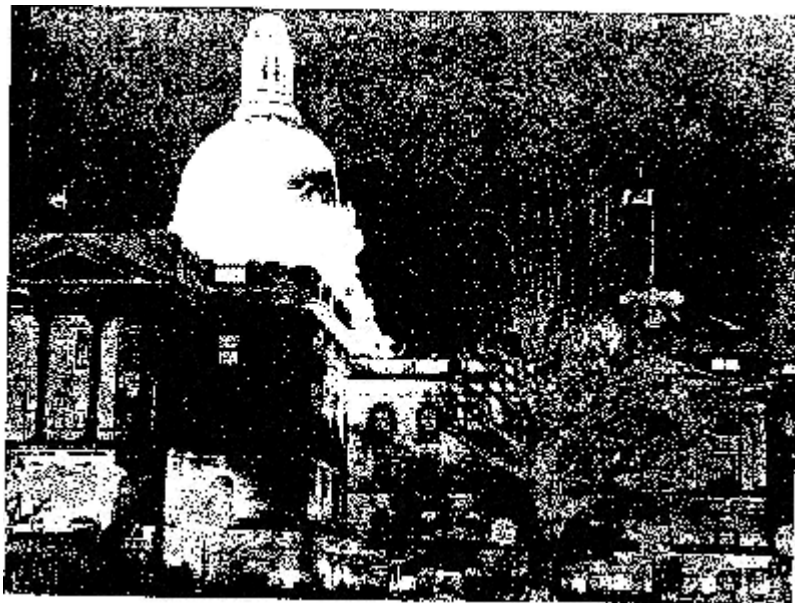


Those incredible years of Social Credit!

30+5

I know, I was there



By Alf Hooke

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alfred John Hooke was born in Whitecroft, Gloucestershire, England, on February 25, 1905, the same year in which Alberta became a Province. At the age of 8 he came to Alberta with his parents and attended school until he was 13; from 13 to 17, he worked as a hired hand on a farm, then returned to school, taking Grades 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 in three years.

He started teaching school in 1926 and for eight of the following nine years was principal of three different high schools. In 1935 he left teaching to become the Member for Rocky Mountain House in the world's first Social Credit government, devoting full time to his representation duties. He was a member of the Social Credit Board from 1938 to 1940 and Chairman of the Board from 1940 to 1943. On June 1st, 1943 he entered the Cabinet, being appointed Provincial Secretary. He was made Chairman of the Post-War Reconstruction Committee, the recommendations of which Committee resulted in the formation of the Department of Economic Affairs in June, 1945, of which Mr. Hooke became Minister.

In 1948 the Cabinet was increased in numbers and Mr. Hooke relinquished the portfolio of Provincial Secretary, devoting his full time to the Department of Economic Affairs until September of 1952, when he also assumed the portfolio of Minister of Public Works, on the resignation, because of ill health, of the former Minister.

In August, 1955, Mr. Hooke relinquished Public Works and Economic Affairs to become Minister of Municipal Affairs and Provincial Secretary, but on September 1, 1959, relinquished the Department of Provincial Secretary to devote all his time to the Department of Municipal Affairs. He held the portfolio of Municipal Affairs until June 29, 1967, when he relinquished that post to become Minister of Public Welfare. On July 16, 1968 he transferred to the Department of Lands and Forests, which portfolio he held until his retirement from the Cabinet in December, 1968. For 14 years he was the Minister in charge of the Civil Service and for over 25 years was the Chairman of the Public Service Pension Board. For nearly 14 years he was the first acting Premier of the Province.

His is a record of public service seldom, if ever, equalled.

First Printing August 1971

Second Printing September 1971

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INSTITUTE OF APPLIED ART LTD.

