

1-1-2009

# Settling and 'selling' Canada's West : the role of immigration

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SETTLING AND 'SELLING' CANADA'S WEST: THE ROLE OF IMMIGRATION

by

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A Major Research Paper

presented to Ryerson University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in the Program of

Immigration and Settlement Studies

Toronto, Ontario, Canada 2009

Johnny Malciw, 2009

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## **SETTLING AND 'SELLING' THE WEST: THE ROLE OF IMMIGRATION**

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Master of Arts, 2009

Immigration and Settlement Studies

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### **ABSTRACT**

This major research paper explores the promotional immigration material created by the Department of Agriculture during Sir John A. Macdonald's time as Prime Minister and within the context of western migration. The paper begins by examine the historiography of Canadian western expansion and continues by exploring the idea of western development as espoused by the business elites in Upper and Lower Canada. Sir John A. Macdonald's National Policy, which focused on increased tariffs, the completion of a transnational railway, and immigration are explored as well. Many attribute the active promotion of Canada to Europeans overseas with Clifford Sifton and the Laurier government. Sifton is known for having envisioned an agricultural paradise in western Canada and the idea of attracting hardworking peasant farmers, yet the contents of the promotional material produced by the Department of Agriculture contain the same themes.

### **Key words:**

Western expansion, promotional immigration literature, the image of western Canada, and the Department of Agriculture and Immigration.

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Western expansion marked a critical point in Canadian history which contributed greatly to the creation of modern Canada. The geographical extension of Canada's boundaries all the way to the Pacific coast helped to propel Canada from a colony to a nation state. Following Confederation, Canada's march westward was well underway and the newly founded government of John A. Macdonald became responsible for recruiting sufficient amounts of immigrants to ensure the prosperity of the nation. Large supplies of labourers, particularly agricultural workers, were actively sought after in hopes of capitalizing on the abundant opportunities for farming and settlement that Canada's west had to offer. An important task for the Dominion government was selling Canada as an attractive destination for prospective immigrants abroad. Today many historians acknowledge the importance of western expansion and immigration, with most attributing the vigorous promoting and selling of Canada's west to Clifford Sifton, Minister of the Interior under Sir Wilfrid Laurier's Liberal government during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Although there is no doubt that Sifton was indeed instrumental in overseeing the creation of material promoting western Canada, the government of Sir John A. Macdonald also had a hand in creating similar materials which were distributed abroad. Much of the promotional material created during John A. Macdonald's government has been overlooked in historical analysis since the period did not see as large of an influx of immigrants compared to the late 1890s and early 1900s<sup>1</sup>. Study of the guidebooks published in the 1880s by the Macdonald government are particularly interesting, for it allows us the opportunity to explore promotional immigration material before the better known 'great migration' of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Although this era of immigration was not given as much attention by historians, Macdonald's government set the tone

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<sup>1</sup> N. Kelley & Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 64.

for the content and methods used by the next government and department. The promotional material produced by the Macdonald government focused on a variety of themes that were found within the Laurier government's promotional material as well.

When discussing western migration and promotional material destined to attract immigrants to settle and secure Canada's future, myths of one sort or another come to light. In order to discuss the constructed vision of Canada that was sold to prospective immigrants, it is important to first understand the variety of myths that have arisen concerning the role western migration played in the creation of a nation. As new nations, both Canada and the United States experienced western migration as further settlement continued to push populations deeper into unsettled land. Perhaps the most notable American Historian to have studied western expansion in the United States is Frederick Jackson Turner. He developed the Turner Frontier Thesis in his well-known work "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" published in 1893. The Turner Frontier thesis viewed American westward expansion as representative of the overall development of American society<sup>2</sup>. He argued that throughout American history there were periods when settlers encountered untamed lands, which they then developed and made civilized, with this process continuing on as space limitations required further movement into undeveloped land. Turner saw the frontier as the location for the creation of American society and all its characteristics. According to Turner, such American characteristics as democracy, independent living, individuality and societal progress evolved and were created as a result of the frontier experience<sup>3</sup>. Those characteristics which are needed to survive a frontier lifestyle are exactly the type of qualities, in Turner's view, which settlers had to exhibit to be successful. The Turner

<sup>2</sup> R. Douglas Francis, "Turner Versus Innis: Two Mythic Wests" in *One West, Two Myths II*, ed. C.L. Higham & Robert Thacker (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2006), 16.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

Frontier Thesis therefore argues that the creation of America as a nation can be in part attributed to the frontier experience and expansion.

In contrast, when we examine the most notable myth surrounding Canadian westward expansion we do not see the frontier or hinterlands as being the birth place of Canadian character. In fact we see quite the reverse. Canada's imagined myth of the west was explored by the economic Historian Harold Innis. Innis was the first to have differed from the Turner Frontier thesis by arguing that it was not the frontier experience which shaped Canada, but it was the exportation of staple products such as fur, timber and wheat by merchants in the Colony and abroad which contributed to the economic development of Canada<sup>4</sup>. Historian Donald Creighton built on this concept by placing particular importance on the St-Lawrence water system and its relationship to transnational and transcontinental trade as central to the development of Canada. This concept which viewed the central location of Canadian development to its centers of commerce found within the range of the St-Lawrence became known as the Laurentian Thesis. Drawing upon this, another concept was developed by J.M.S Careless called the Metropolitan Thesis. This concept is similar to the Laurentian Thesis yet it draws further attention and importance to the urban cities as having economic power, and therefore the power to dominate the majority politically, economically and socially. In the case of Canada, such cities as Toronto and English Montreal were the prime locations for Canadian development, and the development of the hinterlands. The economic power of a select few allowed them to create business ventures and to develop and profit from the west.

<sup>4</sup> J.M.S. Careless, "Frontierism, Metropolitanism, and Canadian History", *Canadian Historical Review* 35 (March 1954): 14-17

The Metropolitan Thesis is most fitting in its relation to the topic of this essay, but some have criticized the thesis for not having a more regional approach and not fully given credit to Canada's diverse ethnic background which helped to settle the west. R. Douglas Francis, in his article entitled, "Turner versus Innis: Bridging the Gap", draws from Literary Theorist Northrop Frye's concept of the Tower of Babel. Frye examines the ways in which Biblical stories have found their way into western literature, and attributes today's society as having been based on the Tower of Babel. Today's societies are linked through a common language of technology, and the Tower of Babel can be seen as the building of the technological age<sup>5</sup>. Francis uses this concept to explore Canada's development in the way in which different ethnicities can be included. In settling Canada's west a variety of ethnicities came to establish themselves in Canada's west. At the time though, many Canadians argued that the Tower of Babel, or Canada's future, might fall in disarray due to the multicultural composition of western Canada. Instead of a collapse of western Canadian society due to ethnic migration, Canada's west did indeed develop, and it developed region character, with each ethnic group contributing to the overall goal of settling Canada's west. This concept allows us to include the ethnic nature of the development of Canada's west and understand the duality of the process through the use of the Tower of Babel concept.

A notable Historian who has contributed to the myths surrounding the development of western Canada is Doug Owram. In his book, *The Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansion Movement and the Idea of the West 1856-1900*, Owram explores how the idea of the west was created and promoted by expansionists in Upper and Lower Canada in the mid nineteenth century. Owram argues that select business elites from central Canada moved to change

<sup>5</sup> R. Douglas Francis, "Turner versus Innis: Bridging the Gap", *American Review of Canadian Studies* (Winter 2003): 7-8.

Canada's hinterland, and in particular Prince Rupert's Land into the ideal agricultural area in an effort to reap the benefits of development. Owram book has been a contribution to the notion that Upper and Lower Canada elites had a vested interest economically in the development of Canada's west and were instrumental in reconstructing and promoting the image of western Canada. For the purpose of this essay Owram's book can shed light on the idea of western Canada and its relation to the promotional material created by Sir John A. Macdonald's Conservation government in the late nineteenth century.

Another important Historian who has contributed to a better understanding of western Canada's development is Gerald Friesen. His most notable work is the book *The Canadian Prairies: A History*, in which Friesen explores extensively the history of western Canada, focusing on the economic and political development of the area from seventeenth to early twentieth century. One distinctive aspect of Friesen's book is his concentration on the aboriginal and immigrant experience in western Canada. The information provided by the above mentioned author has contributed greatly to an understanding of the historical contexts in which the guidebooks were fabricated due to the authors in-depth examination of Macdonald's National Policy and its relation to the development of western Canada.

As already mentioned, many are familiar with the selling of the west to prospective immigrants by Clifford Sifton and the Laurier government, yet few have examined the material published by the Department of Agriculture during Macdonald's time. Before examining the contents of the primary sources themselves, it is important to examine the political structures that were responsible for the creation and promotion of prospective immigrant guidebooks. After Confederation, the Dominion of Canada was given full control of immigration and emigration

issues outlined by the terms of the British North America Act of 1867<sup>6</sup>. The Department of Agriculture was created in 1867, and shortly thereafter, in 1868, the department was given control to oversee immigration and emigration for the newly created Dominion of Canada<sup>7</sup>. The Department of Agriculture oversaw issues pertaining to immigration until 1892, when the Department of the Interior took over the task<sup>8</sup>. During the years when the Department of Agriculture was responsible for immigration, it was very active in creating promotional material such as pamphlets, guide books, and posters to prospective immigrants abroad. Such material was written usually by clerks within the Department of Agriculture using departmental data compiled by immigration agents throughout Canada<sup>9</sup>. Although many guide books were produced and distributed beginning in 1868, the large portion of the Dominion's promotional material was produced during the 1880s<sup>10</sup>. For example, in 1873 barely two million copies of promotional guide books were made and in the year 1888 over three million were produced<sup>11</sup>. During the 1880s a so-called "reading revolution" emerged that allowed the Dominion to reach more prospective immigrants through print, which might account for the surge in promotional material having been produced<sup>12</sup>. Furthermore, during the 1880s the Department of Agriculture was not the only one out to entice prospective immigrants. The Canadian Pacific Railway began collaborating with the Department of Agriculture by providing inclusive trips on the rail to western Canada in the hopes that positive accounts would result and could be used for

<sup>6</sup> Kelley & Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy*, 77.

