hoped to defeat the Liberals over the choice of Speaker, but Gardiner's tactics left them wondering how to do it, and he got his way. The Liberal nominee was defeated thirty-five to twenty-eight, and Anderson and a Progressive moved and seconded the name of a leading Conservative, who was chosen without a recorded vote.

That left the Gardiner forces free to present their Speech from the Throne, a statement notable for its brevity and its contents. It had at first been over twice as long as its final draft, containing justification for the goverment's retention of office, and suggesting the need for relief from the drought, but Mackenzie King strongly advised Gardiner severally to avoid anything that sounded like special pleading or anything resembling a Liberal commitment to support relief measures, and to avert any possible charges that the Crown was being used as an instrument of political ambition. "The more clear-cut you can make the question of political support as its sole purpose," King wrote, "the better it will be for you throughout the province and the Dominion, both immediately and in the long run."

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8 GP, Davis to Gardiner, 27 August 1929, #10547-50; see also memo dated 17 July 1929, #10562-6.

9 *Ibid.*, draft of speech on nomination of Speaker, 1929, #10544-6.

The resulting speech, after registering gratitude for the recovered health of King George V, consisted of two substantive sentences:

> In the circumstances, my advisers are of the opinion that the earliest possible opportunity should be given to Independent and Progressive members to declare, in accordance with known constitutional practice, to which of the two historic parties they are prepared to give their support. Pending a decision in the matter of political support, my advisers are of the opinion that it is not desirable to submit a programme of legislation for the consideration of the members.[10]

Since there was no constitutional reason why the Liberals themselves could not support the Conservatives, or *vice versa*, it is not clear what Gardiner meant by the "known constitutional practice" he pressed on the two smaller groups.

The intent was obvious: to pose them a problem in Gardiner's own terms and at the same time to suggest to all the opposition groups that once they had attained power their first priority should be "a programme of legislation." The intent was further spelled out after Gardiner and Davis had made the usual motion that the Speech "be taken into consideration now" and Anderson had moved a vote of want of confidence. The premier and his two ablest lieutenants for two days delivered well-prepared speeches designed to provoke at least the two smaller opposition groups into a clear partisan commitment, but they were able to elicit almost no response. Much of what they said was challenged as irrelevant to the motion before the House, but the Speaker, admitting his ignorance of procedure, allowed the Liberals the widest latitude: "This is a British Parliament", he ruled at one point. "We are not in Russia." Late on September 5, after Gardiner had delivered a lengthy dissertation on the party system, one Progressive and one Independent each spoke briefly for his group, and the government was defeated. Next morning Gardiner resigned, advising the Lieutenant Governor to summon J.T.M. Anderson, who took office on September 9. In the turmoil the Lieutenant Governor never did get the usual humble vote of thanks for the gracious speech with which he had opened the session.[11]

The two-day session (the legislature did not meet again until February 6, 1930) saw a third Liberal coup, whose significance went almost unnoticed at the time, the quiet tabling of an auditor's report. One of the reasons Gardiner wanted to postpone his resignation was that he wanted time for an independent audit of the province's financial records by a reputable firm, as a response to the widespread charges of governmental corruption and inefficiency that had been one of the features of the election campaign. He himself, despite the legends that have grown up around the Saskatchewan Liberal machine, at no time expressed any concern over what any audit or other investigation might reveal. A few months after his resignation, when two Conservative ministers were still making extravagant charges, he reassured a nervous supporter in a letter:

> You can say quite confidently to all our friends in Invermay district that when a

10 *Ibid.*, King to Gardiner, 21 August 1929, #10522-5; Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly, *Journals*, 1929, pp. 10-1.

11 Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly, *Sessional Papers*, 1929, pp. 1-59; GP,Gardiner to Hon. W.H. Newlands, 6 September 1929, #10508.

> fair investigation has been made into the statements of these two gentlemen and others who may follow them, there will be very little upon which to prove any charges against the previous administration. Of course it is impossible that a government could be in power under any party for twenty-four years with a civil service during the latter part of government of about sixteen hundred without some of the officials giving some offence. I think it will be found, when due allowance is made for this fact, that the shortcomings of our Civil Service are not even as numerous as might be expected.[12]