10042 - 109 Street

EDMONTON - ALBERTA

PUBLISHED, PRINTED AND BOUND IN ALBERTA

Cover Design by Ole Nielson

Printed by

CO-OP PRESS LIMITED

Edmonton, Alberta

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my dear wife, one of the most understanding and devoted persons I have ever known. Clever in so many ways, as her closest friends will attest, yet always modest and humble, and never seeking, but, rather, shunning the limelight, she has remained by my side steadfastly while I pursued a career which has called upon me to place my family of two sons and a daughter second to the welfare of the general public and to call upon her to make sacrifices far beyond the call of duty.

When the going has been rough and the criticism to which every man in public life is subjected has been difficult to take, she has always given me the assurance that told me that she and the children have that faith in "Dad" that he can always depend upon, no matter what others think. Her life has been as dedicated as my own to public service, yet in a way less conspicuous to the public view.

Knowing, as I have for so long known, that the children of our country are our greatest asset, and knowing that the present orthodox economic system is harmful to their interests in the long run, she has been content to take the buffeting of public criticism and to trust in God that our efforts to bring about a better Province and country in which our children, grandchildren and generations yet unborn can enjoy economic security with freedom will not have been in vain.

MY PERSONAL THANKS

This book could not have been written without the help of several devoted friends of many years. While I have kept many records over thirty-five years in public life, I have received invaluable help from other records, especially those kept by two personal friends—Mr. H. E. (Bert) Nichols, whom I have known intimately since the Alberta Social Credit movement began in 1934 and from those of a close personal friend, Mr. William Tomy, M.L.A., whom I have known since we were Normal School classmates in 1925-26, and who has served in the Legislature with me almost continuously since his election in 1935 as the Social Credit Member for the Willingdon constituency.

I also wish to acknowledge gratefully the help of the Calgary Herald for permitting the reproduction of several of the "Aberhart" cartoons drawn by Stewart Cameron, cartoonist for the Calgary Herald in those days, and also for other pictures.

Special thanks, however, I give to Mrs. Irene Gibson, who for nearly a quarter of a century was my personal and private secretary in six portfolios of government. A civil servant a month after turning seventeen, widowed later by the death of her husband, also a civil servant, who lost his life serving with the R.C.A.F. in World War Two, she became a career civil servant, one worthy of the name, and served until her retirement in 1969. Her assistance in keeping personal records for me during so many years has been invaluable. Since her retirement from the civil service, she has researched these files, taken hours of dictation and typed the material for this book several times over, when necessary, as a result of the changes made by me. Without her valued and devoted help, this book could not have been written.

INTRODUCTION

It happened on December 11, 1968!

I received a phone call at eleven thirty a.m. from the Honourable Mr. Strom, who on December 6th had been elected at the Social Credit leadership convention to succeed the Honourable E. C. Manning as Premier of Alberta. He invited me to meet with him in his office at about a quarter to twelve, explaining that he was arranging for his Cabinet to be sworn in the next forenoon.

His greeting to me was most cheery as he said: "Alf, what I wouldn't give to have your experience; I certainly need it now. Let's sit down and chat."

During the next half hour, he asked me many questions concerning the past and referred specifically to the work of the Social Credit Board, of which I had been a member and, later, Chairman, for many years.

He said that he wished to secure more information concerning what Social Credit is all about, as he had not paid a great deal of attention to it in the early days of the Social Credit movement. He had supported the Social Credit movement by his vote, but it was due mainly to Mr. Aberhart's Christian witness than to Social Credit as such. He told me that he would be depending upon me to help him secure an understanding of the Social Credit case and asked me to outline to him what the work of the Social Credit Board had been. This I did, and then suggested to him that he should secure from the Government library copies of the Annual Social Credit Board reports, and read them in chronological order, as they outlined specifically what the Board members had done in each successive year and also outlined our criticisms of the orthodox economic system, together with the recommended Social Credit remedies.

I assured him of my full and sincere co-operation in assisting him in any way I could to become conversant, as a Social Credit Premier ought to be, with principles and policies he presumed to espouse.

By twelve fifteen he had not indicated to me anything concerning the make-up of his Cabinet and I had no idea whatever whether he wished me to serve with him or whether I was to be relegated to the back benches. I sensed, however, that the latter was to be the case, because the conversation by this time had switched to many irrelevancies, such as our various beliefs in Christianity and its application to present day affairs.