<sup>7</sup> Department of Agriculture. *The Historical Series of the Department of Agriculture*. "The Early Years". (2001-04-06, Agriculture and Agri-foods Canada), [http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/205/301/ic/cdc/agrican/pubweb/main\\_e.asp](http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/205/301/ic/cdc/agrican/pubweb/main_e.asp), 2 (accessed June 30<sup>th</sup> 2008).

<sup>8</sup> Patrick A. Dunae, "Promoting the Dominion: Records and the Canadian Immigration Campaign, 1872-1915", *Archivaria* 19 (Winter 1984-1985): 86.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 79.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 84.

<sup>11</sup> Jarrett Henderson, *"Most of our Country is Wild and Unspoiled": Advertising Gender, Race, and Empire of for Western Canada, 1867-1911* (M.A Thesis, University of Manitoba, 2004), 10. Check citation standard for theses

<sup>12</sup> Dunae, "Promoting the Dominion", 84.

publication<sup>13</sup>. During the 1880s a series of guide books were published by the Department of Agriculture entitled, "Canada: A handbook for Intending Settlers". A variety of guidebooks specifically dealing with western Provinces such as Manitoba, were also distributed greatly by the Department of Agriculture during the late 1880s. Although in later years the exact name of the guide book did change, the content remained the same. The consistency of the content has made the guide books an important source for examining the ways in which the government of Canada attempted to attract immigrants.

Since the vast majority of promotional materials were compiled and written by civil servants within the department, it is out of the scope of this paper to identify exactly who wrote and selectively gathered the content of such material. Furthermore there is little literature which has focused on how administratively and logistically such guide books were created. Instead we can examine those who had broader roles within the department to see how the material may have been influenced. The Department of Agriculture had two Ministers while it had the task of overseeing immigration. John Henry Pope was the Minister from 1878 to 1885, and John Carling held the post from 1885 to 1891<sup>14</sup>. In contrast to Clifford Sifton, and the Ministry of the Interior, we do not hear much about these two ministers in immigration history literature. Therefore, it is quite impossible to know exactly what extent the Minister of Agriculture may have had in influencing the creation, content, and publication of such promotional material. What we do know is that a concrete plan for the promotion of the Dominion of Canada overseas was not officially launched until 1872 at which point Sir John A. Macdonald requested an immigration

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Government of Canada Privy Council Office. "Guide to Canadian Ministries since Confederation", [http://www.pco-bcp.gc.ca/index.asp?doc=min/03\\_e.htm&lang=eng&page=information&sub=publications](http://www.pco-bcp.gc.ca/index.asp?doc=min/03_e.htm&lang=eng&page=information&sub=publications), (accessed on October 15<sup>th</sup> 2008).

conference to set out guidelines for an immigration recruitment campaign<sup>15</sup>. Although the conference was more concerned with finding a common ground between competing federal and provincial interests with regards to immigration, it did set out certain guidelines that have contributed to the content and administering of promotional material. The most important resolutions from the Conference were the continued maintenance an immigration agency in the United Kingdom, stationed in London, and a plan to continue to promote Canada in materials, but with a new emphasis on Manitoba and the Northwest Territory. The settlement of these regions were seen by the Macdonald government as being of upmost importance in ensuring overall economic success for Canada and a variety of guide books emerged with a focus placed upon Manitoba and the Northwest Territory. Such guidelines having been established, the majority of Canada's promotion occurred through immigration agents who were sent overseas to promote the Dominion to prospective immigrants. Many agents travelled the countryside throughout Europe handing out pamphlets, posting promotional posters around villages, and giving lectures<sup>16</sup>. Immigration agents were the main engine of the promotion of Canada. The higher echelons of the Ministry of Agriculture did not have direct involvement in the production of promotional material. The material was created by clerks and immigration agents, although managers did have a responsibility to monitor the content and did set out certain guidelines, mainly being that of portraying the Dominion in a realistic way and encouraging its writers not to embellish or create falsehoods, but to subtly downplay some negative aspects, such as the weather<sup>17</sup>. Although it was certain that the employees responsible for the creation of the guide books did not fabricate information to entice immigrants, the agents were encouraged to provide a positive spin on certain topics, and they were especially encouraged not to include any negative

<sup>15</sup> Dunae, "Promoting the Dominion", 75.

<sup>16</sup> Kelley & Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy*, 78

<sup>17</sup> Dunae, "Promoting the Dominion", 81

descriptions. The descriptions included in the guide books give the reader some insight as to how the agents managed to portray Canada's west in a positive light, without actually having fabricated information.

Of particular importance in understanding the literature aimed towards prospective immigrants is determining why alluring immigrants became a priority of Canada's Department of Agriculture during John A. Macdonald's tenure. There were several sentiments expressed during the nineteenth century by the elites of Ontario and Quebecs cities. Beginning in the 1850s a strong movement coincided with efforts to accomplish Confederation in Canada<sup>18</sup>. What emerged was a movement by urban elites to obtain land in northwestern Canada which had long been looked after by the Hudson Bay Company. Those who proposed the idea have generally been referred to as expansionists, who consisted on urban elites from Upper and Lower Canada. The urban elite of central Canada had a nationalistic sentiment in settling Canada's west<sup>19</sup>. The push for Confederation had most obviously been the creation of a self-governing Dominion of Canada, but in more abstract terms it symbolized the unity of Canada. The new nationalistic sentiment which emerged among elites during the time of Confederation was used in two ways. First, it was used by expansionists as a platform to argue for the annexation of Prince Rupert's land and the continued exploration and settlement of the west. Secondly, it was used to by elites to argue for a sense of unity among Canadians in the face of the possible threat from the United States encroaching on the northwest and destroying the ability of the elites to profit from the region.

<sup>18</sup> Arthur Lower, *Western Canada, An Outline History* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre Ltd., 1983), 85

<sup>19</sup> Sarah Wayland, "Immigration, Multiculturalism and National Identity in Canada", *International Journal on Group Rights* 5 (1997): 33-58.



Urban elites national sentiment argued for western expansion, and in turn the need for immigrants, based on notion that Canada's future within the British Empire was dependent on western expansion to lift Canada "from colony to nation" in not simply legal terms, but in the terms of its global power<sup>20</sup>. Furthermore, elites believed Canada would become the 'Eldest Daughter of the Empire' by settling the west and securing the untapped wealth which waited<sup>21</sup>. Some expansionists even argued that Canada would surpass the British Empire and "to become to an empire in its own right"<sup>22</sup>. Immigration was therefore needed to ensure that Canada's west was developed quickly, and immigrants were reminded through the guidebooks that "The British subject, or the incomer from Europe or other parts of the globe, will therefore have the satisfaction of feeling that, in settling the Canadian North-West, he takes an individual part in building a great nation of the future"<sup>23</sup>. In Ray Taras' book, *Liberal and Illiberal Nationalisms*, Ulf Hedetoft, a well known philosophy professor who has published much on the political semiotics of nationalism in Europe, describes national identity as the "common destiny glued to citizens as a fact of nature, and normatively determining their loyalties and moral sentiments"<sup>24</sup>. The common destiny, expansionists had hoped, of Canadians during the nineteenth century was that of western expansion and the creation of a nation-state from coast to coast. National identity also involves a process of self-identification by the members of the nation-state. If expansionists were to get Canadians enthusiastic and willing to take on the challenge of settling the West, then they needed to ensure that a sense of national identity was felt amongst its supporters.

<sup>20</sup> Owram, *Promise of Eden*, 3.

<sup>21</sup> Moyles and Owram, *Imperial Dreams and Colonial Realities British Views of Canada, 1880-1914*, 6.

<sup>22</sup> Owram, *Promise of Eden*, 3.

<sup>23</sup> Department of Agriculture, *Manitoba and the Northwest: information for settlers*, 1.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 45.

Apart from a general sense of nationalism and nation building that was felt by elites during John A. Macdonald's time, there was also a pro-British sentiment among this group. The late nineteenth century meant much success and greatness for the Empire of Britain. During this time the British Empire stretched across the globe and "a doctrine of imperialism emerged [and] imperialist propaganda saturated British society"<sup>25</sup>. This positive portrayal of imperialism was adopted by elite Canadians who were eager to expand westward and contribute to the power of the Empire, both economically and geographically. In Carl Berger's book, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism*, the imperialist sentiment that was seen in Canada can be traced to the Loyalist tradition<sup>26</sup>. Although western expansion was seen by elites as being good for Canada's nation building endeavors, it was also very important for the British Empire in that Canada would become a great partner in continuing and supporting imperial interests<sup>27</sup>. The Loyalist tradition kept alive the idea that Canada's foundations were that of a British nature and all of Canada's greatness had British roots, therefore Canada's continued success depended on keeping the British imperial tradition ongoing<sup>28</sup>. Such groups as the Canada First and the Imperial Federation League which emerged after Confederation in the late 1800s were evident of the imperialistic sentiment which could be found within Canada's urban elite at the time of western expansion. These groups promoted pro-British and imperial sentiment and that Canada was an integral component of the Empire. Some even went so far as to assert that, through expansion, Canada could one day replace Britain as the center of the Empire<sup>29</sup>. Overpopulation and the scarcity of land meant that Britain would one day decline in power and Canada was

<sup>25</sup> Moyles & Owram, *Imperial Dreams and Colonial Realities*, 5.