One of the first goals to which Gardiner devoted his time after the election was vindicating his administration. The accounting firm hired while he was still premier, Price Waterhouse, was chosen because, while Gardiner's confidence was such that he saw no need for any audit, he thought that any idependent outsiders chosen should have had no previous dealings with the government of Saskatchewan or the Liberal party. Price Waterhouse, given *carte blanche* "to determine whether the Provincial system of bookkeeping and auditing is adequate", put a team of twelve men into Regina and on August 29, 1929, produced a satisfying report which concluded that "we found the books and records of the Treasurer's Department in good order, and . . . all the officials and employees with whom we came in contact afforded us all the facilities for the conduct of our work." The audit was mildly critical of the practice of presenting the accounts on a cash rather than a revenue basis, but the Provincial Treasurer later explained that the accounts were kept both ways, but only one was used for reporting. The Opposition in the legislature tried to prevent the tabling of the audit in the short September session, but the Speaker, pleading innocence, said that he thought the report had been properly tabled before any objection was raised.[13]

Price Waterhouse listed several branches of government its people had not had time to examine, and the new government promptly looked into them on its own, as well as studying, from other points of view than an auditor's, the administration it had inherited. The first of the investigations initiated by the Anderson government was the Public Service Inquiry Commission, which arose from an ancient pledge of the new premier's, based on his own experiences as a public servant, to reform the civil service. The chairman was M.J. Coldwell, soon to be chosen first president of the Farmer-Labor Party and also known to favour the merit system. Since Gardiner himself had never concealed his belief that under responsible government the ministry made appointments to the public service (a principle on which Sir John A. Macdonald had put himself clearly on record), the Coldwell commission had no difficulty in finding evidence of widespread use of patronage in Saskatchewan.

An American authority on public administration who visited Regina during the legislature's last pre-election session had written Gardiner a long letter which noted that his government used its power not merely with discretion but with skill, "taking steps to assure the employment of the right kind of persons." But that expert spent only one day in the provincial capital; the Coldwell commission worked nearly six months taking the first long cool look ever directed at the provincial administration. Its report was understandably critical, coming down solidly in favour of the introduction

12 GP, Gardiner to H. Ashmore, 7 February 1930, #18867-75.

13 *Ibid.*; Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly, *Sessional Papers*, 1929, p. 30.

of a merit system. But it was also a disappointment to Gardiner's opponents, for it did not condemn the Liberal regime, as they had hoped, but almost excused it, observing that in the rapid settlement of the province "the Service was itself a growth, rather than a planned and organized development." The report was of so little political use that the new government, apart from tabling it, did not have it printed for distribution.[14]

One of Coldwell's fellow commissioners was James F. Bryant, the MLA who starred as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly before entering the Anderson cabinet on September 9, 1929. Bryant, as a minister, publicized several spectacular allegations made by former members of the provincial police force and the result was the appointment of a Royal Commission to Inquire into Statements made in Statutory Declarations and other Matters. Its report was afterwards remembered by one of its counsel, a Mr. J.G. Diefenbaker, as one which laid bare the whole rotting skeleton of the early Gardiner machine, but it does nothing of the sort. The allegations it investigated concerned primarily the activities of the provincial police in the southeast corner of Saskatchewan, and several were unquestionably well-founded: some policemen and two Liberal workers did work together to exert improper influence; the police, for example, refrained from enforcing laws which might have hurt the Liberals "in a great many instances." The report in no way implicated either Gardiner or his Attorney General. The only incident which involved Gardiner personally went back beyond 1922, before he entered the cabinet; the commission of three judges found that what Gardiner had done so long ago "was for the purpose of remedying what he believed to be an injustice." Since Gardiner himself had, as premier, had the provincial police abolished in 1928, three years before the commission on the Bryant charges, his opponents could make little more of the Bryant report than of the Coldwell. When Gardiner challenged the government in the legislature to move for the report's adoption, so that a debate could be held on it, no motion was forthcoming.[15]

Anderson had equally bad luck with his other inquiries into the Gardiner years. An audit of the Farm Loan Board, of which several Conservatives had been extremely critical, led to a series of allegations about loans improperly granted or granted in excess of what the law permitted; the whole report was on the surface a serious indictment of the Liberals' administration. Anderson's Provincial Treasurer, while declining to have a full audit of the Board's affairs, readily agreed to have the report referred to the legislature's committee on public accounts. Gardiner was a member of that committee, and he and his colleagues succeeded in having called as witnesses the actual members of the Farm Loan Board, who had been overlooked by the government's auditor. The committee, the creature of a legislature in which Gardiner's opponents had a majority, repudiated the audit report.[16]

Another audit, of the Department of Telephones, turned out to be so unsatisfactory to the government that it hired a second firm to report on the audit done by the first. Thenceforth government and opposition had two reports to quote from, the

14 *Ibid.*, 1928-29, p. 62; 1930, #35, (*Report of Public Service Inquiry Commission*).

15 *Ibid.*, 1931, #88, (*Report of the Royal Commission to Inquire Into Statements made on Statutory Declarations and Other Matters*).

16 *Canadian Annual Review*, 1930-31, p. 256.

