

EAST MEETS WEST AT THE 75th

Lorraine M. Williams

On September 1, 1905 Alberta and Saskatchewan became the 8th and 9th provinces to join Confederation. To mark the 75th anniversary of this event the legislative assemblies of the two provinces invited Senators, MPs and MLAs from across Canada to attend their anniversary celebrations. In this article one of the guests recounts some of her personal impressions and experiences. She also provides a glimpse of the type of exchange carried out on a regular basis by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. These activities are intended to contribute to national and international understanding among parliamentarians and people generally.

There was an air of expectation as we arrived at the Calgary airport the weekend of August 29th. Each political party in all ten provinces, as well as the NWT and Yukon, had been invited to send delegates to the celebrations. Guarded greetings, based on ideological differences, soon gave way to more relaxed exchanges as we got to know each other. We were whisked off finally by van to the sophisticated Calgary Inn, where in each room our hosts had left us "Alby", the Alberta buffalo mascot, Alberta '75" lapel pins, name tags and a host of engraved invitations. The establishment had thought of everything for its guests.

With barely time for forty winks, we assembled at 7:30 for transfer to Heritage Park. This was our introduction to the meticulous punctuality which covered every minute of our trip. Items of interest were pointed out by the affable Deputy Chairman of the House, Bill Purdy and his wife. At the park we began the first in a continual round of refreshments, introductions and food. We met the Stampede queen and princesses for this year. For supper we were treated to a huge hind of beef, baked beans, potatoes, sour cream and birthday cake. Alberta Speaker Gerry Amerongen gave us a hearty bilingual welcome. He and his Saskatchewan counterpart, John Brockelbank, cut the birthday cake. We sang *a capella* a horrible rendition of "Happy Birthday". One hopes that a group's ability to govern is not dependent on its facility in singing!

After supper there was barn dancing, which magically picked up even the most exhausted traveler, particularly when it came to figuring out the intricacies

of "Birdie in the Bush". We exited waltzing — literally. The best fun was yet to come. The Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, Bohdan (Bo) Stefaniuk, had arranged a police escort for our stay in Alberta. I do not know who had the most fun on the way home, us in the Brewster bus or the police cars playing leap frog with each other.

The following morning the director of the Calgary Tourist Bureau met us at Stampede Park. He insisted we yell "howdy" before he would initiate us into the "Calgary White Hat Club". Of course, would-be cowboys will do anything for one of those 10 gallon Stetsons. By the third try we were able to yell lustily enough to meet the criterion for membership. Breakfast consisted of flapjacks, fried eggs, bacon, sausages, orange juice and lots of hot coffee. We then boarded our bus for a drive to Banff. The girls from the Alberta committee, Robin Taylor and Charlene Blaney came around with hot towels to wipe the sausage grease off our pinkies. It was just one example of the thoughtfulness that went into the planning of the entire four days. Three police cruisers again had fun escorting us out of the city. Passing motorists stared curiously. We developed a collective fantasy that they took us for a group of convicts being transported from a minimum to a maximum security prison.

On the bus, a spirit of bonhomie prevailed and the shop talk settled down to a frank level — sympathy for some of the eastern provincial members whose constituency office allowances were quite low compared to the rest of Canada; envy of the Alberta situation where a large government majority means that members have to

Lorraine Williams was one of the guests invited by the legislatures of Saskatchewan and Alberta to mark their 75th anniversary as provinces. Her husband John Williams is the member of the Ontario legislature for Oriole.

spend a very little part of the year actually sitting in the legislature. We compared notes as to who is a full-time and who is a part-time MLA. There appeared to be little difference in the demands upon them.

Once in Banff we were ushered into lunch at the Banff Park Lodge. Bo's years with the Chamber of Commerce and the Hotel and Motel Association paid off. He knew we would be stuffed from breakfast, so he had ordered a 'light' lunch of generous portions of cold B.C. salmon and raspberry sherbert. He had come down weeks before and pre-tasted the menu. When the sherbert was not satisfactory, he had insisted they order another brand. We were then offered three choices of afternoon excursions — Lake Louise, the gondola to Sulphur Mountain or a boat cruise on Lake Minnewanka. We chose the cruise and two and one half hours later we returned from that spectacular green lake, pleased with our choice.