<sup>26</sup> Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 78.

<sup>27</sup> Owram, *Promise of Eden*, 126.

<sup>28</sup> Berger, *The Sense of Power*, 78.

<sup>29</sup> R. Douglas Francis, *Images of the West: Responses to the Canadian Prairies* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books), 74.

therefore seen as the successor of Britain. The Empire did not wish to see an end to its power and influence upon human civilization, for “the British Empire was thought to represent man’s highest achievement in the development of governmental and social institutions”<sup>30</sup>. Canada therefore became important to the future of the Empire, and both futures would be secure through expansion since “the North West, promising great economic wealth, seemed to give Canada a unique opportunity to implant firmly these noble institutions in a rising world power”<sup>31</sup>. To expansionists Canada had a clear role to fill in ensuring that the British Empire continued to flourish and continued progress and vitality was seen as being delivered through the settlement and development of the west. Not only were the elites motivated to ensure the future of the British Empire, but it also had the opportunity to gain global status through its inheritance as the head of the Empire. In the immigration guide books published by the Department of Agriculture one can see that imperialistic tone when the author states that: “England is a great civilizer; the mighty colonizer of the world, nature fitted her to play the part; and the work so grandly begun by the Cabots and others, nearly four centuries ago, must go on, no matter who opposes. This was seen to be part of England’s destiny, the work that, as a nation, she must perform”<sup>32</sup>. From the guide books we also see that British subjects themselves had a duty to ensure the Empire continued to flourish by immigrating to Canada or another British Colony to ensure that population pressures in Europe and the rise of poverty did not hold down Britain’s economic success. Jarett Henderson, in his Master’s Thesis entitled, “Most of our Country is Wild and Unspoiled”: Advertising Gender, Race, and Empire for Western Canada, 1867-1911”, discusses the way in which the promotional immigration literature during the late nineteenth century was written in such a way as to entice immigrants from Britain to continue on the

<sup>30</sup> Doug Oram, *Promise of Eden*, 176.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Department of Agriculture. *Canada: A Handbook of Information for Intending Emigrants*, 73.

tradition of colonization<sup>33</sup>. As Henderson’s thesis points out also, imperialism and the ongoing continuation of the British way of life was promoted through these guide books, and Canada’s west was seen as the new colony, where landless and impoverished Britain’s could relocate to give Britain reprieve and help build the Dominion of Canada for the Empire.

The symbolic notion of Canada’s rise to greatness within the Empire and perhaps later within the World had created a sense amongst expansionist that Canada needed to move forward and settle the west. The United States had a similar nationalistic desire involving the move westward. In 1845 John O’Sullivan coined the term ‘Manifest Destiny’ to refer to the mission of the United States of America to expand en masse “across North America in the name of liberty”<sup>34</sup>. Driven by a desire to find self-realization through expansionism, Americans began setting out to the west beginning in 1790 and continuing into the 1850s<sup>35</sup>. The ideals of “manifest destiny” created great fears in elites, and in particular Sir John A. Macdonald, that even further American western expansion, unbeknownst of limits it seemed, might result in Canada’s west being annexed by the United States<sup>36</sup>. Therefore it is important to note that underlying fear of expansionists that Canada’s west needed to be settled to ensure that it did not get into the hands of the United States.

To really understand the importance of the material written and published by the Department of Agriculture it is important to understand how John A. Macdonald’s National Policy, which was first promoted during the election of 1878, contributed to the push for such material to be created and the importance that immigration in general had in nation building in

<sup>33</sup> Jarett Henderson, *Most of our Country is Wild and Unspoiled”: Advertising Gender, Race, and Empire for Western Canada, 1867-1911*. (M.A Thesis, University of Manitoba, 2004).

<sup>34</sup> Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), 3.

<sup>35</sup> Donald Cole, *Handbook of American History* (1968), 89.

<sup>36</sup> Donald Creighton. *The Road to Confederation: The Emergence of Canada, 1863-1867*. (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1964), 212-214, 244, 273-276.

the mind of the elites in eastern Canada. There were three main components to Macdonald's National Policy, the first being an increase in tariffs, the second being the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway from coast to coast, and the third being the promotion of immigration to western Canada<sup>37</sup>. These components of MacDonald's National Policy all had the goal of assuring that Canada's nation building goals would be successful, with the majority of the success depending upon the settling of western Canada through immigration. The National Policy was thought of as nation building policies, but they were also designed to ensure that central Canadian Capitalists had favourable conditions for investment within the west and the railway.

The first component of Macdonald's National Policy was to increase tariffs. Tariffs, Macdonald argued, were increased between the Dominion and the United States in an effort to stimulate Canada's national market<sup>38</sup>. The logic for increased tariffs was to ensure that Canada's national market would be stimulated by making it much more profitable for Canadian's to buy Canadian goods and products rather than American goods and products. Furthermore it encouraged Canadian business to depend on each other by having the west supply the raw material to the east to supply products to west; a way to ensure that both economies would flourish. If the Dominion of Canada was to prosper and achieve the building of a great nation, according to the elites, then it needed to ensure that its national market was prosperous. One way to ensure success was in reaping the vast natural resources, and creating new industries, such as agriculture, in western Canada. Of course, some, like Historian V. C. Fowke, argue that the tariffs did not benefit all parts of Canada equally, and in fact the tariffs seemed to favour central

<sup>37</sup> Kelley & Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 61.

<sup>38</sup> Desmond Morton, *A Short History of Canada*, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, (Toronto: McClelland & Steward 2001), 115.

Canada's elite businessmen exclusively<sup>39</sup>. It is argued that the tariffs forced westerns to paid higher prices for manufactured goods, and the so-called distribution of capital from east to west was unbalanced and centered around central Canadian business interests and ensuring they profited. The tariff policy of the Macdonald government had, and still has, generated much debate as to its effectiveness and fairness and some even argue it led to the alienation of western Canadians.

The second component of Macdonald's National Policy was the completion of the CPR. The railway stretching from western Canada to eastern Canada was very much in need for various reasons. To accomplish the first component of Macdonald's National Policy it was imperative that Canada have a method of transportation to bring natural resources and other products from the western regions to the east for exportation and distribution to Europe. Furthermore, to attract immigration it was also important to have a transportation system to connect settlers to goods and products and to make it known that the goods produced by agriculturalists could be distributed to other areas of the country and the world to ensure profitable sales. Apart from the logistical considerations for the Macdonald government to push for the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway, it was also a prerequisite of those in favour of expansion that Canada be united under a political structure that would ensure economic cooperation. One of the main conditions of British Columbia's joining the Confederation was the stipulation that a transcontinental railway be constructed<sup>40</sup>. The completion of the transnational railway in 1885 was seen then, and still today, as one of the greatest achievements in Canada's

<sup>39</sup> Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, 186-189.

<sup>40</sup> Department of the Secretary of State, *Our History; Canadian Citizenship Series*, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1948), 58.

history<sup>41</sup>. The guide books published by the Department of Agriculture indeed promoted the splendor of the Canadian Pacific Railway, its convenience of travel for settlers out west, and its ease for produce shipment and thus commerce. The "Pacific [CPR] is by far the shortest for a railway"<sup>42</sup>, and although not completely finished to British Columbia, its progress is described as "rapidly developing her railways"<sup>43</sup>. It was evident from the above that the Department of Agriculture did indeed understand the importance of the railway in attracting immigrants due to its facilitation of travel and transportation. In fact, the railway may have contributed to the movement of people out to western Canada and this might have been evidenced by the fact that a large number moved onto tracts of land situated beside the railway<sup>44</sup> in order to benefit from the ease of transportation. The completion of the railway, having been included in Macdonald's National Policy, was directly related to the conditions of Confederation, but they were also have been linked to Macdonald's fears concerning American annexation of western Canada.

Apart from its importance to economic growth through ease of transportation, the completion of the CPR also ensured that American annexation or economic prowess through an alternative railway route did not occur, which was not a major concern for all Canadians, but was of particular fear Macdonald held. For example, John A. Macdonald himself in a letter to C. J. Brydges, Esq., a companion, dated January 28, 1870 stated that:

"It is quite evident to me, not only from this conversation, but from advices from Washington, that the United States Government are resolved to do all they can, short of war, to get possession of the western territory, and we must take immediate and vigorous

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Department of Agriculture, *Canada: A Handbook of Information for Intending Emigrants*, 6.

<sup>43</sup> Department of Agriculture, *Manitoba the Prairie Province, the finest agricultural country in the world*, 5.

