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Wooden Horses and Rubber Cows: Training British Agricultural Labour for the Canadian Prairies, 1890-1930

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See table of contents

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Article abstract

A cause du développement de l'agriculture dans les Prairies pendant les années 1890 à 1930, la demande pour une main-d'oeuvre qualifiée excédait grandement ce que la population locale était en mesure d'offrir. Il fallait donc recourir à l'immigration et l'on vit arriver de nombreux ouvriers d'Europe centrale qui, dans l'ensemble, se sont fort bien acquittés de leur tâche. Toutefois, les fermiers de l'ouest voyaient d'un mauvais oeil l'arrivée de tous ces étrangers et, de plus en plus, on manifesta le désir de recourir à une main-d'oeuvre d'origine britannique.

Plusieurs centres d'entraînement furent donc mis sur pied pour préparer les jeunes Britanniques au travail agricole tel qu'il se pratiquait dans l'ouest canadien. Il semble bien, selon l'auteur, que le système ait eu plus de succès avant la guerre parce que les chances d'obtenir du travail étaient beaucoup plus grandes. Après la guerre, et ce, malgré le fait que plusieurs centres étaient nettement mieux organisés que ceux qui les avaient précédés, le système n'eut pas les résultats escomptés. Bien souvent, les jeunes Britanniques étaient des citadins n'ayant aucune disposition pour l'agriculture et, bien souvent aussi, les fermiers d'après la guerre n'avaient ni le besoin, ni les moyens d'employer une main-d'oeuvre supplémentaire à longueur d'année. Enfin, les Prairies se tournaient de plus en plus vers une agriculture spécialisée qui rendait désuet l'entraînement subi dans les divers centres de formation.

*Wooden Horses and Rubber Cows: Training British Agricultural Labour for the Canadian Prairies, 1890-1930**

W.J.C. CHERWINSKI

For the prairie farmer, the acquisition of competent, reasonably priced labour was a continual problem. Local sources never sufficed to fill the demand, particularly during the busy seeding and harvesting seasons. Harvest excursions met the need somewhat, but the farmer could not afford to pay the high wages demanded by Canadian harvesters on a year-round basis. The cheapest solution appeared to be a stepped-up immigration programme. Luring immigrants, however, also presented many difficulties. Canadians preferred British settlers but, as the London Office of the Immigration Branch could testify, British people were reluctant to move. Experienced farm workers especially seemed to have little interest in emigrating. Canada tried to pry them loose with the hard-sell technique of creating an image of prairie Canada as a land of boundless opportunities with plentiful work, high wages, and guaranteed progress up the agricultural ladder to comfortable land ownership. The propaganda said nothing about the numerous differences between prairie agriculture and that practised elsewhere. Nor did it ever mention the unique hardships the immigrant would certainly encounter in the Last Best West.

Despite its urgent appeal, Canada could only attract non-agricultural labour. Since untrained workers would hardly meet the needs of prairie farmers, numerous schemes and plans arose on both sides of the Atlantic to introduce the inexperienced migrant to the rudiments of farm work. Many of the originators of training programmes actually believed that the exhilirating prairie air would somehow miraculously transform the unskilled urban immigrant into a diligent farm worker whose future would be assured. Inspired by too large an injection of packaged optimism, the plans, although noble of motive, were uneven in approach and programme and by and large naive in their assumption that anyone could learn farming. A more serious problem, however, was that agricultural training fell into the hands of opportunists who harboured no such illusions, but who used their schemes as wooden horses to get unsuitable men into the country as trained agriculturists. For their part, many of these "trained" farm workers assumed that the prairie image applied to Canada's cities as well and the riches

* The research for this paper was made possible through a grant from the Canada Department of Labour University Research Committee. The author is also indebted to Andy den Otter and Hugh Tuck for their valuable comments.

there were available simply for a few weeks of inconvenience spent training. Consequently, the result for many men was disappointment and bitterness at having been so cleverly duped. This paper surveys a number of these schemes as they applied to the prairies, compares their approaches, and attempts to determine the fate of the hired hands so produced who searched for the opportunities they felt should be theirs.

* * * * *

The traditional training method was for someone to hire on with a practising farmer and earn enough in a couple of years to become independent. On a limited basis, such informal apprenticeship arrangements between farmers and potential farmers worked, but more often the trainees required a considerable amount of patience and time from the tutors. In due course, however, the process was self-defeating. Former apprentices required farm hands as well, in numbers which could not be readily supplied.

The shortage of satisfactory manpower for prairie farms occurred at the same time as high unemployment in the United Kingdom coincided with the expressed sentiment that, if England's children found it necessary to leave home, they should remain under the flag. Interestingly, in the latter part of the nineteenth century, two quite separate parts of the British social spectrum — the middle class public school graduate, and the offspring of the unemployed and the institutionalized pauper — found themselves "redundant". Since the Canadian West was an integral part of the "new" British Empire (one prewar advocate of emigration casually referred to Canada as West Britain as compared with Australia and New Zealand which constituted South Britain),[1] it soon became apparent to both groups that the path to opportunity and the fulfillment of an imperial vision could be paved by preparatory training in the chief occupation of the prairie region.

In the three decades before the Great War, the traditional professions for upper and middle class youth of Britain — the church, the bar, and the senior public service — were becoming increasingly difficult to enter for mediocre graduates of public schools.[2] For those responsible for their welfare, either parents or guardians, the mystique of the land proved undeniably attractive. Its possible ownership offered hopes of future status as well as a solid, stabilizing influence in a world of "industrialism [which] for itself spells ruin and degradation . . .",[3] particularly if the young man tended towards irresponsibility. Once they answered the call of the prairie West, however, their experiences as "farm hands" often

1. Saskatchewan Archives (hereafter SA), Deputy Minister of Agriculture (hereafter Dep. Min. Ag.) file XXVI.1, Rev. Gwynn, "The Case for a Farm in or near Winnipeg", n.d. (1911?).
2. *Ibid.*, A.B. Owen to A.E. Struthers, 1 November 1911; F.H. Auld to F.T. Griffin, 28 November 1911; Patrick A. Dunae, "Tom Brown on the Prairies: Public Schoolboys and Remittance Men in the Canadian West 1870-1914", (paper presented to the CHA meetings, Saskatoon, Sask., 1979), p. 6.
3. SA, Dep. Min. Ag. file XXVI.1, Rev. Gwynn, "Case for a Farm".

were not good. The Reverend Gwynn, a member of the Royal Colonial Emigration Committee and chairman of Kent Colonizing Association, summed up both the situation and prevailing attitudes when he stated:

> Some of the best British lads become bottle washers, bar men, and at trades or callings wholly unsuitable if not harmful to their characters. These lads say that the hard condition of many of the farms, the sleeping accommodation, and the general attitude of the farmer who often only wants temporary help, are such as dishearten and disgust them with work on the land. Yet, at the back of all our commercial life must be the landed interests.[4]

Obviously the solution was for the young man to acquire training and the best way was under the watchful eye of an experienced farmer. Accordingly, some young emigrants spent a year on a diversified Ontario farm before moving to Manitoba and the Northwest the following spring.[5] Others hired on directly. No doubt many from the cream of British society were introduced to prairie agriculture in this manner.

Since the possibility of profit existed, the training of well-heeled young men was open to abuses, the most prevalent of which was the farm pupil scheme. By the 1890s, some Canadian farmers accepted fees which ranged from one hundred to two hundred pounds per year from "glib-tongued adventurers" in England who lined up affluent young men who wanted to learn farming. Some of these enterprises were no doubt legitimate and provided value for the money spent, but more often the "trainee" was put to menial tasks involving few skills and few prospects of learning any. When such practices were exposed in the British press, Canadian immigration officials expressed immediate concern since bad publicity could cancel years of work directed at just this segment of British society.[6] In response federal agents assured all who would listen that farmers in Manitoba and the Northwest were only too happy to teach their trade to a "green Englishman" without charge and were even prepared to pay him what he was worth.