Finally, he said: "Alf, I have been able to attract youth to my cause and I have pledged to the people of the Province that under my leadership I shall make full use of youth. In order, therefore, to keep my pledge I cannot invite you into my Cabinet. I said to him: "Well, Harry, that is your prerogative. I would find it to be completely inconsistent knowing as I do that you, as premier, may choose whomsoever you wish to head the various Departments of Government, and then suggest that you should appoint me, or for that matter, anyone else". He added hurriedly: "This is entirely my own decision, as Premier Manning put in a real pitch for you. He really did, Alf."

I asked him who else he might be dropping at the time, as I knew that one at least was older than I and that another two or three were very little younger. I had served in the cabinet for nearly twenty-six years continuously from the time I was the second youngest until, at the age of sixty-three, I had become the second oldest. Incidentally, Mr. Strom himself had, many years before, left youth behind, according to the calendar, as he, too, had already passed his fifty-fourth birthday. He told me that he was dropping no one else at that time but as soon as the Legislative Session of 1969 was over, it was his intention to make further changes and that others would be dropped.

I was sure at the time that he realized that his arguments to me had not been too convincing, because certainly his expressed desire of receiving from me the knowledge I possessed as a result of long experience and my relegation to the back benches did not seem, even to Mr. Strom, to be logical. He may have been thinking, as I was, that Premier Manning had called Mr. Hartley into the Cabinet at the age of sixty-six and that Mr. Hartley had served well for nine years as Minister of Public Works. He may have remembered, also, that Mr. Halmrast, Minister of Welfare, had retired at the age of sixty-six, despite the fact that Premier Manning had asked him to reconsider that decision.

Evidencing a little confusion, he said to me: "Alf, there is another reason I have decided not to invite you into the Cabinet and perhaps I should tell you what that reason is. There are two members of the Cabinet

who have indicated to me that they prefer not to serve if I invite you. Please do not ask me to name them, as I would hate to cause any hard feelings between you and them." I said: "Now Harry, you have put the entire Cabinet under suspicion, haven't you?" And after a moment's thought he agreed that perhaps that was what he had done. I quickly assured him, however, that he could put his mind at ease on that score, telling him that I could name the two he had in mind and also that I was really surprised that the number was not three. It was perfectly clear when I named the two that I hit the nail on the head. I assured him that I understood that the two whose names I had mentioned would be quite vocal and told him at the same time that knowing the third one as I did, that one lacked the guts to say so.

Now that this point was settled and I was about to become once more a back bencher, I said to him: "Harry, this is a great reward for nearly twenty-six years of continuous service as a Cabinet Minister, through six Departments of Government, and though you boast of your strong adherence to Christian principles, as I do myself, I could not do to a dog what you are doing to me; however, I still agree that this is your prerogative and I made you a promise a few minutes ago that I would help you in any way I can to get the knowledge of Social Credit that you are lacking. That promise still holds and if at any time you wish to secure the benefit of my long experience, all you have to do is give me a call and that assistance will be gladly forthcoming. I am concerned with getting the government back on the Social Credit track much more than I am with personalities."

About this moment I realized that his actions would perhaps result in embarrassing questions being asked of him by many friends and supporters of mine throughout the Province and, strange as it may seem, I found myself feeling sorry for him. I had seen him under pressure of questions several times during his relatively short Cabinet service and knew that answering questions was not one of his strong points.

I knew also that I would be asked by many people besides the news media to explain why I had not been invited by the new Premier back into the Cabinet and I wished to make sure that our answers were the same. I asked him whether or not he had considered this question and he replied that he had, and had concluded that he wanted it to end just this way. "Once my mind is made up," said he, "I prefer not to change it."

He then told me that if there happened to be anything on my desk that required a signature, he would prefer that I forward it to the Honourable Mr. Ruste who would be taking my place as Minister of Lands and Forests the next morning. I was to do no more signing that afternoon.