Liberals finding the first acceptable, the Anderson forces preferring the second.[17] Gardiner shortly was able to produce a tidy one-page audit of his own, a tabulation of governmental expenditures which he entitled "Cost of Proving Liberals were Honest in Administration".[18]

Some of the information in that highly satisfactory document was obtained through action in the legislature, a body whose potential the Liberal Opposition exploited with great skill from 1929 to 1934. The greatest single achievement was probably the discrediting of the audit of the Farm Loan Board, but throughout the five legislative sessions of Anderson's premiership Gardiner led his cohorts in a relentless pursuit of the government. No Leader of the Opposition ever believed with greater conviction that the function of an Opposition was to oppose, and Gardiner had the advantage of an experienced following: he had lost only two cabinet colleagues in 1929 and nearly two-thirds of the Liberals in the House had sat in at least one previous legislature. The Conservatives, by contrast, had only four members at dissolution; therefore, Anderson's twenty-four colleagues were nearly all freshmen, as were all six Independents and three of the five Progressives. Anderson further strengthened Gardiner's hand with two early statements of policy: in keeping with Progressive theories, he said that he would recognize as a defeat only a direct loss on a vote of want of confidence; and the legislature would live out the full five years its constitution allowed.[19]

Gardiner hardly needed that much help from his opponents, but he used to the full the freedom Anderson had given him. The loss of power in 1929 had left the Liberals without amenities that they had taken for granted for a quarter of a century and all possible substitutes, including the free publicity that attended a legislature session, were firmly grasped. The mobility of party workers was sharply cut in 1929, for as Gardiner wrote to a friend a few months after the election:

> While in power it was very easy for us to show activity. We were about the province continuously and could make our politics fit in with business at little cost to anyone. As a result most of the arrangements for activities started from Regina. . . . We are now forced into the opposite position where the very lack of funds to move our people around makes it necessary that any activity must start with the local people.[20]

The same lack of funds meant a heavier reliance than had been customary on the railway passes issued to MLA's and on loyal commercial travellers who might have free evenings and weekends as they moved about. The shortage of money, to which Gardiner referred frequently, was accentuated by new expenses that arose from having to shift the party's headquarters from the legislative building to rented quarters, which

17 Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly, *Sessional Papers*, 1930, #41 and #42, *Journals*, 1930, p. 191; See also Susanna June Green, "The Origin and Operations of the Saskatchewan Farm Loan Board", (M.A. thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1951).

18 GP, undated, #19173.

19 Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly, *Sessional Papers*, 1930, p. 147; *Canadian Annual Review*, 1932, p. 261.

20 GP, Gardiner to Mrs. L.M. Norman, 5 January 1931, #17990.

Gardiner considered unavoidable if for no other reason than that he did not trust any legislative staff provided him as Leader of the Opposition.

Gardiner himself wrote nearly all the party's publicity for at least three years after 1929, and he expected every electoral district to be worked in by either an MLA or an MP, whom he urged to show themselves at fairs, exhibitions, and any other gathering where the public could be met. He invented publicity for his leadership by a provincial convention which the poverty-stricken party executive at first refused him for 1930, and he accepted the decision without argument since, as he often said, "I receive my instructions and direction from [the party], not it from me."[21] The executive shortly reviewed its stand and a convention was held in June, 1931, when Gardiner, who had received one vote of confidence from the caucus after the defeat of 1929, saw his leadership unanimously confirmed by the party. The weeks preceding the convention generated much useful publicity and the period after Gardiner used to obtain attention for the party's new platform, which he interpreted as a set of firm guidelines, but one from which he could pick the most apt planks for various occasions.[22] The party issued updated editions of its 1931 platform from time to time and supplemented it after August of 1932 with an irregular newspaper used to foster interest among Young Liberal clubs through a competition for subscribers, the top five salesmen winning free trips to a national convention in Ottawa. As early as October of 1932 the party had thirty candidates nominated for the next election, and they too were expected to work, although Gardiner was disappointed in the amount of energy spent by some of them.[23] An organizer, a highly intelligent young woman who was not an MLA, was put in charge of women's affairs.

A party which, though handicapped, could finance a provincial convention, launch a journal, organize thirty constituency conventions, and finance a new part-time organizer was not exactly destitute, and its fortunes improved as the drought and depression deepened and the Co-operative Government encountered increasing difficulties in coping with them. J.T.M. Anderson, who had spent part of the summer of 1929 attending victory rallies and picnics, was two years later reduced to promising publicly that "no one would be allowed to starve."[24] Within the party the twenty-eight elected members had annual indemnities of two thousand dollars and Gardiner had an additional salary of three thousand dollars as Leader of the Opposition. All were expected to contribute money as well as time for provincial purposes; the same was true of the party's business and professional friends, of whose value in cash Gardiner kept no record.