While immigration authorities condemned the farm pupil schemes at every opportunity, a lengthy editorial in Winnipeg's *The Western World* of June 1898 indicated that exploitation under these arrangements could backfire. Often the trainee was dumped on an unsuspecting farmer who needed the money, but soon discovered that he had a burden on his hands, because the young man was thoroughly useless,"indolent and careless, accustomed at home to be waited on at every turn, and looking for the same sort of attendance here . . . ." As a consequence, he idled away his time waiting for a "remittance from an indulgent momma or aunt who does her foolish best to make him feel happy here in a

4. *Ibid.*
5. Manitoba, Department of Agriculture and Immigration, *Report*, 1902, *Sessional Papers*, No. 2, 1903, p. 294.
6. *Canada Sessional Papers*, No. 13, 1894, p. 27; *The Emigrant*, 1 October and 1 December 1886; *The Western World*, June 1890, May and December 1891; Public Archives of Canada (hereafter PAC), Immigration Branch Records, RG 76, vol. 37, file 839, part 1, Preston to Pedley, 19 November 1902.

'dreadful' country . . . where she imagines he runs a constant risk of being devoured by bears or killed by Indians." Historian Patrick Dunae, in a recent paper on these Tom Browns of questionable motivation, argues convincingly that only a minority, however, were misfits. The rest were just ill-prepared and as a consequence might well have benefitted from formal training schemes set up to better acquaint them for a life on the prairies.[7]

More formal instruction existed on both sides of the Atlantic to better serve the needs of England's comfortable classes. In the Old Country, the Royal Agricultural College and the Colonial College were such institutions. Both offered courses in theoretical and practical agriculture designed to cushion the culture shock between the old and new worlds. While both were expensive, Dunae points out that once a young man graduated he usually succeeded wherever he settled.[8]

Meanwhile, in Canada, there were two farm-training schools established for similar purposes before the Great War, both adjuncts of public schools in England, both exclusive and well endowed, both in Alberta, and both dedicated to an imperial vision for the prairies. Bradfield College Ranch near Calgary and Berkhamsted Farm near Red Deer offered courses in general agriculture, although the former laid greater stress on pursuits associated with ranching.[9]

Since the Bradfield and Berhamsted Ranches demanded that their students spend a considerable amount of time under instruction, graduates were generally well-prepared for what farming had to offer. As Dunae points out, however, their main difficulty was that they were restricted to boys from the home school and thus the numbers attracted were small. Realizing this, other individuals, notably from the Western Canadian British Public School Association and the League of the Empire, made plans for a residential farm school for all "young men of good education" to be operated as a paying proposition near a major prairie centre. Their argument was that many an English father "would not . . . be at all frightened at paying £100 if it would give his boy a start at some occupation that offered him a decent prospect in life." As a consequence, a detailed feasibility study was done by the principal of the Manitoba Agricultural College, but it had to be shelved in 1914.[10]

The enthusiasm of Britain's comfortable classes for the prairies was shared by a variety of philanthropic organizations headquartered in England, whose officers saw there another place where the unfortunate could escape their degrading

7. Dunae, "Tom Brown on the Prairies", pp. 10-1.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 23-4.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 25-7; Glenbow-Alberta Institute (hereafter GAI), "The Bradfield College Ranch for Bradfield Boys in the Province of Alberta Canada, a Preliminary Notice", pp. 12-3; *Red Deer Advocate*, 24 July 1971.
10. SA, Motherwell Papers, R.J. Lecky to Motherwell, 6 June 1910, 9845; SA, Dep. Min. Ag. file XXVI.1, Owen to Struthers, 1 November 1911; SA, Scott Papers, "Principal Black's Scheme for the League of the Empire Canadian School of Farming", 40967-8; and "Tregillus Proposal", 40969-70.

environment and get a new start in life within the empire.[11] Children were their primary concern and two kinds of "child-rescue" organizations prevailed — those who cared for the products of Britain's harsh youth penal system and those involved with the orphaned and abandoned. Both groups developed agricultural training facilities to make their wards more appealing immigrants to the host countries.

Saltley Reformatory in England, the Church of England Waifs' and Strays' Society, and the Wellington Reformatory Farm School all trained and dispatched some boys to Canada late in the nineteenth century, but the most extensive organization involved in reformatory work and the one which had definite ties with the Canadian prairies was the Philanthropic Society, with its 150 acre farm school at Redhill in Surrey.

The society designed its farm school to provide its wards with "the wholesome influence of open air, free discipline, country associations and country habits,"[12] as well as training, the hope being that the boys could in this way bridge the gap to healthy employment which would otherwise not have been their lot. As one of the finest of its kind,[13] the school sent a considerable number of eighteen- and nineteen-year-old youths to Canada each year. By the turn of the century, the lion's share appeared bound for the prairies, mostly to farmers near the CPR main line.[14]

No doubt many of Redhill's students made good farm hands and some may have acquired homesteads of their own. There is no evidence to suggest, however, that the training they received made them better able to adapt to prairie life or to provide superior service to their employers than the uninitiated immigrant. Yet the reformatory training farms did provide the boys with the necessary means of escape but, eventually, mounting pressure from Canadians who viewed reformatory children as "viscious and defective" forced federal authorities to curtail the entry into the country of Redhill graduates whenever possible.[15]

By comparison, Canadian immigration officials encouraged the work of British and Canadian juvenile migration societies involved with bringing orphans and the children of the poor to Canada. Like the reformatory schools, a number of these groups established farm training facilities to prepare their wards to better

11. Joy Parr's recent study, *Labouring Children: British Immigrant Apprentices to Canada, 1869-1924* (London and Montreal, 1980), provides an excellent discussion of the rationale for and the practices of the various philanthropic groups involved with child rescue.
12. A speech by one of Redhill's chaplains, as quoted in Alex G. Scholes, *Education for Empire Settlement: A Study of Juvenile Migration* (London, 1932), p. 18.
13. RG 76, vol. 104, file 16900, J. Ennis to J.A. Smart, 8 November 1904.
14. Sixty-seven of eighty-two Redhill pupils were sent to Manitoba and the Northwest between April 1900 and October 1904. *Ibid.*, "List of Boys Emigrating from the Farm School to Canada in the last 5 Years."
15. *Ibid.*, vol. 65, file 3115, part 3, O. Mowat to Sec. of State, London, 7 July 1898; vol. 104, file 16900, Scott to Smith, 17 September 1909; Robertson to Fortier, 13 May 1910.

avail themselves of the opportunities in the New World. Among them, the Edgeworth Training Farm operated by the National Children's Home and Orphanage and J.W.C. Fegan's Canadian Training School, both in England, were particularly significant for the number of youngsters they sent to Canada before the Great War.

Both Edgeworth and Fegan's also operated reception and distribution homes in Ontario while the George C. Cossar organization ran a training farm for dispossessed Scottish youth at Lower Gagetown, New Brunswick. There is evidence that young men from all three travelled to the prairies to seek their fortunes after they had completed their apprenticeships.[16] The only juvenile migration society to establish a training facility designed to tailor farm hands for the prairies, however, was the renowned Barnardo organization. In 1888, twenty-two years after he began his life-long project, Dr. Barnardo acquired a ten thousand acre site near Russell, Manitoba, 223 miles northwest of Winnipeg, and there he created The Barnardo Industrial Farm. The site was chosen because it offered good cultivable land, wood for fuel, and meadows for hay and pasture. Its emphasis was on mixed agriculture. Only eight hundred acres were ever put to field crop; the rest was used as pasture for a fine herd of cattle, sheep, and swine.