<sup>44</sup> Lower, *Western Canada, An Outline History*, 106.

steps to counteract them. One of the first things to be done is to show unmistakably our resolve to build the Pacific Railway."<sup>45</sup>

Macdonald's fear of American Annexation had to do with the need to find private investment in order to fund the large-scale and expensive endeavor. During 1869 and 1870 John A. Macdonald's fears of the United States moving into western Canada were well-founded due to the interest of an American financier by the name of Jay Cooke. Cooke had come up with plans for the Northern Pacific railway to link from the Great Lakes to Minneapolis-St-Paul and the Pacific Ocean, and to do so he proposed to make the route directly beside the Canada-US border which was too close to the American border for Macdonald, who believed that such a route could lead to eventual annexation of western Canada<sup>46</sup>. In 1871 two Canadian capitalists, Sir Hugh Allan, involved with steamships and from Montreal, and Senator D.L. Macpherson, leader of a Toronto-based capitalist group, became embroiled in a bidding war over the rights to build the transcontinental railway. Sir Hugh Allan won the bid and in February 1873 the Canadian Pacific Railway Company was created. Allan's for the railway would not have a route close to the American border, and this was perfect for Macdonald's concerns. However, in November of that same year, the CPR and Macdonald's government were put on hold due to evidence that indicated that Sir Hugh Allan had contributed a large sum of money to MacDonald's Conservative government re-election campaign just prior to Sir Allan being appointed president of the CPR. Despite this setback, in the early 1880s Macdonald's government began searching once again for capitalists to fund the railway project due to the lack of public revenue<sup>47</sup>. In 1881 James J. Hill, a Canadian-born railway builder in the United States,

<sup>45</sup> Sir John A. MacDonald, letter to C. J. Brydges, Esq., dated Ottawa, January 28, 1870 from Joseph Pope, *Memoirs of the Right Honourable Sir John Alexander MacDonald, G.C.B.*, Vol. 2, (London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1894, republished by AMS Press Inc., 1971), 162.

<sup>46</sup> Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, 172-173.

<sup>47</sup> John Moir & Robert Saunders, *Northern Destiny: A History of Canada*, (Canada: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1970), 319.

George Stephen, president of the Bank of Montreal, and Stephen's cousin, Donald Smith took over the venture of completing the CPR<sup>48</sup>. Although the completion of the CPR was one component of Macdonald's National Policy, it must be noted that its completion was funded by capitalists, and was not a direct result of public funds. The only public funds to have been used were small amounts of tariff revenue which was used to subsidize the building of the railway.

The third component of Sir John A. Macdonald's national policy is most important to this essay for it directly relates to the promotion of western Canada to those abroad. Although many point out that the Laurier government increased spending on promoting western Canada during the turn of the twentieth century, the fact that immigration was included in Macdonald's national policy indicates that it was of major importance to the development of Canada and the Laurier government may have simply been continuing with the promotion. Already noted are the ways in which the promotional material was compiled and created, but it is important to explore the Acts and policy created by the Macdonald government to attract prospective immigrants in an effort to illuminate how important immigration was. In 1869 the Dominion passed the Immigration Act, which was the first Act concerning the issue<sup>49</sup>. The Act did not set out many details about immigration per se it was more concerned with disease control and safe passage for newcomers to Canada<sup>50</sup>. Of major significance to immigration to western Canada was the Dominion Lands Act of 1872. This Act set the perimeters for land to be distributed to immigrants in western Canada<sup>51</sup>. The vastness of western Canada meant that efficient and effective land distribution needed to occur to ensure that immigrants would be able to settle as quickly as possible. The

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Kelley & Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 62.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Jeffrey S. Murray. Library and Archives Canada, "Free Land!", <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/immigrants/021017-2210-e.html> (Accessed October 31st, 2008).

Land Act allowed any head of household or persons of twenty-one years of age to be allotted one-quarter section (160 acres) of land after having tilled and planted on the plot for a minimum of three years consecutively<sup>52</sup>. In 1874 amendments were made to the Act which lowered an eligible immigrant's age to eighteen years of age, and the homesteader had the option of purchasing the adjoining one-quarter section for one dollar per acre. These amendments made it more enticing for immigrants to settle in western Canada. It was evident from the Land Act of 1872 that the Macdonald government did indeed want to ensure that its National Policy component of attracting immigrants occurred by offering free land grants, and making the move to the Dominion as cost effective to the immigrant as possible. This was also cited in the guide books, which describe immigration to Canada as very inexpensive, further catering to those who were tempted by the prospects of free land.

One theme which is clearly seen in all promotional material published by the Department of Agriculture and which was emphasized during the great migration of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century is that the Dominion of Canada was meant for agriculturalists. As Doug Owram and many historians have pointed out, the Canadian government believed that the best type of immigrant was a European farmer. Owram discusses in his book, *The Promise of Eden* that the main goal of the Dominion of Canada and expansionists during the nineteenth century was to secure the west, and to do so required settlers. Of course, the fact remained that the Canada's west had been largely unpopulated and was previously under the control of fur traders, such as the Hudson Bay Company, which gave Canada's west an image of being a vast

<sup>52</sup> John Thomas Culliton. *National Problems of Canada: Assisted Emigration and Land Settlement, with Special Reference to Western Canada.* (Montreal: the Federated Press Limited, for the Department of Economics and Political Science, 1928), 17-18.

wilderness<sup>53</sup>. Almost overnight the western lands of Canada were transformed in travel literature, and, more importantly, promotional immigration literature, from forest and hinterlands to an agricultural paradise. Canada's main industry was agriculture, and as such, the west was envisioned as the new frontier. The older Provinces of Canada had become quite populated and new farmable land to settle was in shorter supply. It was therefore important to find a new agricultural frontier and new land to ensure that Canada's economic future did not stagnate. As mentioned, beginning in the late 1850s Canada's west began to take on an image distinct from the perceived distant wilderness of the fur trade era, and shifted to a fertile, climatically pristine area naturally suited to agriculture.

Land survey expeditions travelled out west to assess the region. So too did tourists and adventurers. These early expeditions described in detail the climate of the area and its potential for agriculture. Many businessmen were fascinated with the prospects of what could be made out of the vast untouched land of the west and what potential it had for becoming a great agricultural region in Canada. Expansionists believed that Canada's commercial future lay in the development of the west in agricultural terms, and as a result, the land quality of Canada's west is the most prevalent theme throughout all immigration guide books. If the Dominion of Canada wished to develop economically it was especially important to ensure that immigrants and agriculturalists were attracted to Canada's western region<sup>54</sup>. In her book, *Land of Promise, Promised Land: The Culture of Victorian Science in Canada*, Suzanne Zeller describes the way in which Victorian science, and in particular the uniformitarian view, was used to collect data

<sup>53</sup> Doug Owsram, *Promise of Eden*, 43-59, 61, 74-75.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 112.

and assess western Canada's potential as an agricultural paradise<sup>55</sup>. Furthermore, the Victorian ideas surrounding progress spurred by the scientific revolution contributed to the notion that expanding civilization into the wilderness was a natural progress<sup>56</sup>. If the expansionists had their way, nature would be tamed and Canadian society would succeed in settling the west.

As Moyles and Owsram discuss in their book, *Imperial Dreams and Colonial Realities*, the Government of Canada had a set goal in mind to "fill up the west" with immigrants to ensure Canada's nation building endeavor set out by the Macdonald government was successful<sup>57</sup>. An idea emerged to attract middle to lower class farmers, or tenant farmers, to settle the west. This idea to attract peasant farmers from Europe is most commonly associated with Clifford Sifton, who believed that these hearty people, used to a hard life, would be able to "persevere through harsh Canadian winters and work hard through the short summers"<sup>58</sup>. Of course, the promotional material from the Department of Agriculture prior to Sifton indicates that the Macdonald government had already decided such persons were well suited as immigrants to Canada. In the Department of Agriculture's material it is made abundantly clear that those from the upper classes, and especially British gentlemen, were not to emigrate. In fact, this point was repeatedly stressed. One example of this can be found in the Department of Agriculture's guide book from 1886:

"Canada is a country of and for workers- none others are wanted. Idlers (unless they have money to live on), all persons accustomed to light employment, lawyers, doctors, clerks, shopmen, teachers, etc., should not go to Canada unless places previously engaged. Such

<sup>55</sup> Suzanne Zeller, *Land of Promise, Promised Land: The Culture of Victorian Science in Canada* (Ottawa: The Canadian Historical Association, 1996).

<sup>56</sup> Zeller, *Land of Promise, Promised Land*, 20.

<sup>57</sup> Moyles and Owsram, *Imperial Dreams and Colonial Realities* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 116-118, 199.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 117.



persons, if they went, might have to perform manual labour for a living, and for which, as a rule, they are totally unfitted"<sup>59</sup>.

The guide books explicitly stated that Canada sought agricultural labourers, and even more specifically, what types of workers were not wanted. Furthermore, the promotional literature was specific in that Canada did not simply want any agriculturalist; they needed to be hardworking and adaptable. Prospective immigrants were warned that only those "able and willing to work... need not hesitate to come here"<sup>60</sup>. It was also reiterated that those willing to work would be able to secure a plot of land upon which they could flourish. The ideal immigrant to Canada's west was especially poor or tenant farmers because they were seen as being most susceptible to succumbing to the allure of independence offered by Canada, and in an effort to better their own lives would make new contributions to Canada's economy<sup>61</sup>. The guide books also revealed that immigrants would not necessarily garner a high wage or earn more pay in Canada, but would instead have the opportunity to forge a living without the restraints of working for another person, as it was believed that the tenant farmer from Europe, even if he did not make riches from immigrating to the west of Canada, would appreciate the independence offered by this modest lifestyle. This notion of independence is indeed an important way that the literature for prospective immigrants attempted to attract the working class. This notion is articulated explicitly throughout the guide books under analysis here: "It is rather a question of attaining this kind of independence that shall move agricultural labourers to emigrate than that of higher wages; and the same argument applies even more strongly to tenant farmers"<sup>62</sup>. The allure of this notion of independence comes largely from the predominant economic concerns of the

<sup>59</sup> Department of Agriculture, *Canada: A Handbook of Information for Intending Emigrants*. (Dominion of Canada, 1886), 78.