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21 *Ibid.*, Gardiner to King, 2 October 1930, #17604; to J.T.M. Anderson, 29 December 1932, #17869.

22 *Ibid.*, #20061-80, ("Platform Resolutions of the Saskatchewan Liberal Party adopted at Provincial Liberal Convention held at Moose Jaw, June 15-16, 1931, and by the Central Council of the Saskatchewan Liberal Party on September 27, 1932, and January 18, 1933"); #20081-2 ("Supplementary Platform Resolutions of the Saskatchewan Liberal Party adopted by the Council of the Party, January 9-11, 1934").

23 See for example, *ibid.*, Gardiner to W. Spedding, 24 August 1932, #15076; to N.B. Williams, 4 December 1930, #14775; to W. Barrie, 22 August 1929, #9792-3; to H.A. Mackie, 24 December 1936, #51242-4.

24 *Canadian Annual Review*, 1932, p. 259.

None of this widespread support, whose extent cannot be measured, matched the sharp public focus of the sessions of the legislature. One of Gardiner's aims in the assembly was to explore as fully as he could the several issues—most of which he considered allegations—which had led to his government's defeat. He was particularly interested in two: the so-called Liberal machine with which was connected promised reforms of the civil service; and the use of the Saskatchewan public school system for sectarian purposes by unprincipled nuns and priests who not only taught in their habits, but in extreme cases had crucifixes in the classrooms. It was the second issue which the Ku Klux Klan had exploited profitably in the late twenties in Saskatchewan, and Anderson and his supporters, although always vague on the details of their charges about the abuse of the schools, employed the issue as having major significance in 1929.

Two legislative devices, the formal question and the order for return, were available to the Liberals and in their use they were again aided by the attitude of the Co-operative Government, which in its untutored way thought all questions should be answered, and by the non-Conservatives supporting the government, for they, and especially the Progressives, were almost as inquisitive as the Liberals about the Government's activities. One hundred and sixteen questions were asked in the legislature in 1929, an election year, and four hundred and twenty-four in 1931, the peak year in Anderson's régime. Orders for returns totalled nine in 1929 and seventy-eight in 1931. The Liberals also forced the government on record in divisions, of which there were only five in 1929 and twenty-eight in 1932.[25]

Through legislative procedures the Liberals elicited some remarkably useful statistics. Anderson, for example, was at first conservative in his estimates of the number of dismissals from the public service, conceding there had been eighty-eight, and rounding his figures off at six percent of the total, which was one hundred and two of the approximately 1700 positions. Liberal newspapers, day after day, listed the departed as if they were casualties from military operations and in March of 1930, in response to an order for "the names of all employees of the Government who have been dismissed since September 9", a return listed 476 discharges. A week later a related order listed 588 new employees in the same period.[26] Clearly, as Gardiner said as often as possible, Anderson's vaunted reform of the civil service was going to come only after the service had already been reformed.

Similarly striking revelations came from queries about sectarianism in the schools. When the Klan had begun to exploit the religious mosaic in the province for its own purposes, Gardiner had characteristically assumed the Education portfolio to be in full charge of whatever was going on. As Minister of Education he found the system working normally in both Protestant and Catholic public schools and remained utterly unconvinced of the validity of the issues raised almost hysterically by the Klan and, in due course, by the Conservatives and other anti-Liberal groups. After 1929 he was able to document his position with figures supplied by the Co-operative Government. In September of 1929 seventeen Roman Catholic premises were being

25 Figures calculated from Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly, *Journals*, 1929-34.

26 *Ibid.*, *Sessional Papers*, 1930, pp. 138, 160; #54 and #49.

used for public school teaching, and in December of 1933 twenty. The public schools employed eighty-four nuns as teachers in 1929, and in 1933 ninety-three. As with the attacks on the Liberal organization and the need for civil service reform, Gardiner was able to show of the schools that there had been in fact no crisis in 1929 and the Anderson ministers had hardly resorted to heroic measures to cope with what they did find.[27]

The Liberals' use of legislature devices in Opposition produced little to convince them that they should assist the Co-operative Government. Their forceful criticisms in turn helped keep the Conservatives, Progressives, and Independents united behind J.T.M. Anderson. Despite his inexperience Anderson, except for one or two attacks from doctrinaire Tories who wanted the party to end the coalition with other groups, showed considerable capacity as a leader. It was at least partly confidence in Anderson that appeared to lead to another abortive series of talks (from both sides of the House) about coalition involving the Liberals. By 1932 Gardiner thought he could defeat Anderson in the legislature only with help from outside, while on the government side some bizarre theories were to emerge based on the possibility of getting some Liberals, including even Gardiner, into a coalition with the Conservatives. Since there are no Anderson papers any attempt to reconstruct some of the relevant events must of necessity be incomplete, but the main outlines are clear enough.