The objectives for the Barnardo Farm were two in number. First of all, Barnardo himself saw it as a means of raising money for his other ventures, particularly those in England.[17] Consequently, the emphasis was on production — the farm's creamery, for example, which was built in 1889, produced sixty thousand pounds of butter annually until it burnt down six years later — but the Farm scarcely met this objective because it was located too far from a major marketing centre. In addition, machinery and equipment suffered in the hands of the inexperienced and uncaring boys, thus further affecting the financial viability of the operation.[18]

However, the Farm's second concern, youth reclamation (turning "myriads of degraded lives into honourable and useful careers", the publicity called it), proved the worth of Barnardo's planning. The one hundred or so trainees chosen each year from "big fellows" "of the rougher sort" from the British Isles and brought to the Farm in three contingents (April, July, and October) were housed in a spartan dormitory. While there the emphasis was always on giving them "plenty to occupy them in all seasons of the year" and for their efforts the boys received free board and a small wage. Once their stints were completed, administrators immediately placed them with "creditable" farmers in the region who had applied for a young man trained "in the rudiments of western farming methods."[19]

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16. See Dept. of Interior Report, 1914, *Sessional Papers*, No. 25, 1915, pp. 193-8; *Sessional Papers*, No. 13, 1895, p. 134.
17. *The Emigrant*, 1 August 1887. See also Parr, *Labouring Children*, for a fuller discussion of Barnardo's activities.
18. SA, Dep. Min. Ag. file XXVI.1, Struthers to Griffin, 23 October 1911.
19. *Ibid.*

In nineteen years of operation, the Barnardo Industrial Farm placed about seventeen hundred young men as farm hands throughout the prairie provinces, and would probably have continued to do so had not Barnardo died. Whether the training there and at the other similar institutions warranted the publicity they received is difficult to say. Doubtless the graduates were somewhat better prepared for farm work than the totally uninitiated, but there is no proof that they became better farmers for their training. The Barnardo Farm's long-time manager, C.A. Struthers, admitted that many of those that arrived at the Farm were ill-suited since they were more used to the sparkle of city lights. Consequently, they showed little respect for farm property. Moreover, he implied that the training they received was inadequate because it placed too much emphasis on demonstration rather than actual operation and because "twelve months [was] little enough time" to train the average youth.[20] Despite these shortcomings, however, all trainees, no matter how good or bad, were hired without question. The simple reason was that, in the two decades before the Great War, the labour supply problem on the prairies in most years was so severe that any able-bodied man could find ample work, irrespective of age, condition, or training. Experience rather than formal training appeared to determine differences in wages.

The depression which began in 1913 disrupted the process of farm training as high unemployment briefly diminished the local demand for labour. The outbreak of war in the fall of 1914, however, compounded the labor problems which prairie farmers had experienced earlier. Not only was the supply of new workers cut off by hostilities, but many existing farm hands dropped what they were doing to defend King and Country. Farmers were forced to make major adjustments, particularly in light of the demands made upon them for increased production. They hired whomever they could; they relied increasingly on children, and even furloughed soldiers when necessary; they turned increasingly to labour-saving devices; and often they left many tasks undone.[21] The long term consequence of this situation for agricultural training was that it accelerated the trend away from diversification and toward "cash grain farming". Without livestock and dairy cattle, the farmer needed hired help only at certain times, and thus he was less concerned whether his hands had any wide expertise. The rest of the time he did without.

Meanwhile, wartime suspicion of foreigners combined with strengthened imperial kinship resulted in serious expressions of concern by many Canadians that the proper Anglo-Saxon balance was being eroded by too liberal an immigration policy.[22] The situation appeared particularly critical on the prairies where im-

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20. *Ibid.*
21. SA, Martin Papers, "Patriotic Harvesting Clubs", 30079-82; Manitoba, Dept. of Agriculture and Immigration, *Report*, 1918, p. 61; Robert Ankli, H.D. Helsberg, and J.H. Thompson, "The Adoption of the Gasoline Tractor in Western Canada", in Donald H. Akenson, ed., *Canadian Papers in Rural History* (Gananoque, Ont., 1980), II, p. 12.
22. Donald Avery, *"Dangerous Foreigners": European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada, 1896-1932* (Toronto, 1979), p. 96.

perialists pointed out that the population consisted of twenty-eight "races" speaking at least thirty-five languages. Moreover, the "leavening British element" felt threatened by their belief that most of these people accepted a much lower standard of living than the British immigrants.[23] Still others opposed the trend they saw of the increasing presence of "the implanted tendrils of the American octopus" in Britain's North American Dominion.[24] To counter both developments, the solution was to decrease the number of foreigners entering Canada and to encourage those with the proper ethnic credentials.

As it happened, after the war the Mother Country had plenty of her children to offer to the Dominions. The return of British soldiers to civilian life displaced enumerable youths employed in industry, a problem which was exacerbated by the postwar depression. Unfortunately, they were not the kind of immigrants that the dominions and particularly Canada desired. Imperial settlement advocates conceded that there was indeed a problem:

> . . .wage earners demanded by the Dominions are land-workers and domestic servants, the very classes of which there is no surplusage at home. Unemployment in Great Britain is at present almost exclusively urban; the labour wanted in the Dominions is rural.[25]

For this reason, some Canadians were concerned that if the situation was to develop unchecked their country would again become the depository of what Gibbon Wakefield in the previous century had called "pauper shovellings". Unfortunately, it was an expression of caution quickly submerged by the combination of imperial sentiment in Canada and Britain's urgent need to solve her postwar economic problems. The policy decisions reached in the Dominion capitals and in London shaped the character of agricultural training for the rest of the decade.

The key to immigration developments was the Empire Settlement Act of 1922, which was the product of a prime minister's conference held the previous year. Not only did it place considerable emphasis on agricultural training for redundant British labour as a logical solution to the needs of both the dominions and the Mother Country, but it also gave a new direction because governments became increasingly involved in the migration process not only as coordinators and controllers of private groups, but also as direct participants in the process. The incentive which the Act offered was a grant made by the Imperial Government of £3 million per year for fifteen years to cover one-half the cost of certain approved schemes designed to assist suitable people to settle overseas. Since the dominion wanted farm workers, training schemes ranked high in eligibility for government aid provided that satisfactory aftercare was guaranteed in Canada.

Before 1914, provincial government involvement in agricultural education in Canada had been directed solely at established farmers and their male offspring, utilizing agricultural colleges, short courses, Farmers' Institutes, and Farm Boys'

23. Scholes, *Education for Empire Settlement*, p. 118.
24. John A.R. Marriott, *Empire Settlement* (London, 1927), p. 70.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 97.

Camps. However, the prewar depression, when numerous ostensibly trained agriculturists went begging for jobs in the city, an expressed desire by Ottawa in 1922 that the prairie provinces take a greater responsibility for immigration matters, and the British Government promise to pick up half the costs of approved schemes, convinced provincial authorities to become more deeply involved in the training process.[26]

The training schemes which met the approval of the Overseas Settlement Department (created by the Overseas Settlement Act) fell into roughly the same three categories as had the voluntary practices which operated before the war: training farms in England, training farms in Canada, and apprenticeship to selected farmers in Canada. The chief difference was the amount of actual control exercised by government agencies to ensure that the trainee would possess at least a degree of competence.