The second longest Cabinet career in Alberta's history had thus come to a sudden end. There is no such thing as thirty days' notice at Cabinet level.

CHAPTER ONE

I think my political career started early in my life, as I remember becoming fascinated with the fact that in 1910 men in the village in which I lived suddenly commenced wearing colored ribbons in their lapels. As a curious little boy of five, I asked my father the reason for this decoration, especially as he, too, was wearing one. This it will be remembered, was in the early years of the Labor movement. Though my father himself was always a Conservative in his thinking, he was, nevertheless, as a coal miner, interested in the organization of labor unions. Father explained to me that a man by the name of Sir Charles Dilke was endeavoring to better conditions for the working man, such as himself, and that it was in his honor that these ribbons were being worn. I recall very well the many meetings held in our village addressed by Sir Charles Dilke and others and on more than one occasion, attended these meetings with my father.

Having been born with a good sense of humor, I was even at that early age, interested and amused at the heckling which often took place at such meetings and at the ready and witty answer for which the English politician has always been noted. I recall very well accompanying my father and his brother to a meeting in the neighboring town addressed by the Right Honourable Lloyd George. The meeting was stormy and someone in the audience hurled a Swede turnip on to the platform, whereupon this witty Welshman stepped to one side, observed the monstrous vegetable and with a smile on his face, remarked: "Some gentleman in the audience seems to have lost his head!"

I was always an avid reader of British history and at the age of five was able to recite the names of those who had occupied the throne of England from the time of Alfred the Great up to the time of the reigning monarch. It was well known to me, even at that time, that the Village of Whitecroft had been in existence prior to the coming of William the Conqueror in 1066 and that the district known as the Forest of Dean, in which Whitecroft is located, had been set aside by him as a special hunting ground.

The area known as the Forest of Dean lies between the Severn and Wye rivers. The Town of Newnham on the east and Coleford on the west; Ross on the north and Lydney on the south form the principal towns along its boundary. It is like a fairy land hidden away from the rest of England. Steeped in antiquity, it is well known that the ancient Druids flourished there; the early Romans mined coal and iron; and to this day portions of the early Roman roads are still in use.

It is difficult to explain the romantic charm which the Royal Forest of Dean casts like a magic spell upon residents and visitors alike. It is a fact that many who come to this place for a short visit return time after time and on each occasion increase their enjoyment as the romance of the old Forest grows upon them.

The Forester will always tell you that the ideal way to see and enjoy the present beauty and antiquity of the place is to travel on foot through the great woods of oak, beech and walnut. Many of the forests cover from eight hundred to nine hundred acres and they are intersected by paths bordered on both sides by giant ferns. Many kinds of flowers grow in abundance over the entire forest area, bluebells and foxgloves being two of the most common. Birds of all sorts find the Forest of Dean to be a real haven and it is not unusual during a short walk to hear the cuckoo, the magpie, the jackdaw and the jay, nor is it unusual to see an abundance of waterfowl such as the heron, wild geese, wild ducks and swans. Every now and again while strolling through these beautiful glades, one becomes conscious that he is walking over a portion of the old Roman roads with their well preserved and well laid stones, even though moss a foot thick is underfoot.

Despite the beauty of the Forest of Dean, and the pleasant and apparently carefree lives the people have always led, making a living has never been easy. Practically the only industry in the area was that of coal mining and in those days of my early boyhood and before, when miners had to go on strike in order to receive a bare pittance, the future for young people looked extremely bleak. Accidents in coal mines were frequent and I well remember the many occasions when someone would come to the school and inform the teacher that between them they should break the news to some little boy that his father had been killed in the coal mine. I can remember the apprehension we youngsters experienced every time our teacher was called to the door. We could not help but wonder whose turn it was next to become half orphaned. More than once I saw the familiar donkey cart wending its way over cobbled roads, carrying the body of a dead miner to his home. Funeral parlors did not exist.