It must be emphasized that to Gardiner Liberalism and coalition were mutually exclusive terms which could be brought together only under the direst circumstances. He had not found those circumstances either in the need of the federal Liberals for Progressive support in the 1920s or, before that, in the conscription crisis of 1917. Coalition to him was part of the Tory conspiracy, something—as he rarely missed an opportunity to point out—they always turned to when in trouble. The Progressives' attitude to entering coalition, and then to continuing coalition, was never clear to Gardiner: before 1929 the group was openly divided about whether any of them should enter any cabinet, but in September of that year one did and the group supported Anderson. In February of 1930 the Saskatchewan section of the United Farmers of Canada voted unanimously in favour of direct political action,[28] thus laying the groundwork for the Farmer-Labor party and in due course the CCF in Saskatchewan; in 1933 two of the Progressives in the legislature changed their affiliation to Farmer-Labor, but continued (with occasional exceptions) to support the Co-operative Government. Gardiner had by then little hope of detaching any of Anderson's supporters in the House, but outside the legislature was M.J. Coldwell, whose activities were not hampered by the perceived necessity of keeping a cabinet in office.

Gardiner always distinguished between the Farmer-Labor party, which he saw as purely provincial, and the CCF, which sought national bases. Since he saw both as extensions under new names of old Progressive factions, none of whom had ever impressed him by their grasp of realities, he underestimated the new groups, the needs they sought to meet, and their leaders. If Saskatchewan needs socialism, he told a wavering supporter during the new parties' birth pangs, "it is well to remember . . .

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27 *Ibid., Sessional Papers*, 1934, #103.

28 *Canadian Annual Review*, 1929-30, p. 488.

that the Liberal Party is the only socialistic party in Saskatchewan." Its record included co-operative elevators and creameries, farm loans, hail insurance, a government telephone system, municipal health and hospital units, free tuberculosis treatment, maternity grants, old age pensions, mothers' allowances, and control of tuberculosis in cattle; its policies called for unemployment insurance, extensions of state medicine, debt adjustment, and centralized issue of money. All that came within the framework of liberalism, whereas a socialist party believed everything must be state owned and controlled.[29]

A year later Gardiner wrote that Salem Bland and J.S. Woodsworth had "a record which will not hear investigation." He wondered why "no one reminds Woodsworth of the fact that he has never done a days [sic] work since he ceased to make use of the training the church gave him free of charge." As for Coldwell, he was just a follower "of these two clerics who have had altogether too much of their own way." "If individuals like Mr. Coldwell pretending reform strike off to satisfy personal ambitions", he told the same correspondent to whom he had recited the Liberals' socialistic record, "it only weakens the forces of reform."[30]

By the time he wrote those words Gardiner and Coldwell had swung far apart again, after another unsuccessful attempt at collaboration. Watching the development of the Farmer-Labor group outside the legislature, Gardiner considered the possibilities of a Liberal-Farmer-Labor cabinet following any legislative defeat of the Co-operative Government. Early in 1932, before the founding meeting of the CCF, when the scope and nature of the Farmer-Labor party had developed to the point where its role seemed inconsistent with support of J.T.M. Anderson, Gardiner approached its head, M.J. Coldwell. Again there were at first widely differing versions of what transpired. It was Coldwell's belief that he had again been offered a portfolio. It was Gardiner's that he had seen Coldwell in his capacity as spokesman for a group whose role might conceivably involve defeating Anderson and helping form a new administration without a general election. Far from offering Coldwell a department, Gardiner said, he would not as premier select the person or persons who represented Farmer-Labor nor, if the group named Coldwell, would he play any part in finding him a seat. Coldwell, who claimed he was also being courted by Conservatives, exchanged with Gardiner the pleasantries, already mentioned, about how much one can trust public men with such poor memories, but the latter added that he had always tried to convert Coldwell, since with his forward-looking views he should certainly have been a Liberal. The second Gardiner-Coldwell coalition also came to naught and ended with their collaboration on the statement cited earlier, which explained their activities in both 1929 and 1932.[31]

The Gardiner-Coldwell axis broke up in time for an Anderson-Gardiner one to be created. This time Gardiner took no initiatives, employing tactics markedly different from those he used with Coldwell. It is possible that Anderson and some of his

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29 GP, Gardiner to E. Simington, 30 January 1933, #15528.

30 *Ibid.*, 5 January 1934, #17298; Gardiner to W. Knowles, 17 December 1932, #15260.