Many of the organizations which had operated before the war, such as the National Children's Homes and Orphanages, Fegan's, and the Cossar operation, continued to function as before.[27] The most extensive operation to train and direct potential farm workers to the dominions and particularly to the prairies was the Salvation Army. This was due largely to the systematic, business-like approach it took to the problem of Britain's superfluous population. Long known for its work among the distressed, the Salvation Army was unflinching in its devotion to its objectives, fearless in its requests for financial assistance, tireless in the advertisement (and often misrepresentation) of its own accomplishments, dedicated in the way it ignored criticism, and enviable in its ability to adapt its organization to meet changing circumstances.

Since its founding, the Salvation Army viewed rural life as desirable to rehabilitate those from the lower side of British society whom the organization was dedicated to save. An integral part of William Booth's global plan outlined in his book, *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (1890), was a farm colony near London where prospective migrants could be trained before departure to the "British colonies", "Foreign Lands", and "The Colony Across the Sea".[28] The next year the Army purchased a three thousand acre site at Hadleigh in Essex to fulfil its vision.

From the beginning, the Army had devoted its efforts to persuading Canada to accept its human offerings. One way to make them more appealing was to use the Hadleigh facility to train various groups in agricultural methods. Yet there appears to be no evidence to indicate that the farm was ever used before the war to prepare English boys for the prairies, probably because the Army was so preoccupied as an agent recruiting all kinds of workers, an activity for which it received

26. SA, Scott Papers, "Unemployment", 46050-7; RG 76, vol. 296, file 271918, J.G. Gardiner to Chas. Stewart, 22 November 1922.
27. Scholes, *Education for Empire Settlement*, p. 74.
28. General William Booth, *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (Napeville, Ga., 1942), pp. 136-43, and chart at front of book; Jose Harris, *Unemployment and Politics: A Study in English Social Policy, 1886-1914* (Oxford, 1972), pp. 28-9.

considerable money from federal and provincial authorities. (In 1906, for example, the organization claimed to have selected ten thousand farm hands for Western Canada which it planned to distribute through its "Farmers' Help Bureau" located at Brandon.[29]) This work carried on with public money, however, soon attracted criticism, particularly from organized labour which accused the Army of glutting the urban labour market.[30] Immigration officials also were upset with the way the organization flagrantly evaded departmental regulations. In response, the Department of Immigration and Colonization imposed further restrictions on immigrants, making the Salvationists' task that much more difficult.[31]

The Empire Settlement Act of 1922 made the Army's task considerably easier. Soon its officials presented a series of training schemes to prairie governments for consideration.[32] When these were rejected, the Army turned to its Hadleigh farm which became a school for juveniles seeking to emigrate. By the end of three years of operation (1923-26), close to two thousand boys[33] made the journey to the farm at their own expense, arriving in scheduled groups each Thursday afternoon. The training period was determined by the previous experience possessed by the individual youngster and by sailing schedules. Nonetheless, most of them stayed for a mere six to twelve weeks. During that time, each boy was introduced to the skills deemed most important for him to acquire, including care, harnessing, and handling of horses, and milking a cow "without springing to his feet at every switch of the cow's tail." For the Army these skills ranked in importance with serving God and honouring the king; the total plan was not intended to produce fully qualified farmers, but simply to build "a successful future for each lad" away from the degrading environment that had been his home.[34] Once "trained", the boys departed for Canada in a group consisting of other "mixed immigrants", all under the care of an experienced Salvationist officer. On arrival other officers took over and placed each lad with a

29. RG 76, vol. 105, file 17480, part 1, Smart to Preston, 2 November 1903; Preston to Smart, 27 November 1903; "Proposal for a Course of Special Training in Agriculture", 3 May 1904; *Farm and Ranch Review*, (January 1906).
30. SA, OC file no. 496/07, Scott to Lieutenant-Governor, 22 July 1907; Dep. Min. Ag. file XXVI.1, memo, Molloy to Motherwell, "Re Salvation Army and Government Grants", 2 August 1917; Scott Papers, Regina Trades and Labor Council resolution, 20 February 1909, 45908; and Saskatoon Trades and Labor Council resolution, 31 March 1909, 45912-3; GAI, Alta. Dept. of Agriculture, "Correspondence re: Veteran Immigration from Great Britain", J.C. Watters to Harry Gosling, 12 December 1916.
31. Avery, *"Dangerous Foreigners"*, p. 95; RG 76, vol. 105, file 17480, part 3, Cory to Lamb, 20 May 1921; Smith to Calder, 30 April 1921; Blair to Lamb, 14 July 1921.
32. SA, Dunning Papers, Lamb to Dunning, 27 April 1923, 28893-4; 10 January 1924, 28896; Dunning to Lamb, 23 January 1924, 28900; Trudge to Dunning, 29 January 1924; 28910; "Outline of Three New Schemes", October 1925, 29482-5.
33. Marriott, *Empire Settlement*, p. 99.
34. *The Salvation Army Scheme for Boys: The Stepping Stone to Manhood*, (pamphlet), 1929, pp. 3-5.

handpicked farmer at a fair wage where it was hoped he would provide satisfactory service.

The Overseas Settlement Committee subsidized the Hadleigh farm based on the number trained, and both Canada and Britain contributed to the transportation cost of each boy to the amount of eighty dollars. This practice continued until it was discovered that the Army demanded repayment from the boys once they were working. Despite considerable pressure, however, the organization refused to stop the practice, because it considered it morally advantageous for boys to "contribute" to their own social elevation.[35]

Relations between Canadian governments and the Salvation Army were never very good and the repayment issue was only one of a succession of conflicting objectives. There is no doubt, however, that Canada received a considerable number of people for the more than a third of a million dollars ($376,264.28) spent by Ottawa between 1907 and 1927,[36] and the prairie provinces added numerous farm hands to their populations for the thousands spent on Army work.[37] Whether they got what they paid for is doubtful, particularly with regard to trained workers. Even the Army recognized that six to twelve weeks' instruction gave little in return.[38] Moreover, many of the "trainees" never had any intention of staying on a farm and, as a result, a high percentage were deported as public charges, despite Army claims that the scheme had proved successful.[39] To be fair, however, the Salvation Army had become involved in training juvenile farm workers to meet the requirements of the Empire Settlement Act and Canadian government restrictions, and it had no intention of giving value for every dollar it could squeeze from any source. All philanthropic organizations viewed training as a means to an end rather than an end in itself. Their primary objective was to move people at the least cost per person. That the Army was the most skilful at it deserves grudging credit.

While the results from farm training schemes created by philanthropic organizations proved less than satisfactory, various public bodies were quick to emulate them as a means to dispose of superfluous workers. For example, municipal officials, local volunteer groups, and prominent citizens from Northumberland and Durham established, with Overseas Settlement Committee assistance, a hostel where unemployed boys could be "tested, trained and equipped for farm work in the Dominions." Using the resources provided by farmers in the area, they experienced for three months both the rudiments of agriculture and the salutary benefits of "the open air life" and then migrated under the care of an emigration society. This scheme was soon followed by others of like nature and

35. RG 76, vol. 105, file 17480, part 3, Walker to Egan, 22 July 1926; memo, 15 December 1926; memo, 14 November 1927; *The Salvation Army Scheme for Boys*, pp. 10-1.
36. RG 76, vol. 105, file 17480, part 4, "Grants made to the Salvation Army".
37. Saskatchewan paid the Army ten thousand dollars yearly until 1912 when the terms were modified. SA, Dep. Min. Ag. file XXVI.1, memo, Molloy to Motherwell, 2 August 1917.
38. *Salvation Army Scheme for Boys*, p. 4.
39. RG 76, vol. 105, file 17480, part 3, memo, 15 December 1926.