A few of us bought souvenirs at inflated prices. Then we departed by bus in 13 degree weather to Brewster's Valley Donut Tent near the youth hostel. We thought of the kids camping out as we huddled around the huge open fireplace. Soon we lined up for the familiar menu — beef, beans and birthday cake. Senator Sid Buckwold of Saskatoon taught some of us easterners the Butterfly Dance to the merry squeaking of two fiddlers. Then we all collapsed, timidly requesting that the bus depart an hour before scheduled to go back to the hotel.

On Sunday morning two of our party reported that they had squeezed in a hurried breakfast with Calgary cousins who told them that more citizens were concerned with the teacher's strike that had been dragging on, than with the 75th birthday party. Then we were off to Drumheller, wearing our Stetsons (there is no way to pack them.) As the police escorted us safely to the highway, Bo insisted on a resounding "howdy" before he would offer us any libations. He also passed out an assortment of magazines (including 'Mad') and a huge wicker basket of fresh fruit.

We passed through Berseker, which fitted the easterner's idea of a prairie town. Bo told us that the in-flight movie was "Prairie Splendor" and that the screens were located to our right and left. Peanuts, band aids, matches and aspirins were available. We also learnt that Berseker and other towns were upset because the railway may close the station. As the highway got bumpier, one of the MLA's suggested this must be a riding held by one of the opposition members. We continued through the Palliser Triangle (shades of Richard Boone) to the Badlands (we were not supposed to call them that). The MLA from Drumheller came out to meet the bus as we

went through Dinosaur Valley. Down by the river, we had a barbecue.

It began to dawn on us that Alberta had it made when one of the guides informed us that only one tenth of the coal deposits here had been mined. We left this dry valley which was a tropical forest 68 million years ago, and which now lies strangely silent — crowned by a statue of Christ and disturbed only by the sound of the singing cables of the Bleriot ferry over the Red Deer River.

Back in the bus, we saw prairie cathedrals (grain elevators to us) and fields wealthy with grain and oil. By the time we reached Wetaskiwin, it was teeming rain. We regretted having rushed through Stan Reynold's eclectic museum collection. As we were leaving, Stan informed us that it houses only 10% of his collection. Perhaps Alberta has 90% of itself in reserve?

We reached the Four Seasons in Edmonton. It was a solemn place but known to serve the best croissants in the West. Bo had arranged for more surprises in the room, including a duffle bag to carry our momentos. There was a letter of personal greeting from the manager, a box of goodies from the hotel bakery and a single rose in a vase decorating the bathroom. We left by bus to get to a reception and dinner at the Jubilee Auditorium. The gourmet meal included "Festival of the Empire" crepe, a dessert created especially for the visit of Queen Elizabeth to the Commonwealth games. The chef had to get Royal permission to reproduce it. A cast of fifteen extremely talented youngsters performed a musical by Fred Robertson entitled "Alberta People". We all fell under the spell of its mythical spirit puppet, Napi. When the performance was over the children mingled with us and they joined in the oohs and ahs when the now familiar birthday cake was brought out, this time decorated with 75 blazing sparklers.

Monday was *the* day. Our bus took us to the stately legislative building for the presentation of a new canopy for the Speaker's chair. It was a gracious gift from the Edmonton city fathers to the people of Alberta. We were directed to reserved seats in the gallery and had to look twice at Bo whom we did not recognize in his formal clerk's attire. We were given cards with the recently proclaimed lyrics to "O Canada" but true to our singing form, we still managed to stumble over them. The wife of one of the NWT delegates explained the intricate Indian bead work in the Alberta rose hanging in the foyer of the legislature. We then streamed out on the grounds to hear speeches by Premier Lougheed, the Lieutenant Governor, Prime Minister Trudeau and Governor-General Schreyer. The Governor-General read a proclamation