31 See *ibid.*, #30787-9; see also #59586-93, #17922-43.

supporters were misled by Gardiner's message to the faithful in the first issue of the *Saskatchewan Liberal*, which appeared in August of 1932:

> This is a time for those who believe in Reform to sink all petty differences of a merely partisan nature, to forget personal ambitions and join in the common cause of reconstituting Saskatchewan. It is a time when the best brains and best thought of all forward looking groups should be brought together in a spirit of cooperation and helpfulness, under the highest ideals of Patriotism, yes, and Religion, that we might triumph over trials and tribulations.[32]

Anybody who thought words like those could be addressed to Tories did not know Gardiner. Nonetheless, coincidently with the appearance of the message, Gardiner and at least two other Liberals were the recipients of some singular attentions. On September 3, 1932, A.C. Stewart, Anderson's Minister of Highways and the Independents' choice in the cabinet, called on Gardiner at his farm to make one of a series of varying offers being made at the same time to T.C. Davis, MLA for Prince Albert, and Charles McIntosh, MLA for Kinistino. Davis and McIntosh were asked by Stewart to enter the Co-operative Government, but there were other plans for Gardiner. "Mr. Stewart", Gardiner promptly reported to Mackenzie King,

> offered me the Presidency of the University with the suggestion that if I would accept it they were prepared to take three of my ex-ministers into the government. When I told that I was not interested he asked me whether I would come into the government as one of three if the proposal were made to me. I stated to him that if the proposal for a coalition government were made to me I would discuss the proposal with the Liberal members before offering any opinions on it whatsoever. I am calling on him on Tuesday next to state that nothing further will transpire regarding the matter until Anderson has made personally some concrete suggestion.[33]

Stewart happened to visit Gardiner at a time when he was entertaining his former Provincial Treasurer, W.J. Patterson, who stayed in the house while Stewart and Gardiner met conspiratorially in the yard in Stewart's car. Patterson and Gardiner thereafter drove the nine miles west to the farm of W.R. Motherwell, Gardiner's crotchety old mentor who happened to be entertaining the party's provincial president and secretary, so that most of the party's leading members knew of Stewart's proposal within minutes of its having been made.

The offer had two peculiarities about it: the presidency of the University of Saskatchewan was not vacant, but occupied by a warm friend and admirer of Gardiner's, Dr. Walter Murray; and the premier, Dr. Anderson, knew nothing about it and, when he heard of Stewart's lengthy odyssey to Lemberg, Prince Albert and Kinistino, expressed considerable surprise. At the same time Anderson, who had since 1929 spoken from time to time of the general desirability of an all-party coalition, by a striking coincidence was himself becoming more specific about the Liberals. Within five days of Stewart's approach to Gardiner, Anderson spoke in Winnipeg of the need for "a union of all Parties in each province", and two months later invited Gardiner to

32 *Ibid.*, "To the People of Saskatchewan", #15085.

33 *Ibid.*, Gardiner to King, 4 September 1932, #17668-70.

a confidential talk which, in the context, could only have been about coalition. Gardiner always kept close to his party executive and refused to have any talk in confidence, but Anderson pressed him for a meeting anyway and it was held November 20. Anderson openly wanted coalition. Gardiner countered with what he called the "Baldwin-MacDonald arrangement." By that he meant that the Liberals would be cooperative about the two major problems facing the government, relief and debt adjustment, since the two major parties agreed substantially about the problems and the solutions. That being the case they could cooperate without coalition. Gardiner's proposal included a committee drawn from the ministry and the Opposition to work out details and, after the legislative session in which the two collaborated, a general election. It was agreed that Anderson would take Gardiner's proposal to his caucus, and return with either an acceptance, perhaps with modifications, or a firm offer of coalition.[34]

There then occurred one of those inadvertent breaks in which Anderson, who claimed to be unaware of the presence of reporters, spoke to a Conservative club in Winnipeg in terms which, when they became public, made further negotiations difficult if not impossible. The Winnipeg *Free Press* and *Tribune* chronicled Anderson's speech in the same terms: Gardiner had turned down coalition and "offered to be 'good' and not obstruct during the coming session if we would promise him a provincial election next summer. There will be no general election until July or August, 1934 . . . ."[35] Gardiner not unnaturally took Anderson's statements to mean a termination of negotiations over both coalition and any alternative and, while Anderson attempted to explain away his Winnipeg performance in a letter plainly intended to be conciliatory, he also accused Gardiner of breaking faith by making a public statement before Anderson had met him again after consulting the government caucus. Gardiner, who took the Winnipeg speech as the report from caucus, declined to take any initiatives beyond offering to take a firm offer from Anderson to the Liberal caucus.