by 1929 there were seven municipal committees able to "train" 1,170 boys for the Dominions. No estimate can be made, however, of how many ultimately settled on the Canadian prairies or how effective their preparation was compared with that offered by other groups.[40]

A more extensive, better organized effort directed at an older group was the farm-training scheme for young unemployed men between nineteen and thirty-five years of age instituted by the British Ministry of Labour in 1925. First used in 1916 to train ex-servicemen,[41] the ministry training centres at Claydon in Suffolk and Brandon in Norfolk advertised a broad, highly structured programme designed not only to train, but also to screen out the undesireable. The first of three phases was the most physically demanding for the candidate with an emphasis on tough manual labour. Once he hurdled this barrier, the trainee spent the next eighteen-day segment in the dairy learning to milk (eight men to a cow) and to tend cattle, and in the final part he was taught to plow and to take care of horses.[42]

Whatever their merits, the Labour Ministry's Farm Training Centres became models for other facilities of their kind. They were studied by a variety of officials interested in farm migrants and were even filmed by the CPR as part of its programme to promote immigration.[43] Such tacit approval by Canadian officials caused the spawning of imitators intent on creating equally acceptable programmes. One of these was operated by Northern Ireland's Ministry of Labour. Others were under private operation, including the Church of Scotland Training Farm at Curton Vale.[44] Among them the Hudson's Bay Company Training Centre, opened in 1927 and operated in conjection with Canadian Cunard as designated carrier, at the 250 acre Brogborough Park Farm at Ridgemont near Bletchley, Bedfordshire, deserves special attention.

The Labour Department influence was obvious in the Brogborough Park programme. Designed for men between sixteen and thirty-five years of age, it too consisted of three three-week periods. The first emphasized manual labour as a culling device, the second stressed dairy practices, and the last taught field techniques using horses. More important, the centre offered the latest in technological innovations for the aspiring farm hand, including the most modern Canadian machinery under the direction of experienced Canadian farmers. Later the centre

40. Scholes, *Education*, pp. 81-2; Provincial Archives of Alberta (hereafter PAA), Premiers' Papers, Acc. no. 73.301, file 0525, Greenfield to Brownlee, 17 November 1928; RG 76, vol. 355, file 395716.

41. SA, Martin Papers, "Memorandum on Proposed Facilities for Enabling Prospective Migrants to the West. . .", 18 October 1916, 29758-60.

42. Scholes, *Education*, pp. 83-4; PAA, Premiers' Papers, file 0525, Greenfield to Brownlee, 16 May 1927; SA, Sask. Royal Commission on Immigration and Settlement, Minutes of Evidence (hereafter RC on I & S), vol. 33, pp. 26-7; RG 76, vol. 265, file 218165.

43. PAA, Premiers' Papers, file 0525, Greenfield to Brownlee, 16 May, 15 November 1927, 18 February 1928; SA, RC on I & S, vol. 23, p. 18.

44. RG 76, vol. 356, file 400652.

was singled out for special comment for two other teaching aids it used. One was a wooden horse on which students practiced harnessing techniques; the other was a rubber cow equipped with a rubber udder, since few cows could express milk to untrained hands. One observer, realizing that some people would look askance at the latter device particularly, and concerned about portraying the centre in the best possible light, conceded that, while this bovine beauty appeared rather absurd, "she" "would be of considerable value, not only to the prospective immigrant, but also to the poor cows that they [*sic*] came in contact with in the future."[45] Both devices were deemed sufficiently successful, however, that they were adopted by the Carstairs Experimental Farm in Lancashire, the Vimy Ridge Training Farm in Ontario, and later by the Labour Ministry Centres.[46] The future farmer paid nothing to use this equipment or to stay at the farm. He was only obliged to deposit ten pounds with the Hudson's Bay Company to guarantee that he would proceed with Cunard to a farm in Canada assigned by the HBC Overseas Settlement Limited. His third-class ticket would cost £4 10s.; the rest of the deposit would be returned to him in Winnipeg.[47]

Sophisticated equipment and Canadian instructors notwithstanding, Canadian provincial governments preferred to encourage schemes which brought suitable Britishers to Canada for training, since differing farm practices, climate, and soils as well as insufficient quality control made overseas programmes inadequate.[48] In the private sector, the Church Army, the Church of England, the Boy Scouts, the YMCA, and the Big Brother Movement all made separate agreements with the Empire Settlement Board at some time during the twenties to use their respective prairie branches and parish organizations to set up reception hostels and placement facilities for young farm apprentices from England.[49] Success in each instance, however, was determined by the amount of effort each organization put into placement and aftercare.

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45. PAA, Premiers' Papers, file 492, memo, Reid to Brownlee, 14 June 1927; "Canadian Cunard Farm Instruction at the Brogborough Park Farm. . .", 25 November 1927; SA, RC on I & S, vol. 23, p. 18; vol. 28, p. 28.
46. RG 76, vol. 231, file 130761, part 3, Egan to Greenfield, 21 December 1926; vol. 265, file 218165, part 2, Pilling to Passmore, 23 May 1927.
47. "Canadian Cunard Farm Instruction at the Brogborough Park Farm. . ."
48. Scholes, *Education*, p. 75. One unique scheme designed by the Canadian National Railways involved a ten-part correspondence course which qualified the Britisher to emigrate once he had successfully completed an examination based on the course. CNR, *Practical Farming in Canada: A Series of Lectures Prepared by the Department of Agriculture, Canadian National Railways, for the Information and Guidance of New Settlers in Canada* (London, n.d.); PAA, Premiers' Papers, file 0525, Greenfield to Brownlee, 4 April 1927.
49. Scholes, *Education*, pp. 77-8, 117-8; SA, RC on I & S, vol. 23, pp. 76-80; Sask. Dept. of Labour, file LaI5, "Summary of Discussions, Conference on Juvenile Immigration." The CPR also had an apprenticeship scheme using government inspectors instead of local contacts. John H. Culliton, *Assisted Emigration and Land Settlement with Special Reference to Western Canada* (Montreal, 1929), p. 71.

During the same period, the Imperial Government entered into similar apprenticeship agreements with the federal government and a number of provincial governments, including those of Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Known variously as the British Boy Immigration Scheme, the British Farm Boy Apprenticeship Scheme, and the Boys' Reception and Distributing Farm Scheme, the Imperial Government again paid half the cost of exporting youths between the ages of fifteen and nineteen to the prairies. For their part, the federal and provincial governments provided free transportation, hostel accommodation, and undertook "certain responsibilities for training, placement and aftercare." In short, they had to provide a temporary home for the youngster to become acclimatized and learn a few basic skills before he was placed with a reliable farmer. He in turn agreed to provide the boy with instruction in farming, pay him a predetermined wage — in 1929, it was "$150 per year, with board, lodging, washing and mending, with bonus for harvest according to the value of the work done by the boy" — half of which was sent to the provincial director of the scheme to be saved for the day when the young farmer would be ready to set out to his own quarter section.[50]

Apprenticeship schemes appeared ideal for all concerned. The success rate, however, indicates that there were difficulties. For example, of the 173 boys brought to Saskatchewan up to 1932, eleven went home using their own resources, two were shipped back because they were sick, another eleven were deported as unsuitable, eleven more left to join relatives elsewhere in Canada, and twenty-one simply disappeared. Boys sent to Manitoba fared somewhat better, although the government there complained of similar problems with slackers and deserters.[51] Since officials tended to place their programmes in the best possible light, one suspects that the problems with the apprenticeship schemes were more prevalent than these numbers show.