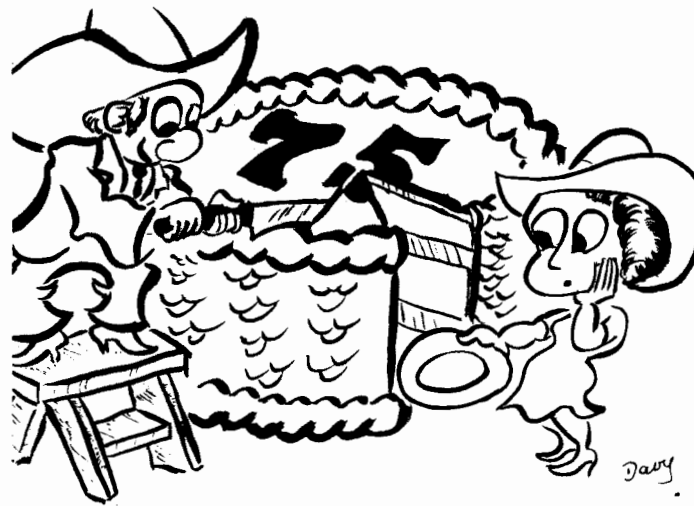
which significantly added the words "Strong and Free" to the provincial coat of arms.

A young child on her father's shoulders looked backwards through her binoculars to get a view of the Prime Minister. If he appeared smaller because of that, it was only fitting. This was Alberta's day, not his. Mr. Lougheed spoke of the pressures on old values, which rapid growth can bring. He echoed a complaint which we have heard from many Albertans on this brief trip. Torontonians in particular understand that kind of pressure. As the air force jets flew past, a small plane carelessly crossed their path, oblivious to the fact that he came close to being annihilated. The incident served as a symbol of Lougheed's warning.

Lunch at the Edmonton Plaza was almost an anticlimax. Our stomachs rebelled at the fragility of "Cold Plate Alberta" when we had become accustomed to much heartier fare. Pop singer Gabrielle Bugeaud provided the entertainment. She had a strong voice. The Prime Minister listened attentively, but many were thinking that she was a strange choice for the entertainment of senior citizens and pioneers for whom the luncheon was intended to honour.

After a half-hour nap, we went on to the grand finale. We spent a dream-like evening at the Royal Glendora Club as guests of Edmonton's Municipal Anniversary Committee. We tipped our glasses in salute to the talented RCMP Concert Band. The mountie who did the falsetto arrangement of Indian Love Call endeared himself to us forever. We knew from experience what the buffet dinner menu would be. Only this time we had an individual birthday cake for each table! Just as the fireworks display ended, some of us rushed over to the railroad bridge for the great experiment. Would the city be able to pull this one off? Would the "Great Divide" waterfall (which has already divided the city in other ways) fall? The appointed hour came; first a trickle and then those 12,000 gallons of *treated* water began their descent of 210 feet every minute. The crowds went mad with approval. The next day we would be off to Vegreville and then to Saskatchewan for the rest of the celebrations.

In Lloydminster, a symbolic event took place when the sixty-five passengers were transferred from the privately owned Brewster bus from Edmonton to the Saskatchewan Transport Company bus. Lloydminster was the logical place to make the exchange since it is situated exactly on the border of the two provinces. We arrived in time to hear the end of the Governor General's remarks at the Communiplex grounds, then moved on to a picnic meal. We had our (by now) familiar menu of



beef, beans and buns. As sure as night follows day, the dessert was the inevitable birthday cake.

The day had been declared an official holiday in Lloydminster — Proclamation Day. The entire city of 14,000 seemed to have turned out. A tent provided shelter from the intense sunshine and we sat with some friendly folks from Paradise Hill while Governor General Schreyer cut the cake. He sat at a table beside us but the farmer opposite him was completely unimpressed. He continued to chew on his toothpick as if Canada's Governor General sat down and ate cake with him every day.

Our host, Speaker John Brockelbank and his wife hurried us up to the waiting buses. Mayor Kay Matheson saw us off, asked us to sign the guest book and gave us a packet of souvenirs, including an interesting local history by C. Wetton called *The Promised Land — A Story of the Barr Colonists*. But as we pulled away from the crowds, the single most interesting question for the politicians concerned the provincial sales tax situation in Lloydminster since Saskatchewan has one but Alberta does not.

Once the bus started rolling, we became adept at picking up assorted snippets of information. We passed the home of Russ Phillips who is in the Guinness Book of Records for a World Walking Championship. The oil rigs pumping away in the fields recover less than 10% of the oil because of its viscosity; the town of Tisdale wanted to cancel their stamps with the words "land of rape and honey" but the request was turned down and so it went.