Anderson thought it unreasonable of Gardiner to refuse to divulge his own and his party's views on coalition per se, but agreed that the next step was a proposal from himself as head of the government. The proposal he made took a self-defeating form: "Will you kindly place before your Council my request that I be advised as to the attitude of the Liberal members of the Legislature on the matter of coalition." The Liberal provincial Council, meeting in mid-January, 1933, rejected the request in a lengthy motion which began with six "whereas" clauses, one of which asserted that the Liberal MLA's "have always been and are now willing to cooperate with the Government in all necessary measures for the welfare and good government of the Province." The statement ended by expressing opposition to coalition on principle, as not in the best interests of the province. Anderson acknowledged that there was obviously no point in his making "a concrete proposal setting forth the conditions of

34 *Canadian Annual Review*, 1933, p. 240; GP, Anderson to Gardiner, 7 November 1932, #17833; Gardiner to Anderson, 11 November 1932, #17835-6; Anderson to Gardiner, 19 November 1932, #17839-43; Gardiner to Anderson, 29 December 1932, #17864-70.

35 *loc. cit.*

any coalition, a course which I should have followed had your council expressed a willingness to consider coalition."[36]

The negotiations thus never really began, both sides feeling that no offer worthy of thought had been made by the other. Both leaders were acting on principle: Anderson undoubtedly did believe that the crushing problems of the times required that the best brains available, regardless of party, be brought to bear on them; Gardiner, who held throughout that it was no part of the duties of a Leader of the Opposition to take the lead in proposing changes in a responsible cabinet, believed equally firmly that party government was the safest guardian for the province. Writing to a stout supporter after the January Council meeting, he said of the two major parties:

> If they did unite they would likely make a worse job of running the government ... than the present coalition has made. Coalitions always become spending machines because they cannot agree on anything other than spending themselves into popularity.
>
> I have taken the position from the beginning that if the government members can show some real reason involving policies which are going to be beneficial to the province for sinking all other differences for the time being I am willing to consider coalition. On the other hand if the only reason is to keep the Coldwell party out then I am of the opinion that such a move would help them into power and keep them there for a long time.[37]

When the legislature met on February 2, 1933, Gardiner put down a resolution for a committee of five, three to be chosen from the cabinet by the government and two from the Opposition by the Liberals, to confer on legislation on debt adjustment and allied matters. It was a proposition which, if accepted, would have obliged Anderson to choose between selecting three Conservatives for the committee, thus restoring a miniature two party system at the top, or selecting a non-Conservative and thus reducing the Conservatives on the committee to equality with the Liberals. After a good deal of legislative jockeying, extended over several days, a compromise committee was struck, of four from the Conservatives, four from the Liberals, and three from the other groups in the House, and the resolution, after the meeting of the protagonists, was moved by Gardiner and seconded by Anderson. It was the last legislative gesture towards coalition involving government and Opposition; the committee, if it ever met, left no record, not even of the names of its members.[38]

There was one other coalition happening, which began simply enough but with adequate manipulation by Gardiner and his forces became one of those epochal political events that portend the future. Charles McIntosh, the MLA for Kinistino, was the only Liberal approached by A.C. Stewart in 1932 who had not been in Gardiner's cabinet. The opportunity for promotion to Anderson's ministry set him dithering to such an extent that by year-end Gardiner said that his future was so uncertain that it

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36 *Ibid.*, Anderson to Gardiner, 12 January 1933, #17882; W.F. Kerr to Anderson, 25 January 1933, #17899-900; Anderson to Gardiner, 28 January 1933, #43029.

37 *Ibid.*, Gardiner to E. Simington, 30 January 1933, #15528-30.

38 *Ibid.*, Anderson to Gardiner, 8 February 1933, #15561-2; Gardiner to Anderson, 9 February 1933, #15563; Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly, *Journals*, 1933, pp. 27-33; letter from Gordon Barnhart, Clerk of Legislative Assembly, 28 January 1977.

hardly mattered what he did. McIntosh was the only Liberal to respond openly to Anderson's appeals for support of his government, by writing a letter to the press urging the two leaders to bury their differences in the common interest.[39] At the opening of the legislative session of 1933 McIntosh crossed the floor, though still insisting he was a Liberal, and after the session ended he became Minister of Natural Resources. McIntosh's acceptance of an office of emolument automatically vacated his seat in the legislature, and the necessary by-election was scheduled for May 22.