The complaints directed at the British Farm Boy Apprenticeship Scheme indicate that it would have taken a miracle to convert a street-wise product of the city into a prairie farmer. Many of the boys were too small physically. Others had little interest in farming, and most had no appreciation of machinery or animals. Consequently, wanton destruction of equipment and wilful cruelty to livestock were not uncommon. The Saskatchewan farmer, Robert Story, summed up the situation nicely when he revealed his reasons for not having an apprentice:

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50. PAA, Premiers' Papers, file 491, Forke to Brownlee, 14 January 1929; Saskatchewan, Bureau of Labour, *Report*, 1928-29, p. 76; 1931-32, p. 36; Manitoba, Dept. of Agriculture and Immigration, *Report*, 1929, p. 30; SA, RC on I & S, vol. 31, p. 65; Dept. of Labour, file LaI5, "Conference on Juvenile Immigration", Copy of Account Book; "Application for Farm Apprentice"; RG 76, vol. 356, file 397430; vol. 295, file 270653; vol. 296, file 271918.

51. Saskatchewan, Bureau of Labour, *Report*, 1931-32, p. 36; Manitoba, Dept. of Agriculture and Immigration, *Report*, 1929, p. 30; RG 76, vol. 295, file 270653, part 2, Bowman to Blair, 14 June 1930.

> It is not like a boy of your own that you can cuff his ears and make him mind. Most of them have been brought up in the city and they are pretty mischievous, it is not the same as they had been brought up on the Farm in this country and accustomed to Horses and Cattle and the Farm in general. . . .[52]

While her sister provinces tried to cope with the Apprenticeship Scheme, Alberta chose to go it alone. Never very enthusiastic about the way federal immigration workers had treated her,[53] she chose instead to heed the appeals for assistance to the "better class" of British youth made by public school alumni, many of whom had achieved positions of prominence throughout the prairies after they returned from defending the empire.[54] These men were worried about the alarming changes which had taken place in the region's ethnic composition before their very eyes. The result was a scheme which became known as the Hoadley Plan, after the minister of agriculture who implemented it, whereby the province opened its three agricultural colleges to train public and secondary school graduates for their proper place in Alberta rural society.

The first agricultural college scheme to be established in Canada had involved the CPR and Macdonald College in Montreal which jointly sponsored, without direct government subsidy, the importation of around thirty public school boys annually starting in 1924. The rigorous programme comprised two complete winters at the college divided by a summer of practical experience on a farm near Montreal. For this training, each boy paid seventy-two pounds which he could make back with his summer wages.[55] While the Manitoba government entertained a similar plan a year earlier which would have cost the trainee $200 to $250,[56] the Hoadley Plan was the first and only government supported scheme of its kind to become fully operational. Under its terms, the Overseas Settlement Board chose the first sixty-four boys in 1924 and they were sent to the Vermilion Agricultural College with the board and the dominion government handling the transportation costs. For a fee of $150 (£7 10s. per month) to cover board and room for five months, each applicant participated in a structured programme of training paid for by the British and Alberta governments. While in attendance, they lived in the residence or in selected homes and abided by the college's rules.[57]

The curriculum, predicated on a certain level of previous education attained by the boy, was designed to train him for the actual operation of a farm and included such subjects as Animal, Field, and Poultry Husbandry, Farm Management, Mechanics, Entomology, Veterinary Science, Botany, Chemistry, and

52. SA, Dept. of Labour, file LaI4 (2), Story to Tomsett, 8 May 1930; Rayner to Tomsett, 7 February 1930; Tomsett to Little, 22 August 1930.
53. PAA, Premiers' Papers, file 0525, Greenfield to Brownlee, 27 October 1927, 18 February 1928; file 491, Forke to Brownlee, 14 January 1929.
54. SA, Dunning Papers, Wilson to Dunning, 31 May 1922, 28578-9; Dunae, "Tom Brown on the Prairies", p. 26.
55. Scholes, *Education*, pp. 123-4; *Agricultural and Industrial Progress in Canada, passim*, 1924-29.
56. SA, Dunning Papers, Stewart to Dunning, 22 January 1923, 28768.
57. RG 76, vol. 231, file 130761, part 2, "Rules and Regulations".

English. In addition, each English boy received special instruction on Canadian conditions so he could keep up with local students. Once the course was completed, the college endeavoured to find each one a job on a farm nearby and, when the boy felt he was ready, the provincial Department of Agriculture helped him in every way possible to get established on his own land by providing advice on the purchase of land, machinery, and livestock. In 1925, in order to take the pressure off Vermilion, the course was expanded to include the other colleges at Olds and Claresholm.[58]

From the beginning, the Hoadley Plan received praise from empire settlement advocates as the right sort of programme to instill the proper values in the next generation of Alberta's farm leaders.[59] Just as quickly, however, school officials saw problems emerging. The lax attendance and casual behaviour of some English lads created discipline problems among regular students at the colleges. Most prominent, however, was the lackadaisical inspections performed on candidates in Britain. Doctors examined some boys simply to see if they were healthy and others passed through without any examination whatsoever. Consequently, some were too young to qualify and one was even sent to Aberta to see if the climate would help his frail condition. S.H. Gandier, the principal of the Vermilion School, estimated that as a result 40 per cent were deemed not up to standard and 10 to 15 per cent of the total were useless. For this reason, he feared that the last group alone would "finally damn the whole scheme" by making the placement of all Hoadley Boys difficult.[60]

To some extent, Gandier's fears and suspicions were confirmed by the follow-up studies done on the Hoadley Boys. Of the sixty-four in the 1925 group, thirty-four, or almost 54 per cent, were still involved in some sort of agricultural pursuit a year later, while twenty-nine, or 45 per cent (one of them had died), were listed as "Gone to the City". Essentially the same proportions prevailed the year after (56 per cent to 44 per cent). Officials admitted that those who stayed farming "were doing fairly well", but a number of them were getting little more than board during the winter. In addition, officials regretted that, despite the superior training the Hoadley Boys received, farmers had little faith in their ability to work and usually paid them the same wages, or even considerably less, than Old Country boys who came to the prairies without training (thirty to forty dollars per month for newcomers compared with twenty to thirty dollars for Hoadley Boys).[61] Yet immigration advocates continually harped on the fantastic success of the Alberta scheme and used it as an argument for greater empire settlement.[62]

58. *Ibid.*, part 1, "Agreement between Secretary of State and the Province of Alberta, 1924"; "A Canadian College for British Boys", 1924; Culliton, *Assisted Emigration and Land Settlement*, pp. 59-60; *Agricultural and Industrial Progress in Canada, passim*, 1924-29; Scholes, *Education*, pp. 124-5.
59. PAA, Acc. no. 73-307, box 101, file B, Chapman to Hoadley, 22 April 1925.
60. *Ibid.*, Gandier to Craig, 29 June 1926; Craig to Greenfield, 23 September 1926; file D, Gandier to Craig, 2 January 1926; RG 76, vol. 231, file 130761, part 1, telegram, Craig to Blair, 27 November 1924.
61. PAA, Acc. no. 73.307, box 101, file B, Gandier to Craig, 29 June 1926; "Report 1925 British Boys"; "Report of 1926 British Boys".
62. See *Agricultural and Industrial Progress in Canada, passim.*, 1925-29.