<sup>60</sup> *Manitoba the Prairie Province, the finest agricultural country in the World*. (Manitoba Government Emigration Office, 1890), 26.

<sup>61</sup> O'ram. *Promise of Eden*. 137.

<sup>62</sup> Department of Agriculture, *Canada; A Handbook of Information for Intending Emigrants*, 4.

United Kingdom at this time, although it must be noted that the guide books were addressed to Europeans in general. There was a large shift in England away from the agricultural sector to a more urbanized and manufacturing oriented economy, meaning that more people were relying on others to employ them as opposed to holding an independent farm. This problem is reflected in writings of inhabitants of England at the time:

"The agricultural population is diminishing, the acreage under cultivation every year getting less, and the food-supply within the islands gradually trending towards the vanishing point. Every year the population is drifting more and more into the manufacturing towns, increasing competition and making life harder to bear"<sup>63</sup>

The problems of urbanization, overpopulation and poverty associated with the Industrial Revolution were reiterated by the Department of Agriculture in its guide books many times. The guide books encouraged those from the British Islands to immigrate to Canada to help relieve Britain of its overcrowding and poverty, and also to avoid the ever dropping wages due to a high proportion of labourers<sup>64</sup>.

The literature for prospective immigrants drew upon this economic shift in England and made direct comparisons between England and Canada, accentuating the differences between the lives of farmers in the respective places. Again, the theme that recurs is that of the potential for independence in Canada and the rising rate of reliance upon others for sustenance in England:

"There are no more independent people in the world than the farmers of Canada. There are many small tenant farmers in England, living from hand to mouth, who are paying more in rents, rates, and taxes each than they could purchase a good improved farm for, out and out, in the Dominion; that is to say, their expenses in England for one year are greater than the cost of a good freehold in Canada"<sup>65</sup>

<sup>63</sup> George T. Denison, *The Present Situation of England a Canadian Impression*. The Nineteenth Century Journal, Vol. 42, December 18, 1897 edited by Carl Berger, Imperialism and Nationalism, 1884-1914; a conflict in Canadian thought. (Toronto: The Copp Clark Publishing Company, 1969), 44.

<sup>64</sup> Department of Agriculture, *Canada; A Handbook of Information for Intending Emigrants*, 72.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 76.

This independence was not guaranteed, and the literature of the time attributed success in the Dominion to individual characteristics and work ethic. It was made clear in the guide books that anyone willing to come to Canada and work hard would experience great success. Those promoting western expansion, like those responsible for the Department of Agriculture guide books, knew that the climate and soil and life in general in settling Canada's west would be a difficult one. They were very anxious to avoid seeing immigrants from Europe fail. In an attempt to ensure retention rates, emphasis was placed on attracting hardy people with good work ethic. Those who chose to immigrate knew that there was a great deal of personal motivation needed to succeed. Particular emphasis was placed on the notion that the harder one works, the more likely one would be at achieving independence and success in Canada.

"Unsuccessful farming is almost unknown there. Men have failed through idleness, carelessness or dissipation or through entering into outside speculation; but it would be difficult to find... the honest and industrious farmer whose labours have not been crowned with success"<sup>66</sup>. This point was emphasized not only to attract the hard workers necessary for western expansion, but also to squarely put the blame for failure upon the individual who immigrated, and not the conditions they confronted upon arrival in Canada. This is explicitly stated throughout the guide books: "It is unfortunately true that there have been many cases of failure and individual hardships, but these are the exception, and in nearly all cases they arise from the unfitness of the persons who suffer to emigrate at all"<sup>67</sup>. It could be conjectured that the guidebooks published by the Department of Agriculture seem to have created the template for the Laurier government in promoting Canada as a paradise for European agriculturalist and those wishing to make a better life for themselves.

<sup>66</sup> Department of Agriculture, *Canada; A Handbook of Information for Intending Emigrants*, 76.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, 75.

To attract farmers to the agricultural west it was important to entice them with the very factor which made their livelihood: the climate and soil. All immigrant guide books began by painting western Canada as one of the most wonderful agricultural areas of the world. In all sources studied, the climate of Canada was first introduced by comparing the latitude of Canada's west to that of France and the South of Germany. It is important that this comparison was made since virtually all the immigrants who contemplated coming to Canada were from European nations, and such a comparison would quell any fears of Canada having a diversely different climate. The comparison of climate based on latitude was informed by climatologists such as Humboldt, who based his assumptions on the application of isotherms, which are lines on maps joining places of equal temperature used to map worldwide temperature<sup>68</sup>. The application of the scientific method was especially useful in convincing potential immigrants considering that immigration agents in Europe noted that many outside of the Dominion had no conception whatsoever of Canada, let alone its climate and scientific evidence was often deemed as reputable. Also, many agents feared that the only things people heard would be from disgruntled settlers within the European press<sup>69</sup>. The Department of Agriculture therefore encouraged its immigration agents abroad to read newspapers and provide advertisements in them to ensure that such negative depictions would be 'corrected'<sup>70</sup>. The guide books also indicated that "Hostile immigration agents will describe the country as a frozen region of inhospitability"<sup>71</sup>. The 'hostile immigration agents' referred to agents from other countries and colonies such as the United States, South Africa and Australia, which also had agents overseas

<sup>68</sup> Zeller, *Land of Promise, Promised Land*, 13.

<sup>69</sup> Ronald Rees. *New and Naked Land: making the Prairies Home*. (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1988), 16.

<sup>70</sup> Dunae, "Promoting the Dominion", 77.

<sup>71</sup> Department of Agriculture. *Manitoba the Prairie Province, the finest agricultural country in the World*. (Winnipeg: Manitoba Government Emigration Office, 1890), 6.



promoting their respective state and which no doubt had an interest in discouraging immigration to the Dominion<sup>72</sup>. The guide books, however, were able to dispel such negative claims by competitors by stating that:

“However it is insisted that one who has not actually lived in this climate or in one similar to it is not competent to form an independent, intelligent opinion. All such are asked to banish their prejudices and listen to those who have lived in the country for years. The almost universal verdict is that the climate of Manitoba is more agreeable than that or any part of Ontario, Quebec or the eastern Provinces”<sup>73</sup>.

By using latitude as the point of comparison, the guide book used prevailing wisdom at the time to dispel any negative views of the Canadian climate by comparing it to Europe, an area of long time agricultural development and familiarity. In fact, it was popular belief that locations on the same latitude would result in similar climate, and no doubt the Department of Agriculture used such ‘knowledge’ in an attempt to relate Canada’s western climate to that of Europe<sup>74</sup>. It may be indicative of the notions of the time that many perceived not just Western Canada’s climate, but Canada in general, as having a harsh climate. In fact, this is even mentioned by the Department of Canada that if the country were to attract sufficient immigrants Canada “must do much to remove the absurdly false impressions that prevail in Europe respecting her climate and soil”<sup>75</sup>. Canada attempted to combat the impression that its climate and soil were not agreeable through inflated comments on the wonderful conditions in Canada’s west. One guide book went further by stating that any “adverse criticism of the climate of Manitoba may generally be attributed to ignorance, prejudice or falsehood. The testimony of thousands who have come hither from every

<sup>72</sup> Dugae, “Promoting the Dominion”, 77.

<sup>73</sup> Department of Agriculture, *Manitoba the Prairie Province, the finest agricultural country in the World*, 6.

<sup>74</sup> Rees. *New and Naked Land: Making of the Prairies Home*, 15.

<sup>75</sup> Department of Agriculture, *Canada: A Handbook of Information for Intending Emigrants*, 71.

part of the world will endorse this statement”<sup>76</sup>. Winter was described in the best possible way within the guide books. Winter, of course, was cold, but was described as not extremely cold as “this degree of cold in the dry atmosphere of the North West does not produce any unpleasant sensation”<sup>77</sup>, and “the weather is not felt to be colder than that in the Province of Quebec, nor so cold as milder winter climates where the frost, or even a degree less of cold than frost, is accompanied with dampness”<sup>78</sup>. Although the temperature was described as going as low as 40 below, a positive spin was added by indicating that although a thermometer indicated a cold temperature, it did not seem cold due to the dryness of the climate<sup>79</sup>. In fact, the guide books even called into question a thermometer’s ability to gauge the climate in an effort to positively spin winter temperatures in Western Canada by stating that: “A thermometer does not indicate the agreeableness or otherwise of the climate, and experience has abundantly established the fact that it is no criterion whatever from which it may inferred whether or not the temperature as indicated is pleasant or the reverse”<sup>80</sup>. While not entirely untrue, the guide book went to great lengths to ensure that prospective immigrants took more into consideration than simply the measurement of temperature. Winter was made to sound more agreeable by stating that western Canada does not receive much snow, “and buffaloes and horses graze out of doors all winter”<sup>81</sup>. The amount of snow fall had to be minimized in an attempt to secure prospective immigrants and the guide books explicitly focused on this<sup>82</sup>. In fact, government publications, such as the primary documents used in this analysis, were forbidden by officials to make many references to

<sup>76</sup> Department of Agriculture, *Manitoba the Prairie Province, the finest agricultural country in the World*, 7-8.

<sup>77</sup> Department of Agriculture, *Canada: A Handbook of Information for Intending Emigrants*, 45.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 45-46.

<sup>79</sup> Department of Agriculture, *Manitoba the Prairie Province, the finest agricultural country in the World*, 6

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Department of Agriculture, *Canada: A Handbook of Information for Intending Emigrants*, 48.