The Kinistino by-election of 1933 was only the second to be contested during Anderson's premiership, the Liberals as a matter of strategy having permitted the others eight ministers to be returned by acclamation in the autumn of 1929. (The first contested by-election, a spirited affair from which the Liberals had wrung the last drop of publicity, had been in Estevan in 1930.[40]) Like the federal by-election that was to be held later in the year in Mackenzie, the parties regarded Kinistino as of crucial importance; the provincial seat offered the first real test at the polls of Anderson's and Gardiner's courses since 1929. Unlike Mackenzie, which had gone to the Progressives since 1921, Kinistino had been solidly Liberal since 1912; in 1933 Kinistino was to be a two-way fight, where four candidates were to appear in Mackenzie; and Kinistino, as a provincial seat, was solely under Gardiner's jurisdiction as far as the Liberals were concerned, with no rivalry from any national federation asserting its responsibilities. Gardiner and Anderson, for once in agreement, narrowed the Kinistino issues down to coalition and the new minister, still insisting he was a Liberal, ran as a Government candidate against an official Liberal. McIntosh, who had taken the seat handily in 1929, in 1933 lost by a vote of 4,186 to 2,163. "I would say", Gardiner reported next day to King, "that all of the vote we received is a straight vote against anything else but a party government."[41]

Kinistino was thus accepted by Gardiner as a total vindication of his decision to continue as a normal opposition and avoid coalition with the governing parties, despite the grimness of the problems Saskatchewan faced in the early thirties. He did not consider his flirtations with Coldwell inconsistent with his chosen course because in both he was merely exploring possibilities, something else a Liberal did before making decision. In both the Liberals would have remained in charge of whatever ensued. Gardiner's direction of Liberal fortunes in opposition culminated in one of the most stunning defeats in Canadian history: in the provincial election of 1934 the Liberals, running in constituencies devised by their opponents, won fifty of the fifty-five seats, and Anderson's supporters took not one.

There is a certain irony in a defence of the parliamentary and party system which results in the destruction of one group, the Progressives, and the elimination from the legislature of another, the Conservatives, for thirty years. But the same defence, to which M.J. Coldwell contributed, helped in the rise of a new party: the Farmer-Labor

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39 *Ibid.*, Gardiner to A. Grant, 17 December 1932, #17845; *Canadian Annual Review*, 1933, p. 240; *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 22 November 1932.

40 See Norman Ward, "Gardiner and Estevan, 1929-34", *Saskatchewan History*, XXVII, (Spring 1974), pp. 60-5.

41 King Papers, MG 26, J1, vol. 96, Gardiner to King, 24 May 1933, pp. 166338-41.

party, running in its first general election, fielded fifty-one candidates in 1934, won five seats, and came second in seventeen, with 24 per cent of the popular vote. They were of course aided by the electoral system (the Conservatives earned 27 per cent of the vote for no seats), but even so the party's history would have been different if coalition had been as acceptable to Gardiner and Coldwell as it was to J.T.M. Anderson. As a final relevant footnote, the record should show that two Farmer-Labor candidates in 1934, who were not even runners-up, were M.J. Coldwell and T.C. Douglas. Both left the provincial field in 1935 as successful CCF candidates for the House of Commons and it is idle, but interesting, to speculate on what might have happened if they had won provincially in 1934. Coldwell would have become Leader of the Opposition instead of the man who did, and the man who did, would have left no vacancy behind him when he enlisted in 1940. The vacancy that was in fact left was the one ultimately filled by T.C. Douglas.

Résumé

James Gardiner devint le premier chef de gouvernement en Saskatchewan à perdre le pouvoir alors que le parti libéral qu'il dirigeait détenait le plus grand nombre de sièges. Après sa défaite, en 1929, il mit un temps considérable à déterminer la meilleure ligne de conduite à suivre pour son parti: il devint chef de l'Opposition en choisissant de l'être sans s'allier à aucun autre des partis en cause.

Au cours des années qui suivirent, toutefois, les circonstances furent telles qu'il dût, en deux occasions, considérer la possibilité d'une coalition ave M.J. Coldwell et ses partisans. De plus, en 1932, il fut également sollicité par le gouvernement de J.T.M. Anderson en vue d'une coalition qui aurait permis à trois libéraux, dont Gardiner, de siéger au Cabinet. Cependant, rien dans tout cela ne cadrait avec la conception qu'entretenait Gardiner du rôle de chef de l'Opposition. Pour lui, ce rôle sous-entendait, à la fois, la préservation du système parlementaire et le maintien de celui des partis.

Cette politique s'avéra d'ailleurs d'une grande importance dans l'histoire des partis politiques en Saskatchewan et pour le sien en particulier. Le talent qu'il mit à y maintenir une organisation politique vigoureuse, et ce, en dépit du fait qu'il était démuni de toutes les ressources financières dévolues au parti au pouvoir, fit en sorte que, dès 1934, la coalition qui gardait Anderson au pouvoir fut non seulement défaite mais détruite.