While the statistics may not have indicated it, the proportion of those trained in the various agricultural colleges in Alberta who remained permanently in farming was probably the highest of any of the trainees sent to or trained in Canada. The reasons are simple. The aftercare was better, although the Alberta government was reluctant to commit itself, forcing Ottawa to take up the slack. As a result the recipient farmer, usually partial to educated British boys already, had a better idea of what he was getting than if he had hired an apprentice or a product of a training farm in the Old Country. Moreover, the boys who entered the agricultural colleges were more inclined toward farming as a career than their poorer urban counterparts. Most important, however, was the fact that these boys had the highest chance of success because they had some financial backing from their families to help them after their training and apprenticeship was completed.[63] Nevertheless, their success or failure was rarely determined by their training. The short time spent at Olds, Vermilion, or Claresholm merely confirmed whether they wanted to farm or not.

The majority of British farm labourers sent to Canada after 1923 were not as lucky as the Hoadley Boys. There were neither many farmers nor fabulous wages to greet them when they arrived at their destinations. While lists of placements indicate that only those with Anglo-Saxon names applied for British trainees to work as farm hands,[64] even then there appeared to be an unexpected reluctance to hire them sight unseen. Of one hundred and fifty men destined for predominantly English-speaking southern Saskatchewan in time for the 1929 seeding, for example, only thirty were placed after ten days' hard work by placement officers. The reasons cited were competition from Central Europeans and the fact that "some of the worst critics of British trainees are their own countrymen."[65]

The nativism of second and third generation Canadians might have contributed to some of the disdain, but prairie farmers also had what were for them sound reasons for refusing to hire their own kind. From the beginning of settlement, the Britisher had earned a reputation as a bad-risk employee. If he was from the "lower orders", he was branded as "lazy, saucy, stupid . . . immoral . . . very disobedient . . . thieving" and prone to take revenge on a farmer and his animals if disciplined.[66] If he was from the "better class", the consensus was that he was haughty, overbearing, and generally difficult. Consequently, literature designed to attract him to the prairies warned him to be more receptive to advice from his employers:

> [It] is . . . needed to impress on the young Englishman the warning that anything like a swagger is held in abomination by Canadians. The youth who adopts this attitude, not because he has any qualification, but apparently because he thinks himself a hero in some tiny republic of school life, is an object

63. RG 76, vol. 231, file 130761, part 2, O'Kelly memo, 8 October 1925.
64. SA, Dept. of Labour, file LaI6(2).
65. SA, RC on I & S, vol. 23, p. 21.
66. RG 76, vol. 119, file 22877, Amos to Dept. of Interior, 31 July 1895; Shier to Dept. of Interior, February 1898.

> of derision and disgust, and Canadians are almost morbidly on the look out for such symptoms.[67]

Despite such sound advice Britishers continued to have a reputation as know-it-alls and accomplished complainers.[68] Their most serious flaw, however, was their apparent unwillingness to work hard, something no prairie farmer could tolerate when time was of the essence. As one Alberta farmer said of a Hoadley Boy whose father had complained about the low wages paid, ". . .considering the work he did on the place he was not worth any more in fact if any stranger had seen him around the place they [*sic*] would draw the conclusion that he was a guest and not a hired man."[69] Postwar critics of British immigration claimed that this problem was due entirely to the fact that Britain's surplus population was "city bred; their forefathers have lived in the cities for generations. [Consequently] they have no inclination to farm, nor can they understand how one can happily live away from the town, especially alone on a prairie of the Canadian west. . . ."[70]

Farmers' suspicions about British workers were confirmed in 1928 when the Canadian government allowed ten thousand unemployed British coal miners into the country to help with the harvest. From the beginning, they proved to be a major headache and an embarrassment for all concerned. Not only were they incapable of handling the work — some were placed three times in four days because they smashed everything in sight — but a number got involved with the Communist Party in Calgary and began to agitate to be sent home immediately. As a result, many farmers concluded that the British agricultural labourer was a difficult quantity to assimilate under any circumstances.[71]

Not only did many prairie farmers consider the British worker as a joke, but they tarred the training schemes designed for them with the same brush.[72] They knew full well that four weeks' instruction, particularly under foreign conditions using prosthetic livestock did not a farm hand make,[73] and they suspected that training was simply a means of getting redundant labour into Canada.[74] Since many of the trainees shared the low opinion of their few weeks spent in agricultural instruction, the farmers' suspicions were confirmed. Moreover, it was

67. GAI, "The Bradfield College Ranch for Bradfield Boys. . .", p. 8.
68. SA, RC on I & S, vol. 34, p. 19; vol. 45, p. 131; GAI, CPR file 1489, Kaye to Colley, 25 August 1928.
69. RG 76, vol. 231, file 130761, part 2, Jacques to Elliott, 11 January 1926.
70. PAA, Premiers' Papers, box 12, "Provincial", file 1, "Immigration and Colonization in Canada", n.d. These suspicions are confirmed in Lloyd G. Reynolds and Carl A. Dawson, *The British Immigrant: His Social and Economic Adjustment in Canada* (Toronto, 1935), pp. 79, 269-70.
71. GAI, CPR file 713, telegram, Lathrop to Colley, 25 September 1928; file 754, see entire file and especially Vanwyck to Colley, 31 August 1928; and memo, Colley to Van Scoy, 14 September 1928; PAA, Premiers' Papers, file 0524, Brownlee to Greenfield, 10 September 1928; SA, RC on I & S, vol. 1, p. 35; vol. 2, p. 109.
72. SA, RC on I & S, vol. 22, pp. 66, 75.
73. SA, Dept. of Labour, file LaI6(2), Gelley to Tomsett, 27 May 1929.
74. SA, RC on I & S, vol. 23, pp. 56-7; vol. 30, Statement of Thomas Wild.

generally held by those who were interested in migrating that "all they needed to do when here at work a short time was to cut up rough in general on the farm and they would be fired", whereupon they could proceed to their real destination.[75] With such behaviour, it is no wonder that many farmers preferred the seemingly docile Central European.[76]

Aftercare reports prepared by federal and provincial bureaucrats offer the best indication of the fate of British trainees and these are generally uneven in quality and deal only with the year or two after the initial placement with a Canadian farmer.[77] Therefore, one can only speculate as to what ultimately happened to the average British farm trainee left to his own devices in a strange and often hostile environment. The United States was always the strongest magnet to the British farm worker and many proceeded there at the first opportunity.[78] Those most seriously afflicted with homesickness and who had the necessary money returned to the communities from whence they came. Many also preferred industrialized Central Canada and even the cities of the prairies to the farm. As one Saskatchewan farmer described it, the urban appeal was tremendous:

> . . .a very considerable percentage of people came to this West from elsewhere, originally intended to go on the land. However, only a trifling proportion of them went. The cities were bright: there were people, moving picture shows, taverns, music halls, churches, life and electric light. The city seemed happier. There was work in the city at good wages; and the hours of such work were regular, — just so many hours per day. Evenings and Sundays were for pleasure and self-indulgence. And, like seafaring men, farm hands acquire a faculty enabling them to shape well in many branches of labor. . . .[79]

Unfortunately, the depression which began in 1913 tarnished the glitter of the prairie city and often the farm hand found himself no better off there than he had been back in England. Lacking useful skills, he fell into the seasonal rhythm of unemployment followed by short stints in a variety of low-paying jobs. A 1914 study in Saskatchewan, for example, estimated that 65 per cent of those who came to the province as agriculturists drifted to the cities and that 75 per cent of the urban unemployed previously had been classified as farm workers or farmers.[80]

As indicated earlier, the agricultural worker who came out before 1913 with the intention of staying on the farm had a good chance of attaining his objective as work was plentiful. If he was careful, he could acquire his own land and even become an employer of labour in due course. His postwar counterpart faced bleaker prospects, however. Cheap, good land was often hard to get, so he had to