My father was the second oldest of three boys in a family of nine children and at the age of twelve it had

become his turn to receive such tragic news. His older brother had already left school and had gone to the coal mine, while the younger brother was only three.

My grandmother was a cripple from birth and to be left a widow with nine children in those days, when there was no such thing as workmen's compensation, made it necessary for each child to earn a few pennies in any way possible in order to keep body and soul together. Father therefore, was obliged to leave school at the tender age of twelve and enter the coal mine. This was in the year 1891, and though England's labor laws had been greatly improved during the nineteenth century, they still permitted young boys to work long hours at such arduous tasks. Twelve hours a day, six days a week were the rule and three shifts were compulsory. This meant that even young boys of his age, working deep in the bowels of the earth, would work day shift one week, afternoon shift the next week, and night shift the following week.

I have often heard my father and his brother speak about those early years, describing how they worked in tunnels only four feet high, loading coal into small cars and pushing or pulling them to the main entry where they were emptied into the conveyance which delivered the coal to the top of the shaft. I gather that father's first week's pay amounted to five shillings and can recall his telling how delighted he was and how he ran all the way home, a mile and a half, to show his mother and gave to her what he had earned.

These were the days also when every youngster attending school took his few pennies of tuition with him every Monday morning and I have heard my grandmother tell how she would go without many needed things to make sure that the younger members of the family could at least get their schooling. Though crippled, Grandma Hooke herself had secured a secondary school education.

In my mother's family two of her oldest brothers had, before the turn of the century, emigrated to Springhill, Nova Scotia, to engage in mining there. Some time later they had moved westward and had become engaged in mining in Lethbridge where the oldest brother, Alfred Davis, became manager of the City-owned coal mine, remaining in that position until his retirement and the closure of the mine many years later. By 1900, four of her brothers had emigrated and all were engaged in mining in the Lethbridge area. In their letters, they spoke about the great opportunities that existed in this western land for young people and I well remember hearing mother and father discussing the pros and cons of emigrating to Canada. From his own experience, father had come to the conclusion that he wanted better opportunities for his own children than he himself had had.

In his case, emigrating to Canada meant that he would be the only one of his family to do so, while in Mother's case it was different. She did, however, dislike the idea of leaving behind her only sister and her mother and father. In April, 1910, her mother had passed away and the remaining brother, younger than she, had made up his mind that he would follow his brothers to this promising land of Canada.

There was still one thing which bothered Mother and that was the fear of crossing the ocean, but in 1911 it was evident from newspaper reports that the unsinkable ship, the Titanic, would take people safely back and forth across the Atlantic Ocean. The railway companies of Canada were advertising all that Canada had to offer to Britishers and Europeans if they would only emigrate. I still remember a pamphlet coming in to our home depicting Canada as a land of milk and honey. While I cannot recall the authorship of the pamphlet, I remember that it displayed a picture of a young boy reaching out of his upstairs bedroom window and plucking what appeared to be a juicy looking orange from a tree. I have, of course, since learned that Canada is a land of milk and honey, providing that one is prepared to milk cows and tend the bees.

Early in 1912, Mother and Father, together with me and my brother and young sister, went, as it had been our custom, to visit with Mother's sister and her family to have supper and to attend the Sunday evening service at the primitive Methodist church. The main discussion evolved around whether or not both families would consider emigration to Canada, as it certainly seemed from the encouraging letters that had been received from Mother's brothers that it was the sensible thing to do. Father and Mother had, by this time, together with Mother's youngest brother, decided they would emigrate and the major consideration seemed to be whether we should try to secure passage on the **Titanic** which we knew was unsinkable, or whether we should secure passage on another ship offering lower rates and catering to emigrants. Father made enquiries a day or two later concerning passage on the Titanic, only to find that there were already more applications than could be accepted. There was, however, always the possibility that cancellations would take place, in which case we would be duly notified. The time came and the great "unsinkable ship" left without us. I can well recall my mother's feeling that though we had missed the maiden voyage, we could no doubt secure passage on a subsequent voyage. This, however, as the world knows, was not to be. The sinking of this great ship shocked the world and many prospective emigrants delayed their departure. We left England finally on the 20th of September,

1913, travelling to Canada on the Royal Edward, which incidentally, was sunk in the Dardanelles during the early days of World War One.