We passed through Battleford, one of the three sites that served as a capitol for the Northwest Territories. At historic Fort Battleford fruit, muffins and drinks were furnished for us by the Pennydale Junction Restaurant, a refurbished railroad station. The Fort was lonely that afternoon. Only one other car of visitors was there besides ourselves. We wanted to linger in the calm and dignity of the commander's house, but festivities in Saskatoon were beckoning.

What really makes one province different from another? Strangely enough, it's the minutiae. Easterners are not accustomed to having cars pull over onto the shoulder so that others can pass. Why is it that in Saskatchewan dead skunks litter the highway, whereas in Ontario it is porcupines? Other such trivia preoccupied us. We passed a Hutterite colony and were fortunate to have a trained sociologist and theologian on board in the person of Laverne Lewycky, MP from Dauphin. He gave us an overview of Hutterite culture and religion. Before we realized it, we were in Saskatoon, just after rush hour.

Our formal introduction to Saskatoon took place Tuesday night at the Western Development Museum. We experienced Boom Town circa 1910, and it was very impressive. In the east most pioneer exhibits recreate the mid-1800's. But here, we saw artifacts that some of us still remember as part of our early lives. Personally, I was transported back to childhood as I looked at a bakery truck, its horses "anchored" by a heavy iron weight attached by rope to the side of the wagon. I experienced a vivid memory of watching the horse to see how far it could move with the anchor down before finally giving up. In the general store there was a clock exactly like the one my Grandmother O'Donnell had on the dining room mantle in her Orillia lumber hotel. The old bank displayed its cache of corporate seals. It reminded us that the days of pomposity in banks are well behind us.

At dinner, our hosts poured their tomato juice into the beer and we were introduced to "Red Eye". Fresh Thresherman's bread cut in thick slabs, and Saskatoon berry pie were a rare treat for the non-Westerners. Speaker Brockelbank presented a special stamp issue commemorating Saskatchewan's 75th to the Alberta Speaker as a memento of the evening.

On Wednesday some of us had breakfast in the once fabled Bessborough Hotel. Then we separated. Some went to the Potash mine. The rest piled into a bus heading for the John Diefenbaker Centre and the Ukrainian Museum. A "must" for those who go to the Diefenbaker Centre is the 22 minute film "Lifetime to

Legend". One does not have to be a fan of "The Chief" in order to appreciate his contribution to Canada. We learned that in the fall of 1969 when he became chancellor of the University of Saskatchewan, Dief bequeathed to the University his entire collection of papers, which amounted to over three million pages as well as political memorabilia, gifts and Dief's own priceless collection of Sir John A. Macdonald manuscripts and furniture.

The collection has to be housed differently since it functions both as a public museum and a private archives. This challenge has been faced squarely by resident Director John Munro. He has taken the approach that the Centre is not a mausoleum. Dief is not to be canonized there. Rather it is a gallery, a "medium", whereby visitors can have an insight into the development of 20th century Canadian politics, as reflected in the life of Dief.

We cut our visit short to get over to the Ukrainian Museum. The Museum opened in May 1980 and already has welcomed over 6,300 visitors. According to Marie Kishchuck, the assistant curator, Sunday is the busiest day. The Museum houses a well mounted display of over 20,000 artifacts and photographs depicting the evolution of Ukrainian life in Canada. The Museum also offers folk art classes in embroidery, Pysanky (Easter egg painting), ceramics and rezba (wood carving). The museum hopes to find old timers who are experts in Rozpys (the art of decorative wall and furniture painting), block painting on fabric and bead work for necklaces. It is one of Ms. Kishchuck's priorities to find such craftsmen before the skills die out.

It was then time to move on to Regina. It rained all the way but that did not deter Speaker Brockelbank. Encouraged by his wife, he gave us a running commentary on the damp sights we pass ... "Dundurn is your typical Saskatchewan town — four grain elevators, a few stores and in this case, a Canadian Forces Base" We passed man-made Blackstrap Mountain, the pride of Senator Sid Buckwold, former mayor of Saskatoon who had been with us on the trip up until this point. One of the NWT representatives suggested that they have boulders higher than Mount Blackstrap in the Territories! We passed the Ipsco Steel Plant where all its steel pipes are made from scrap metal. Finally we reached Regina and, whatever the significance, a rainbow appeared in the sky.