75. SA, Dept. of Labour, file LaI6(2), Routledge to McDonald, 24 April 1929.
76. SA, RC on I & S, vol. 31, p. 88.
77. See RG 76, vol. 265, file 218165, parts 1-3.
78. SA, RC on I & S, vol. 1, p. 32-3; Reynolds and Dawson, *The British Immigrant*, p. 77.
79. SA, Scott Papers, Scalanders to Scott, 29 May 1915, 46042-4.
80. *Ibid.*, "Unemployment", 46050-7; RC on I & S, vol. 1, pp. 106-7, 125, 126; Social Service Council of Canada, "The Man Out of Work", January 1927.

keep on working for others. He had little hope of either permanent employment at a decent wage or a normal family life. In addition, he had to perform menial, back-breaking tasks, like picking rocks, which offered less challenge than that for which even his meagre training had prepared him. Faced with "board only" in winter and competition from "Galicians", he was forced to drift from job to job in agriculture, lumbering, railway construction, or mining.[81] Both he and his urban counterpart became justifiably bitter and disillusioned as a result. With the onset of the depression, many sought deportation as a last resort.[82]

In a sense the Great Depression solved most of the problems for those concerned with training British workers for prairie agriculture. By 1933, all governments had sent terse statements to England terminating existing schemes and requesting that no more trainees be sent.[83] More telling perhaps was the fact that *Agricultural and Industrial Progress in Canada*, the public relations journal of the CPR, contained not one reference to British farm training schemes in its 1930 issues, in marked contrast to dozens of stories which had appeared during the previous decade. The trained British farm hand became a forgotten figure as the labour supply problem on the prairies evaporated.

The economic conditions during the 1930s only completed developments percolating since the Great War. High wages paid to unreliable farm hands plus increased farm size caused more and more farmers to adopt gasoline tractors, compact separators, and combined harvester-threshers. This process, begun in the early twenties, accelerated after 1927.[84] Few farm trainees received instruction in the care and operation of these devices since most programmes and equipment were based on farming with horses. A farmer could not afford to risk his machinery in the hands of a novice. So if he still hired labour, he preferred a willing but inexperienced man to set at "low wages and keep him as a general roustabout and choreman and ultimately teach him a little about farming."[85] These developments, plus the depression, sealed the fate of training schemes to the regret of only their most ardent advocates.

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Despite the shortcomings, the training of British labour for prairie agriculture was not a total failure. No doubt the opportunity to participate in some programme or other kindled in many a lad an interest in farming which was satisfied eventually in either land ownership or challenging permanent farm employment.

81. SA, RC on I & S, vol. 20, p. 167; Manitoba, Dept. of Agriculture and Immigration, *Report*, 1916, p. 130; GAI, CPR file 711, memo, Colley to Van Scoy, 7 February 1927.
82. SA, Dept. of Labour, file LaI6(1), Sharpe to Merkley, 24 October 1930.
83. PAA, Alberta, Dept. of Agriculture, Acc. no. 73.307, file "British farm boys 1924-30", telegram, Craig to Government of Alberta Office, London, 4 February 1930; Saskatchewan, Bureau of Labour, *Report*, 1931-32; RG 76, vol. 356, file 397430, memo, 29 December 1933.
84. Ankli, Helsberg, and Thompson, "Gasoline Tractor in Western Canada", pp. 19-21; SA, RC on I & S, vol. 16, p. 19.
85 SA, RC on I & S, vol. 16, p. 17.

Nevertheless, the whole idea fell far short of the expectations of those who pushed training as a solution to British overpopulation, prairie labour needs, and Western Canada's alarming ethnic developments. The reason appears to be that the promoters of the many schemes espoused a romantic notion of not only the prairies, but also of the prairie farmer and the prospective trainee, which together would lift British youth out of the morass of industrialization.

Their notions may have originated with nostalgic boyhood recollections of measured and orderly pastoral pursuits in the Old Country where the farm worker had a recognized place in society and realized it. The promoters seemed to transfer these images to the prairies with the result that they also believed in the redemptive qualities inherent in country air to suddenly alter the behaviour of the most hardened urban youth. To them the agricultural practitioner was above all else a gentleman land owner who, after surveying the many facets of his domain, had the time and energy to be a benevolent tutor, a surrogate father, and a devoted confidant to a polite, attentive, British lad who was himself steeped in an ideology based on Samuel Smiles and Rudyard Kipling, who wanted nothing better than to "get ahead". Promoters were not prepared to accept prairie agriculture for the mean and grubby existence which it often was before the Second World War.

The prairie farmer's greatest concern was the cost of production, of which labour was only one component. The *Farm and Ranch Review* stated the rules simply when it said that the good farmer "must understand his men, teams and tools, and to use each as to accomplish the greatest good with the least cost."[86] Many English-speaking farmers no doubt preferred a British farm worker not only for nationalist reasons, but also because communications were better than with "foreigners" who were generally considered to possess strong backs and weak minds. But the same cost-effective rules applied to the Britisher as well. For example, numerous Hoadley Boys complained bitterly to government officials that once they left the secure confines of the agricultural college they were "at the mercy of the individual farmer who has a very human desire to get the most out of them for the least cost. . . ."[87] If the Englishman proved unwilling or incapable of production to expectations, he became more trouble than he was worth.

The prairie farmer was not a charitable creature. To plant, produce, and reap a crop was a continual struggle against not only such natural afflictions as bad weather and insects, but also against equally intangible manmade problems like the railways, the banks, and the tariff. He had little control over any of them, although they profoundly affected his profits. He did have control over his hired helpers, however, and he used them only when he had to and then only for as long as he needed them. When there was nothing for them to do, they were a costly burden and he had no qualms about dismissing them, even if it meant having to look for good help again the next year.

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86. *Farm and Ranch Review*, (5 May 1910), pp. 294-5. See also pp. 285-7; and *Ibid.*, (30 June 1911), pp. 390-1.
87. RG 76, vol. 231, file 130761, part 2, Walker to Blair, 28 October 1928.

Agriculture before and after the Great War emphasized the family farm; whenever possible, it was the family which provided most of the yearly labour simply because family costs were fixed, whether its members worked or not. E.G. Grest, an agricultural economist who studied farm labour in the early 1930s, showed that in the year 1930-31 more than four-fifths of all farm labour on 537 farms in Saskatchewan and Alberta was provided by family members. Otherwise farmers most frequently hired help by the month, while day-help came second and year-long help involved the smallest numbers, averaging less than a man-month per farm.[88] Inevitably, farmers considered availability, experience in harvesting and seeding, and a willingness to work hard for long hours as the primary considerations in their selection of hired hands. For a farmer to hire year-round labour meant a considerable expansion of his operations, an expense he usually could not afford. The alternative was diversification into livestock and poultry. Many British farm workers had been trained in these specialties, but cows and chickens ran counter to the "cash grain farming" which was gaining increasing acceptance through the period under discussion. Furthermore, as the importance of the horse declined in favour of the internal combustion engine, the role of the trained hired hand diminished accordingly. In short, farm training schemes did not reflect the realities of prairie agriculture. The programmes often ignored existing trends[89] because the fundamental rationale for many of the plans which produced trained farm workers too often were based on an image of the prairie west, and the farm hand's role with it, which had little resemblance to fact. Viewed from the farmer's perspective, within this land of opportunity, the hired hand was simply an unreliable rolling stone "ever looking for the fabled Eldorado", and was treated accordingly.[90] Thus, conflicting images took their toll in human dislocation, discomfort, and disillusionment.

88. E.G. Grest, "Farm Labour", *The Economic Analyst*, (March 1935), p. 10.
89. See SA, RC on I & S, various statements made to the Commission.
90. "The Hired Man Problem", *Farm and Ranch Review*, (5 May 1910), pp. 294-5.