I remember very vividly the experience of crossing the Atlantic Ocean and especially remember when passengers were called to the deck when we reached the approximate spot where in April, 1912, the Titanic went down with the loss of over fifteen hundred lives.

I well remember when the Titanic sailed, my mother stating when our names had not yet been reached: "Well, perhaps it is all for the good. This may be the way God wants it." Her words came back vividly to us as we stood on the deck of the Royal Edward that beautiful September morning gazing at a vast expanse of ocean and thanking God that we had not been on the Titanic on that fateful night. We travelled from the City of Quebec by immigrant train, sitting by day and sleeping at night on wooden-slatted seats, arriving at the City of Calgary on the morning of October 1st.

Only a few years before, a railroad line had been laid between Lacombe and Coronation and two of my mother's brothers who had been engaged in mining in Lethbridge had moved to the little village of Halkirk, situated on this railroad line and located about fifty miles east of Lacombe and approximately one hundred and fifty miles south east of Edmonton. It was to this little village that we journeyed to make our future home.

While waiting for the train from Calgary to Lacombe, I heard trainmen, one after the other, shouting at the top of their voices: "Calgary, Calgary." I had not seen the word in writing and to me, a little boy of eight, who had been nurtured in the narrow confines of the Wesleyan Methodist Sunday School, the very word excited me and many times I have heard my father tell the story of how I leaned against him and whispered: "This is the place where Jesus was crucified, isn't it?" I remember wondering at the time why he laughed so heartily.

While in England I had heard my maternal grandmother speak of her brother who had emigrated to the United States, living in a place called Minneapolis. The name fascinated me. Some time prior to our leaving England, this great uncle, Chris James, and his family had left the United States and had settled also in the Halkirk district on a homestead. We were surprised and delighted when arriving in Halkirk to be met not only by Mother's brother, Uncle Will Davis, but by Uncle and Aunt James, as well. Mother's brother, in company with Uncle James had driven to town with a team and wagon, while Aunt James, who was then sixty years old, had driven her own team and buggy, in order that Mother and my four-year-old sister could at least enjoy the comfort of a ride over prairie trails on a spring-equipped vehicle, the male members being accommodated in the springless farm wagon. To me and my brother our first ride behind a team of horses was a real thrill and the trip of five miles came to an end all too soon for us.

Arriving at the homestead of Uncle James, we met other relatives, Aunt Nell Davis, our five Davis cousins, together with three other members of Uncle James' family. We enjoyed our first Canadian home-cooked meal which had been prepared by one of the daughters while her mother had gone to town to meet us. It was at this meal that we tasted cole slaw for the first time, such a dish being entirely unknown in the district from which we had come. Roast beef and a plentiful supply of home-grown vegetables, done to perfection, followed by sliced peaches and cream, also new to us, completed the meal.

While several of Aunt James' family were married and had children of their own, two boys still lived at home—one, Harry, already a young man, and the other, Lawrence, a boy only two years my senior. This young one, it seems, had come into the world when his mother was approaching her fiftieth birthday.

As soon as supper was over, chores had to be done and for the first time in our young lives my brother and I saw cows being milked. Young Lawrence, sitting down on his three-legged stool, entertained my brother and me greatly by squirting milk directly into the mouths of three or four cats which followed him, meowing, from one cow to the next. The odd squirt aimed in our direction was also great fun for Lawrence, that is. It was only natural that we should want to do the same thing Lawrence was doing, but a switch of the cow's tail changed our minds quickly and our lessons in milking were delayed until a later date.

Uncle Will's coal mine was only a matter of rods from Uncle James' home, so later in the evening we walked down the hill to Uncle Will's abode, where we were to spend the next six months of our lives.