<sup>82</sup> Rees. *New Naked Land: Making the Prairies Home*, 14-15.

the amount of snow fall in Canada's west and they were not to include any pictures, be it photograph or drawing, depicting snowy scenes. So although the Department of Agriculture did not distort the climate explicitly, it often focused on the most appealing aspects possible, and sometimes refrained from actually delving into specifics regarding the climate unless it was positive.

In the guide books the climate is also described alongside the topic of leisure in attempts to show that one not only can survive the Canadian winters, but in fact enjoy them. In discussing leisure activities it is said that Canadians "enjoy them most heartily, especially in the winter, when the bracing and exhilarating atmosphere tends to elevate the spirits and to sharpen one's appreciation of innocent fun and... amusement"<sup>83</sup>. The idea of promoting Canada not only as a tolerable climate, but also as a pleasant one, was a strong aim of the guide books in an attempt to discourage the prevailing rumours regarding the inhospitable nature of the climate from deterring settlement. Not only is winter made to be attractive, spring is described as a season:

"of complete enjoyment. All nature is suddenly relaxed and seems to be possessed with the purpose of afford pleasure, delight and happiness. Mother earth beneath a clear sky, and warmed with the genial and almost constant rays of the sun, quickly divests herself of her snowy mantle and becomes clothed with a richness of verdure that is an uninterrupted delight"<sup>84</sup>.

Although many of us in Canada know that spring is usually a time of rain, it is only mentioned as occurring in June, and is described as "gentle showers" which create moisture to "accelerate and develop growth" of crops and plant life<sup>85</sup>. The spring is claimed to aid agriculturalists by providing moisture to the soil and the summer in turn provides "continuous sunshine" which

<sup>83</sup> Department of Agriculture, *Canada; A Handbook of Information for Intending Emigrants*, 88.

<sup>84</sup> Department of Agriculture, *Manitoba the Prairie Province, the finest agricultural country in the World*, 7.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

"affords conditions exactly adapted to promote vegetation and mature the crops"<sup>86</sup>. The autumn is also a great season in Canada's west for the agriculturalist in that:

"As summer gradually wanes and indications of autumn approach new features and delights present themselves. The heavens do not appear as if draped in mourning. There are no indications that the fountains of the great deep are broken up. The roads do not become impassable; on the contrary, nature forbids the suggestion of anything sad or gloomy. It is doubtful that any portion of our year is more agreeable than autumn. This is greatly to the advantage of the husbandman who is afforded the most favourable opportunity for harvesting and threshing and preparing the ground for another season"<sup>87</sup>

The guide books described all the seasons and their accompanying climates in terms of their usefulness in contributing to the industry of agriculture and this is especially important since the idea of western expansion was to be accomplished through the creation of an agricultural center of Canada according to expansionists<sup>88</sup>. This fact seems to indicate how these guide books were trying very hard to entice agriculturalists by describing the seasons in terms of their relationship to the land and crop growing. The climate is also described in terms of its relationship to good health. The west of Canada is described as being sunny all the time, resulting in happy good natured people<sup>89</sup>. In particular, "Manitoba and the North-west territory of Canada are amongst the absolutely healthiest countries on the globe, and pleasant to live in. There is no malaria, and there are no diseases arising out of, or peculiar, either the Province or the climate"<sup>90</sup>. Statements such as the above are found in all immigration guide books and seem to suggest that a healthy climate was indeed a concern for intending immigrants. This might have something to do with the dangers of transatlantic travel and the adjustment to a new climate and land which may have made many settlers ill once they first arrived to Canada.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 7-8.

<sup>88</sup> Rees, *New and Naked Land: Making the Prairies Home*, 5-7.

<sup>89</sup> Department of Agriculture, *Manitoba the Prairie Province, the finest agricultural country in the World*, 8.

<sup>90</sup> Department of Agriculture, *Manitoba and the Northwest: Information for Settlers*. (Ottawa: Department of Agriculture, 1887), 1.

In Catherine Traill's book, *The Canadian Settler's Guide*, published in 1855, the author makes reference to ague, rheumatism and dysentery as common diseases and illness to befall newcomers to Canada<sup>91</sup>. Traill discusses the fact that many in Europe feared ague in particular when emigrating to Canada as it was a fairly common illness among newcomers, but she argued that if the proper precautions were taken, one might be able to avoid it, and that many who complained of these illness were complainers by nature, and should not have immigrated to Canada. Although Traill's book was published approximately thirty years before the guidebooks were published, and was not written in direct reference to western Canada, Traill's work indicated that prospective immigrants had a sense that coming to Canada could result in illness. The fact that concerns had been present in Europe for decades over the dangers associated with trans-Atlantic migration, it is likely that those responsible for the publishing of the guide books would have wanted to put emphasis on the health benefits that would be expected upon arrival in Canada and overlook the journey, and the risks associated with it. In the hopes of quelling the fears and perceptions to which Traill refers, the guide books explicitly make an effort to write positive references to Canada's healthy climate.

Although the climate is an important aspect of a landscape and may motivate or negate immigration decisions, to the agriculturalists the most important aspect of all was the condition of the soil. Most certainly the soil was an important aspect to describe positively if one is to construct the west as an agricultural empire. Throughout the immigration guide books the soil of Canada's west was emphasized as being among the best in the world. The most notable recurring aspect of Canada's western region is the fact that: "the soil is so rich that it does not require the addition of manure for years after first breaking of the prairie, and in particular places where the

<sup>91</sup> Catherine Traill, *The Canadian Settler's Guide*. (Toronto: Reprinted by McClelland Stewart 1969, originally 1855), 204-208.

black loam is very deep, it is practically inexhaustible"<sup>92</sup>. The soil was not only extremely rich in minerals and only in need of initial breaking, but it was also the best soil in the world for the growth of wheat. All sources go on in length about the natural ability of the soil to grow large amounts of wheat. In describing Manitoba as advantageous for wheat growing one source goes as far as to say that: "It is a fact established beyond controversy that the average yield per acre of wheat has been larger in Manitoba than in any other part of the world for equal areas. It is beyond a doubt that this country has a record for wheat growing that has not been equaled"<sup>93</sup>.

Canada's west was not only well-suited for wheat crops, it also had the most nutritious grasses of the best quality for grazing.

"for grazing and cattle raising the facilities are unbounded. The prairies grasses are nutritious and in illimitable abundance. Hay is cheaply and easily made from the native grasses; and to the present day the farmers have, for the most part, burnt their straw to get rid of it".<sup>94</sup>

Good grazing land meant that cattle ranches could also be started in Canada's west. Both wheat and cattle were important to European settlers, as both were main staples. What better way to entice settlers than by creating an image of the western lands as being favorable for two major staples that conjure images of European life.

Apart from having the greatest soil and the greatest climate, Canada's west also had an "ample supply of good water, her inexhaustible stores of fuel"<sup>95</sup>. The immigrant guide books needed to assure the settler that although Canada's west was a prairie region, it still would have sufficient rainfall through its wonderful climate, and sufficient rivers and lakes. Another aspect

<sup>92</sup> Department of Agriculture, *Manitoba and the Northwest: Information for Settlers*. (Ottawa: Department of Agriculture, 1887), 1.

<sup>93</sup> Department of Agriculture. *Manitoba the Prairie Province, the finest agricultural country in the World*, 12.

<sup>94</sup> Department of Agriculture. *Manitoba and the Northwest: information for settlers*, 2.

<sup>95</sup> Department of Agriculture, *Manitoba the Prairie Province, the finest agricultural country in the World*, 1.

of the landscape was the fact that prairies do not have many trees, but the guide books embellished by stating that wood was not an issue: "trees are found along the rivers and streams, and they will grow anywhere very rapidly, if protected from prairie fires. Wood for fuel has not been very expensive"<sup>96</sup>. The image of the climate and landscape of Canada's western region was constructed in a way to entice prospective immigrants, and in particular, agriculturalists. This emphasis is reflective of the priority placed upon converting the wilds of Canada into profitable agricultural regions. Indeed, the climate and landscape receive the most attention in the guide books as they were deemed to be the most important aspects of the west in ensuring economic and political success according to expansionists.

An important thing to note regarding the discussion of climate in literature for prospective immigrants is that not only do the authors take time to describe the climate favourably in absolute terms, they also describe it favourably in relative terms. In the guidebooks, direct comparisons are made between Canada's climate and that of various parts of Europe. This manner of describing the climate was intended to provide prospective immigrants with a notion of familiarity with respect to what to expect from the climate, and also to provide a comparative base. Not surprisingly, in a majority of comparisons, Canada was construed as being far more attractive for agricultural purposes as well as general agreeableness. If Europeans could be convinced that the climate of Canada was similar, or even superior, to the prevailing climates in their homeland, than chances were better that they would be willing to immigrate to Canada. The prevailing climate dictates much of how one works and plays, and the guidebooks made efforts to assure that not only would one's farming life remain much the same, but the way in which they socialize and enjoy the outdoors would remain constant as well.

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<sup>96</sup> Department of Agriculture. *Manitoba and the Northwest: information for settlers*, 2.