That night dinner turned out to be another round of hip of beef, but *no baked beans*. What if the breaking of the formula brings us bad luck? Perhaps that explained what happened to Newfoundland that evening. Speaker Len Simms was called upon to present an en-

graved plaque of "virginite" to the Speakers of both Alberta and Saskatchewan. As he did so, he noticed, to his chagrin, that both were engraved with the words "To the Province of Alberta". Only a Newfie could carry this off with aplomb. Speaker Simms assured the Saskatchewan Speaker he would leave him \$2 to get the engraving corrected. His fellow Newfies wisely refused to let him leave the podium until he produced the \$2 and handed it over to Speaker Brockelbank.

Thursday was the climax of the entire week. We arrived at the beautiful government grounds in mid-morning, shepherded ever so efficiently by Gwenn Ronyk and Donelda Klein of the Clerk's office. Lake Wascana glittered in the sun. From our reserved seats in the Gallery we could see an attractive picture of the Queen hanging over the Speaker's chair. The proceedings began. Speaker Brockelbank looked very serious in his official robes. The Canadian born Lord Mayor of London was one of the guests. He had a medieval appearance in his robes of black and gold, his ruffles and chain of office around his neck. With the help of his Sheriff of the Court, he presented an English china plate, suitably inscribed, to the Premier. The solemnity was broken when the Premier, in his thanks, referred to the City of London's history as "having been long and, for the most part, honourable". The Lord Mayor was presented with a Hans Herold painting of the small village of Laura, Saskatchewan. The Parliament of Canada was then presented with a group of prints called "Vision 80". The Governor General reciprocated. He presented, from the Queen, the originals of the valuable 1912 documents from the Ministry of the Interior, showing the disposition of lands in Saskatchewan from 1901 until 1912.

The ceremonies completed, we viewed some exquisite prize winning quilts then we moved quickly into the bus and over the Albert Street bridge. It is actually a dam and was constructed as a make-work project during the depression. We reached Victoria Park just as the re-enactment of the original ceremonies were about to begin. The bandshell was decorated with colourful scenery and resembled a puppet theatre. The RCMP Concert Band captured the spirit of the day with its robust marches. Messrs. Schreyer, Blakeney and Trudeau sat bemused on the platform as the actors became, for a few moments, the ghosts of Earl Grey, Sir

Wilfrid Laurier and former Premier Walter Scott. Excerpts from press clippings and speeches of that day in 1905 were read, including one from a Regina paper which speaks of the "jewels of eloquence dropping from the lips of Prime Minister Laurier". When Mr. Trudeau got up to speak, he said wistfully, "I wish we had the press today they had in 1905".

Once the speeches were over the Regina inter-school chorus and bands took the VIPs on a walk through the park to admire a new plaque in honour of Premier Walter Scott. The chimes of Knox Metropolitan United Church (the first church in the Commonwealth to broadcast a church service) rang out joyously.

Thursday night was the grand finale to the official celebration. The Premier's dinner and dance was held at the multi-tiered Saskatchewan Centre of the Arts. The dinner was a masterpiece of compromise — roast turkey with dressing, augmented by cabbage rolls and perogies. "Betty and her Five Brothers" belted out gypsy-cum-yiddish music. The head table was alive with conviviality. Tommy Douglas got more applause than anybody else. His opening quip will be much quoted: "As the devil said when elected to Parliament, 'It's nice to be back home' ". The crowd roared its approval.

Then Premier Allan Blakeney went to the lecturn. "To some of us", he lamented, "this morning seems like 75 years ago". The hard working festival committee nodded their assent. He then talked about the small centres which have had homecoming parties — places such as Burr where, "the present population of fifteen or less had a registration of 1500 for homecoming . . . It just proves that Saskatchewan people will drive a long way for a good party." The dinner ended on a positive note — the announcement of a new Provincial Archives building for the people of Saskatchewan.

After dinner, we went to the lobby to listen to the "Celebration", a talented group of young Saskatchewan singers and musicians chosen from all over the province. The delegates decided to forgo the dancing and opt for an early bus back to the hotel. We were anxious to take a peek at our *Pictorial History of Saskatchewan* which we received as a gift. The next day we would be going home to various parts of Canada. It had been a great 75th and we can hardly wait for the 100th!