The weather that fall was most delightful and we had no snow until the middle of January. The fine weather gave us an opportunity of getting acquainted with some of the neighbors and of learning the ways of pioneer life in Alberta. Sod shacks and log cabins dotted the landscape, although for the most part the sod shacks by this time were used as chicken houses. A few of the older settlers who had moved into the

district before the coming of the railroad had advanced even beyond the log cabin stage and had built frame houses, the occasional one even being nicely painted. Roads, however, were non-existent but trails made by horse-drawn vehicles seemed to go in every direction. Even fences were few and far between.

The little red school house, consisting of one room, served as the school, the church and the community centre and it was here that newcomers usually met the other members of the district.

We lived in what was known as the Spruce Creek school district which, while it boasted of a school, had no teacher, so for the first year of our lives in Canada it was impossible for us to attend classes of any sort.

The warm open winter, while being a boon for the farmers was anything but a blessing for those engaged in the coal industry. It was fortunate for us that we were able to spend the first winter living with relatives; otherwise, the thirty dollars with which we had arrived in the country would not have gone as far as it did.

In the spring we were able to rent, for the sum of six dollars a month, a small four-roomed house consisting of one ply of shiplap lumber, situated about one mile from Uncle James' home. Our nearest source of water supply, however, was the spring in Uncle's pasture and every day it was necessary to carry at least two buckets of water this distance. Carrying drinking water long distances, however, was not new to us, as we had found this to be necessary in the Forest of Dean.

One thing we had not been used to until we came to Canada was mosquitoes and the spring of 1914 seemed to have produced an unusually large crop. When Father went for the water each evening, my brother and I went along and on the way back as we walked behind him, carrying poplar switches, we attempted to keep the mosquitoes away from the back of his neck and his hands.

The school district which adjoined Spruce Creek on the west was known as Rosebank, the school itself being four miles from where we lived. Church services were held regularly every Sunday afternoon and the Methodist Minister from Halkirk, whose name was Ayers and who drove a little black pony named Spike, did his best to be present on every occasion. If it happened, however, that for one reason or another he could not be present, the congregation who had gathered could always be assured of a divine service conducted by one or another of the early settlers, Mr. Paul Farnalls, who lived but a few yards from the school, being the main one.

It was on one of these Sunday afternoons that we became acquainted with an English family from Yorkshire, by the name of Baines. By a strange coincidence, their older son and I were the same age, all but a day, while their daughter and my brother were exactly the same age, to the day. As Mr. Baines and father conversed with each other concerning their lives in England and how long they had been in Canada, and why they had chosen this particular area in which to settle, Mr. Baines told father that it was only by the grace of God that he and his family were there at all, because they had had reservations on the Titanic and had cancelled them only about a week before its departure because of an unfortunate happening in the family which made it impossible for them to leave at that time. It would have been impossible, as it still is, to convince any member of the Baines family, or our own, that God does not have a hand in human affairs.

When the fall of 1914 arrived, the Spruce Creek school opened, but not for long. Alberta at that time, being short of qualified teachers, brought in young girls and young men from Eastern Canada who had had some high school training and put them in charge of the many little one-room schools which would otherwise have been closed entirely. The turnover in teachers was very great, it not being unusual for a school to have two or three such teachers during a term. I remember one Ontario girl remaining only three days, during which time most of us had not even learned how to pronounce her name. Homesickness was common, but occasionally love-sickness took over, as some young farm lad would induce one of these girls to settle in the West with him.

It was fortunate for my brother and sister and me that Mother had had teaching experience before her marriage and she assisted us greatly, at least with the three Rs. Reading material, however, was not very plentiful and as I recall it, the Bible and the T. Eaton catalog served as a major portion of our home-made curriculum.

In England Father had been recognized as a lay minister in the Wesleyan Methodist church and our

Sundays consisted of being subjected three times a day to Biblical teachings. Hand in hand with the rather narrow fundamentalist view of religion, went an extremely narrow view of material and more mundane things. We were never permitted, as youngsters to play ball or marbles or even hop scotch and we were often reminded that Sunday, being the Lord's day had to be observed strictly in accordance with Biblical teachings.