In attracting immigrants to settle the west it was crucial that the positive differences between Europe and Canada were discussed, but it was just as important to convince prospective immigrants that there would be similarities between their homelands and their new homes, particularly in the political and social realms. It was presumed that a certain degree of change, as long as it was for the better, would be accepted by those considering immigration, but it was also assumed that many would miss some aspects of European society, and thus, the literature made available for prospective immigrants the similarities between Canada and Europe and more importantly, Britain. It should also be noted that a particularly strong connection was purported between Canada and the United Kingdom for the aforementioned reason that the most desirable immigrants were thought to be those from the United Kingdom at the beginning of the expansion movement. Later on in the early twentieth century agriculturalists from more diverse countries were sought. For example, it is made clear to potential immigrants that Canadian governance was conducted in a fashion resembling that practiced in England: "As nearly as the altered circumstances will permit, the powers privileges and immunities of the Canadian Parliament are similar to those of the Mother Country"<sup>97</sup>.

Although it was desirable to portray Canada as a vast land that was largely uninhabited, due to the population problems in Britain, it was also important that the country was not entirely perceived as barren and isolated. This was reinforced by informing immigrants that once one arrived in Canada, "Improvement and progress go on around him. Roads are made, villages grow up, post offices are opened, schools and churches are established"<sup>98</sup>. Prospective immigrants were assured that procuring the sufficient household items and the like could be easily done as well: "Bear in mind that there is no difficulty in buying any ordinary tools in the principal towns

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<sup>97</sup> Department of Agriculture, *Canada; A Handbook of Information for Intending Emigrants*, 6.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*, 86.

at reasonable prices"<sup>99</sup>. It is likely that this type of statement would have been included in the guide books to assure potential settlers that many of the amenities to which they were accustomed in Europe, and especially in Great Britain, would be readily available. A priority of the Department of Agriculture and Immigration seemed to be emphasizing that although Canada was bountiful it was also populated enough that one could still enjoy some of the more sophisticated things in life "in the way of more intellectual recreations", such as "lectures, readings and concerts"<sup>100</sup>. Settlers were assured that, "those who fancy that the Canadians work so hard that they forget to play are very much mistaken"<sup>101</sup>, and that "the domestic amusements are similar to those of England"<sup>102</sup>. The prevailing view was that if prospective immigrants did not believe that they would have to sacrifice many of the things they had been accustomed to in Europe, then more people might take their chances in the Dominion and populate western Canada. The government aimed to make prospective immigrants believe that emigration to Canada would simply mean economic upward mobility "within a familiar social framework" due to the close resemblance and ties with Britain<sup>103</sup>. Emigration would not result in a 'culture shock' or a shift to frontier living, but rather Canada's west was constructed as a civilized British Colony where a prospective immigrant could improve their economic standing whilst remaining cultured. Those concerned with attracting European immigrants to Canada faced the constant challenge of making Canada seem different enough to offer new opportunity, but similar enough to ensure a comfortable and easy transition.

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid, 82.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 87.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, 88.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, 87.

<sup>103</sup> O'wram, *Promise of Eden*, 143.

A common theme found throughout the guide books published by the Department of Agriculture is the constant comparison between Canada's west and the west of the United States of America. In attracting an immigrant labour force, the guide books often compared Canada to the United States, whose west already had a reputation of great success in terms of settlement and the sheer number of immigrants who choose it over Canada<sup>104</sup>. It was therefore important for the Department of Agriculture to emphasize Canada's great potential for growth in comparison to the United States. In fact, it was explicitly stated in the guide books that: "American wheat fields are fast becoming exhausted. For years past they have been encroaching upon their uncultivated territories, and to such an extent that they now find that they have reached the limits of their possessions"<sup>105</sup>. It was advantageous for the Department of Agriculture to contrast the degree to which each of the nations had already developed so as to give the impression of the United States as already having fulfilled whatever potential it may have had, whereas Canada had yet to tap its vast potential<sup>106</sup>. Canada used its advantage in having a new frontier to settle and used the earlier beginning the United States had to argue that the American frontier was over, and that prospective immigrants would fare better in the newly obtained west of Canada. Since the United States was better known than Canada, those seeking to garner the labour force necessary for expansion in Canada needed to compete to attract these immigrants. In the literature for prospective immigrants, the Department of Agriculture used many direct comparisons between Canada and the United States so as to portray the Canadian west as a far more favorable alternative than its more crowded southerly counterpart.

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<sup>104</sup> Kelley & Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 100-101.

<sup>105</sup> The Department of Agriculture, *Manitoba the Prairie Province, the finest agricultural country in the World*, 12.

<sup>106</sup> O'wram, *Promise of Eden*, 116.

In attempts to make Canada appear more favourable as a destination than the United States, comparisons between the climates of these countries and Europe were made. As already discussed, Canada's west was compared to being at the same latitude as the south of German and France, and to have a temperate climate similar to those European regions. In contrast, the western region of the United States was described as being comparable to some Middle Eastern regions of the world: "The central parts of Illinois, Indiana, and the northern part of Missouri are in latitude 40, the same as Palestine and the great deserts of Tartary"<sup>107</sup>. The United States western region was described as a dry and arid desert and prospective immigrants to Canada are warned that "the high temperatures and a burning sun are not the only enemies with which the Englishman going so far south has to contend. The want of rain is another even more grievous defect in climate of those parts of the United States...those parts of the States...very much resemble Palestine, Arabia, Persia, Syria and Independent Tartary"<sup>108</sup>. This comparison was no doubt included to repel prospective immigrants from the United States west and to the more "familiar" western lands of Canada. The guide books attempted to deter people from choosing the United States by warning that the climate was too hot and unpleasant and that it would be too much of a change from the more temperate European climate for the most desirable of immigrants to withstand. The desert climate of the western parts of the United States was also said to be too different for successful farming since European farmers "must go from a climate of comparatively cool summers with a humid atmosphere to one of intense heat and severe droughts. Those who migrated from the north of England, from Scotland, Germany, Sweden, to Kansas, Central Missouri, or Illinois, must still undergo a still greater change of climate,

<sup>107</sup> Department of Agriculture, *Canada; A Handbook of Information for Intending Emigrants*, 9.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

necessitating an almost entire change of agriculture"<sup>109</sup>. The literature made available to potential immigrants by the Department of Agriculture tried to accentuate that the United States climate was unsuitable and largely unfamiliar for one accustomed to farming in Europe. It was assumed that prospective immigrants would rather move to a place with which they would not have to change their way of life or manner of farming.

The guide books made a link between the described unfavorable climate and arid soil of the United States and the potential for profitable farming. The Department of Agriculture states that "the proportion of cultivatable land suited to the production of the temperate zones in view of the very large cultivatable areas of the North West Territory, may be stated to be larger than that of the United States"<sup>110</sup>, inferring that farming in Canada was more profitable than in the United States. The area of the western states are repetitively described as too hot and arid to be profitable farm land, and furthermore if there was any good farm land, its climate does not produce as much great farm land as the temperate climate of Canada. In describing the potential in the United States for growing the type of crops that European immigrants would have been accustomed to, the guide books repeatedly explicitly state that it is near impossible:

"South of the fertile regions...and west of the 100<sup>th</sup> meridian, these plants either fail entirely or succeed but imperfectly, from climate effects, chiefly from a deficiency or entire absence of rain during the agricultural months, accompanied with high summer temperatures; and over the States lying immediately to the east of these desert areas, the summer heat is still too great for the profitable growth of these products, and the rain still deficient, or rendered insufficient through high temperatures and rapid evaporation"<sup>111</sup>

This comparison in climate was used to make Canada's west appear to be the better choice for crops and more specifically, "In comparing Europe with North America we find that

<sup>109</sup> Department of Agriculture, *Canada; A Handbook of Information for Intending Emigrants*, 9.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, 10-11.



those regions of the new world which correspond with the best grain and grass zones of the old world are in Canada. They are in similar positions and similar climates”<sup>112</sup>. If the climate and crops were the same in Canada’s west, then that meant that the farmer did not need to change much about their farming practices. The guide books posit that in the United States the climates, and thus, the growing of crops, are so different that farming practices had to be greatly altered, whereas in Canada the climate was similar to that of Europe and did not require a shift in agricultural practices for the European farmer. The guide books did not posit that farming was impossible in the United States, but that it was vastly different than to what Europeans were accustomed. Agriculturalists seeking to immigrate to North America were warned that if one chooses a more southerly climate one would need to change crops and herds: “The almost entire change in the farming operations in climates so different the farmer in going from North and North-west Europe to those parts of the States named must give up, as staples, his grains, grasses, herds and flocks”<sup>113</sup>. The guide books seem to rely on the hope that immigrants would choose the nation that offered the most ease of transition in their livelihood while creating an image of the west based on comparison to soil and climate to discourage prospective immigrants from moving to the United States<sup>114</sup>.

The guide books also seemed to draw a distinction between American and British society. As already mentioned, various comparisons were made between Great Britain and the Dominion of Canada in which it was argued that Canada as a society was exactly like that of Britain. Through the use of the immigration guide books, the Dominion of Canada ensured that the prospective immigrant got the impression that life in Canada would be the exact same as life in

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, 12-13.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid, 10-11.

<sup>114</sup> O’ram, *Promise of Eden*, 118.