I recall that a part of the T. Eaton catalog was out of bounds for my brother and me, as our tender years of nine and seven were regarded as being altogether too young to permit of a glimpse of beautiful ladies wearing long johns and nighties, though this attire reached from their chins to their ankles. We had learned while much younger than this that Mother's orders were to be carried out implicitly and while we were sure her love for us knew no bounds, we also knew she believed in the adage "Spare the rod and spoil the child" and she had no intention whatever of spoiling any of us. However, my brother and I were perfectly normal young boys and I am sure no one would blame us if, when mother happened to be absent from the house and we picked up the T. Eaton catalog, it accidentally fell open at those pages which I know now supplied us with our first bit of family life education. Whenever the new catalog arrived and the old one went to its final resting place a few yards behind the house, it was possible, by holding the door slightly ajar, to view these pornographic pictures undisturbed, even though mother was at home.

Needless to say I did not tell Mother a story I had heard from an older boy, Abner Opgorden, son of our nearest neighbor, concerning the little girl who, when playing with her dolls in her bedroom, heard a quiet little knock on the door. Believing it to be her little brother, she called in her childish voice; "Is that you, Tommy?" When he answered in the affirmative, she said: "You can't come in because I have my nightie on and mummy says little boys shouldn't see little girls with their nighties on." After a silence of a minute or two, she was heard to say: "It's okay, Tommy. You can come in now. I took it off."

Living was easy in those days, as prairie chicken, partridges, ducks and rabbits abounded. Garden stuff grew prolifically in the fresh prairie sod, while those things one had to purchase such as sugar, flour, tea and coffee were quite cheap when purchased in bulk. There was very little occasion to dress up and consequently bib overalls formed the main attire for the male members of the family in summer and winter.

The main plague with which we had to contend was the abundance of mosquitoes. It seemed that nothing could eradicate them but the first snowfall. Nevertheless, to me and my brother, especially, life during these times seemed to be one glorious experience after another. Several neighbors had boys of our ages and from them we learned how to ride horseback, milk cows, shoot with a twenty-two, snare gophers and, in general, do all the things young Canadian pioneers could do which contrasted so greatly with what our lives had been in the comfortable little Village of Whitecroft from which we had come.

With the rest of the family, however, it was different. My sister, at the age of five, was naturally too young to know the difference, but to father it was a matter of finding one job after another, in order to earn enough money even for our rather meagre existence. Coal mining provided employment only during the winter, so that during the spring, summer and fall he worked at anything which was offered to him, from driving a team of horses with a slip, to patching up holes in the trails, to clearing the land with an ax for neighboring farmers.

The early days in Halkirk produced, for the most part, good grain crops and father could always count upon stooking contracts and other related jobs. These to me were the days of real joy, as the whole family, mother and all, helped in stooking grain. I can still recall the lunches we enjoyed in the field, made for the most part of roast prairie chicken, or grouse stuffed with English sage and onion dressing,

The commencement of World War One had taken many male teachers out of teaching service and once again many one-room schools were closed. By the time I reached the age of thirteen, I had not had, all together, in Canada, more than two years in school, and consequently, had not reached grade eight, which, incidentally, in that day, was supposed to represent a real goal in education.

With so many men going to war, young boys found no difficulty whatever in securing work as hired hands on farms, so at the age of twelve, I found myself hiring out to a farmer for one dollar a day and board, and doing the work of a hired man. This I continued to do until January of 1922. My winters were occupied by working in the coal mines where, though I was always scared half to death, I loaded cars with coal and shoved them out to the mouth of the mine.

It had always been my desire, from the first day I attended school in England, to become a school teacher, but by the time I had reached the age of seventeen and had not yet had an opportunity to complete even the elementary grades, it seemed to me that at that advanced age and having done a man's work for over four years, my dreams of becoming a school teacher could never be realized.