Britain. It is important to discuss it in relation to the striking contrast between Canada as British, and the United States as something completely foreign to the prospective immigrant from Europe. It is stated in the guide books that “If Canada is suitable for the French, the German and the Swede, how much greater are the attractions it offers to the native of the British Islands...the emigrant from the United Kingdom will find his laws, language, manners and customs”<sup>115</sup>. Apart from the customs and society in general having been more like that of Europe and thus better suited to immigrants from the old world than the United States, the Dominion’s close link to the Empire in terms of commerce was also noted as being favourable to the prospective immigrant farmer. An example of this can be seen in the following passage:

“Canada’s nearness to the English market, and her direct connection therewith, constitute important elements in the success of the Canadian farmer. In the far west of the United States, where the chief crop is Indian corn, the cost transportation to the seacoast is so great that many farmers have a hard struggle to live, and frequently find it cheaper to use their corn as fuel than to carry it to market”<sup>116</sup>

The nation building goals Canada were both informed by a desire to become the inheritor of the British Empire and as a nationalistic drive framed by this. Canada’s goals to expand its frontier and settle the west for economic prosperity were also accompanied by a desire to ensure that Britain, “the mighty colonizer of the world”<sup>117</sup>, would continue to reproduce and flourish in the New World and it was the newly arrived immigrants’ duty to ensure that the west of Canada developed in a civilized and British manner, making sure newly arrived immigrants felt not only connected to Britain, but also “serve[d] to strengthened the British Empire”<sup>118</sup>. Therefore it was not surprising the British Empire was used as a template for western society, and the United

<sup>115</sup> Department of Agriculture, *Canada; A Handbook of Information for Intending Emigrants*, 74.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, 62.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid, 73.

<sup>118</sup> O’ram, *Promise of Eden*, 129.

States was used as a template for society to be avoided<sup>119</sup>. The western region of the United States was seen as lacking in civilized manners, and had such a brash things as "lynching-bees, horse-thief removals, revolver accidents and land settling difficulties"<sup>120</sup>. Canada was no doubt a more civilized and familiar place to settle than that of the United States, where such a culture shock was to be expected. The opinions and sentiments of those that had already traversed the Atlantic to Canada and found it agreeable were deemed valuable in convincing new immigrants to come.

An integral part of the guide books were the settler testimonials. They were generally included at the end of the guide books as a way to show that the facts mentioned in the guides were indeed true. Settler testimonials began to appear in promotional material en masse in 1884 when Alexander Begg, who was in charge of the CPR emigration office in London, decided to send questionnaires to settlers in Manitoba, Assiniboia, and Alberta asking them to describe their experience in immigrating to the western Canada<sup>121</sup>. The answers were then used by both the CPR and the Department of Agriculture for publication within promotional guidebooks. The testimonials were of great success and provided prospective immigrants with important information regarding the western Canadian immigrant experience. The questionnaires had a set format. Settlers were asked their name, nationalities, the year of their arrival in western Canada, the amount of money they had brought with them, their cost of living, their crop yields, their agricultural techniques and the current worth of their farm. Although it has been shown that questions had not be altered in any manner other than shortened or corrected grammatically, it is apparent that Begg carefully selected the most positive testimonials which would favorably

<sup>119</sup> Ibid, 134-135.

<sup>120</sup> Department of Agriculture, *Manitoba the Prairie Province, the finest agricultural country in the World*, 11.

<sup>121</sup> Dunae, "Promoting the Dominion", 85-86.

portray western Canada. Carefully selected testimonials gave prospective immigrants a reinforced sense that indeed immigration to Canada's west was possible with minimal capital or even no capital at all and that Canada was therefore idea for the small scale European farmer or tenant farmer<sup>122</sup>. This was especially important to demonstrate considering the targeted audience was that of the European peasant farmer. The guide books gave the illusion that it would only take minimal finances to secure passage, obtain farmland and beginning reaping the economic benefits of having come to Canada. This can be demonstrated in the section of the guide book titled "Practical Information for Intending Settlers", in which it was stated that many farmers with little to no capital "but with strong arms and resolute will, may safely remove to a land where muscle is more in demand than money, and where industry is respected, no matter how humble may be the labourer"<sup>123</sup>. The Department of Agriculture seemed to use the testimonies of European settlers to provide a relatable story that had personal meaning. All settler testimonies were found within the back portion of the guide books, positioned in a way to allow reflection upon prior claims in the guide books in hopes to dispel any skepticism. Testimonies of immigrant success stories seemed to have been included in all guide books, be it public or private, and give the impression to the intending immigrant that it was indeed possible to immigrate to Canada with little to no capital from the old country and establish an independent farm which, settler's were told, may double in land value in a short amount of time<sup>124</sup>. Testimonies included such statements as "Having only 10 pounds to begin with, I homesteaded, and it is now worth, the land alone, 200 pounds", to indicate that one could easily increase their

<sup>122</sup> Moyles and Oworm, *Imperial Dreams and Colonial Realities* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 123-124.

<sup>123</sup> Department of Agriculture, *Canada; A Handbook of Information for Intending Emigrants*, 73.

<sup>124</sup> Moyles and Oworm, *Imperial Dreams and Colonial Realities*, 122-123.



land value<sup>125</sup>. Apart from attempting to demonstrate the realities of success from immigration to Canada, the settler testimonies had a further effect in quelling skepticism in that the nationality of the settler was included in the testimony so that the reader might identify with his peers, be it a Scotsman, or a Dutchman. All testimonies begin with "I am a Mennonite"<sup>126</sup> or "Being a Scotsman"<sup>127</sup>, and as mentioned, was intentional made in such a way to foster a sense of commonality between the settler and the reader. The climate was also mentioned favourably in settler testimonies by way of careful selection. For example such references as: "I have suffered no loss from the climate, either winter or summer; the climate is healthy"<sup>128</sup>, were included to further reinforce the notion that Canada's western climate was indeed favourable. It is interesting to note that Begg did receive very negative descriptions of western Canadian weather, many indicating that winter was not at all brisk and pleasurable, but of course they were purposely not included<sup>129</sup>. All testimonies were carefully selected so as to ensure that a positive view of both land and climate and ability to settle successfully in western Canada were conjured. Although it is important also to note that Begg did not alter the responses of the settlers so as to provide positive feedback. Even though many settlers may have had a negative experience in settling in the west, a good portion did indeed find the guide books descriptions to be accurate and many did find settling in Canada's west to be a positive experience.

Many of the above described themes and content included within the guidebooks by the Department of Agriculture can be seen replicated even after the Department ceased producing

<sup>125</sup> Department of Agriculture, *Manitoba the Prairie Province, the finest agricultural country in the World*, 36.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Dunae, "Promoting the Dominion", 86.

such material<sup>130</sup>. The Department of Agriculture set the tone for how promotion of the Dominion would be done in future literature geared towards attracting immigrants. The favourable description of the soil and climate and the emphasis on attracting agriculturalists continued on into the next century at an even more pressing rate. Many historians have examined the promotion of Canada's west to immigrants abroad by examining material and policy during Sir Wilfrid Laurier's government and under the direction of Minister Sifton, of the Department of Interior. This might be attributed to the success of Minister Sifton's promotional campaign. Although the Macdonald government produced promotional material for immigrants' abroad and included immigration in national policy, the fact remains that such campaigning was not successful<sup>131</sup>. For example, by 1891 there were only 31,000 farms in Canada's west<sup>132</sup>. In contrast, the period of 1896 and 1914 "experienced six of the ten largest annual immigration levels ever registered"<sup>133</sup>. The dismay influx of immigrants during Macdonald's time can be attributed to an economic depression, which Canada and the majority of the World fell into in 1873<sup>134</sup>. Their unsuccessful attempts had the effect of the historical record largely ignoring the fact that the Macdonald government and the Department of Agriculture set the tone for the way in which Canada was promoted within immigration guide books. When one explores the content of the guide books one notices certain themes which have remained constant in promotional immigration literature. The most important aspect of the guide books was their appeal to tenant or peasant farmers, and also agriculturalists in general. Canada's west was thought to be settled by agriculturalist throughout Canada's early immigration promotions. Naturally if agriculturalists

<sup>130</sup> Kelley & Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 64.

<sup>131</sup> Henderson, "Most of our Country is Wild and Unspoiled", 10-11.

<sup>132</sup> Jeffrey S. Murray. Library and Archives Canada, "Sell, Sell, Sell", <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/immigrants/021017-2310-e.html> (Accessed October 31st, 2008).

<sup>133</sup> Kelley & Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 111.

<sup>134</sup> John F. Conway, *The West*, 22.

were to settle the west then of course the climate and soil would be of major importance.

Throughout the guide books we see the positive attributes of Canada's western climate and soil being discussed. The independence of farming was propagated throughout the guide books and but it was also made clear that Canada was civilized and British in nature. Although Canada was described as British in nature throughout the guide books, it did seek to attract other non-British farmers, and this was evident by the references to Canada being suitable for Swedes, French, Dutch, and various other European nationalities. Immigration agents were also sent to other European countries other than Britain, and the guide books were published in a range of languages, making it further clear that non-British farmers were also targeted<sup>135</sup>. Although it would seem as though Macdonald's government did not succeed in attracting a large influx of immigrants, large group migrations to western Canada did occur<sup>136</sup>. For example, western Canada experienced group settlement from Russian Mennonites, Germans, Icelanders, and Scots. The allure of attracting immigrants had much to do with the political climate of Macdonald's time. There was a notion among elites of Upper and Lower Canada that if the Dominion was to establish itself as a new nation it needed to show its power and ability by expanding economically, and western expansion was seen as the mechanism for achieving such endeavors. There were also notions among expansionist in central Canada that through the Dominion's success the British Empire would flourish and Canada would rise within the Empire, and perhaps even replace it one day. Apart from this, Sir John A. Macdonald felt compelled to settle the west in fear that the United States would annex the land if not settled. These general themes in the Canadian consciousness may have informed Macdonald's National Policy, which seemed to address the issues of nation building through settlement of the west. The historical record

indicates immigration was crucial to the development of Canada and that settling the west was an integral facet of settling the west.

<sup>135</sup> Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, 185-186.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

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① BL-15-11