

THE FIGHT FOR THE YUKON SEAT

Sketches of the Careers of James Hamilton Ross and Joseph Clarke, the Leading Candidates.

The career of Mr. J. H. Ross, commissioner of the Yukon, is aptly described by the paradox: An uneventful life full of events. In other words he is and always has been a man of activity. What ever his hand hath found to do he has done with all his might.

The name by which in the Northwest Territories he is even yet most widely known is "Jim," a friendly contraction of James Hamilton Ross. He was born in London, Ont., May 12th, 1856, son of John Edgar Ross, of that town. He was educated at the Grammar school there, and with his father and a brother came first to Lake Winnipeg, where they engaged in the fur trade.

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The activities of Mr. Ross were not slow in influencing the people among whom he had gone to live, for less than two months after his arrival at Moose Jaw, he was elected a member of the Northwest council. For some time preceding that year, legislation had been flowing in so rapidly, chiefly from Ontario, that a change had been made in the government of the country.

Regina had just been made the capital of the Territories, and the members ex-officio, had been strengthened by the admission of elected members, to increase in number as population increased. In 1883 this arrangement gave six elected members, and on the 22nd August, of that year, Mr. Ross and Frank Oliver took their seats together on the council, and from that day sat side by side as Northwest legislators for many following years.

In addition to the six elected members there were two ex-officio and three appointed members. Hon. Edgar Dewdney, minister of the Interior, was then in charge of the council, and its clerk was the present Lieutenant-Governor Forget.

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The first thing the council did with Mr. Ross when he had taken his seat was to make him one of a select committee to consider a petition from Mr. H. J. Brown, and Mr. J. Brown, two Regimans, who wanted permission to brew and sell beer in the Northwest Territories. The committee reported in favor of getting powers to issue licenses for these purposes, but the bill was a minority report from Mr. Frank Oliver against that recommendation.

per capita was given the provinces, as well as additional sums as compensation for the public lands that were being sold by the Dominion government, as well as an advance on account of the school lands that were to be sold in a future more or less remote.

Two other important items were a demand for reduction of duties and lower freights on lumber, and agricultural implements, and, most important of all, a requisit for the representation of the Territories in the Dominion parliament. Good pioneer business that for a maiden session, and the next was like to it. A new member joined the council in the person of Mr. J. G. Turriff, the present commissioner of the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Turriff, as a rule, sided with Mr. Ross and Oliver, and the embryonic Territorial opposition, though he deserted them on the most important matter of the session when he voted against the resolution of the council in session and expressed a hope that some arrangement might be made under which he would have the benefit of such assistance, thus foreshadowing the establishment of an advisory council, ministry or board. The immediate arrangement was that the local members should have access to His Honor on matters affecting their respective districts.

Before the council again met an event happened to Mr. Ross of the greatest tribitely but truthfully described as the most important event in any man's life. It was the marriage of Mr. Ross and Oliver was for increased legislative powers; it pointed out that the Northwest was paying more than its share of taxes, and that there should be some consideration shown for the deprivation of the Territories of its lands, timber and minerals; it asked for the Hudson's Bay railway; demanded the abolition of official members of the council and that supplies should be open tender in the districts affected. These were a lot of the remarks that were side-tracked, but even when so emasculated, the memorial was not altogether dead. Like the original motion it demanded that the council should be used by an assembly elected by the people.

It is worth noting, too, that the council declared its intention of opposing aforesaid motion, and that the Dominion government should use of the assembly for party purposes would be deplorable—a policy still insisted upon by the assembly. The session was a purely business session, and it was tedious to detail the legislation. Mr. Ross introduced and carried a bill to exempt certain properties of the Northwest Territories, and the demand for control of the trails and satisfaction of carrying into effect when he came to administer public works. He succeeded also in getting the council to pass a resolution that the use of the assembly for party purposes would be deplorable—a policy still insisted upon by the assembly.

The calm stream that was marking the progress of the new country was interrupted by a series of disasters that experience shows to be inseparable from the early history of all communities. In the Lieutenant-Governor's report on the opening of the session referred to in the previous paragraph, allusion was made to what were described as "exaggerated reports of a feeling of discontent among the half-breeds and Indians." The council was assured that there was no cause for alarm. "I can confidently say," the Lieutenant-Governor declared, "that our relations with the Indians are such that they have been since the treaty was made, and the progress they are making in agriculture is most gratifying." It was not until the summer of 1884, however, that the danger of the "urgency" was persistently demanded, and even then it was not until the following session that the measure became law. It is a fact worth remembering that the pioneers of education in the Northwest, as of many other important reforms, Mr. Ross also got through the council a bill incorporating Moose Jaw.

A Champion of Reform. There were many matters that from their nature were beyond the jurisdiction of the council. They were not, however, beyond its discussion. There thus came into existence a formulated association every year of the wants and desires of the council which was placed before the Federal government by petition or resolution, and generally urged by a delegation from the council to the government at Ottawa—just as takes place today. These documents are of interest and importance, as showing the increasing interest of the people of the Territories for self-government and entire control of their own affairs, as well, which is significant, an assumption of the privilege of considering advice in those matters upon which it was beyond its power to legislate. It was a direct testimony to Mr. Ross's ability that at his first session he was selected one of the committee to draw up a petition, and every line of it shows his handiwork. Thus we find the council calling upon the Federal government to recognize the rights of the Territories, a policy subsequently carried out with vigor when Mr. Ross became commissioner of public works. Railway extension was one of the first things that the council urged that it should have greater control in the expenditure of its money. It claimed the same status

for stout demands for urgent reforms. The reply made a vigorous demand for parliamentary representation, which the recent census warranted; the C. P. R.'s exemption from taxation was disparaged; there was a sly hint that the rebellion might have been avoided (as above stated) in Mr. Ross's proposal for compensation to those who had suffered loss and clemency to those who had been imprisoned, suggestions that were ultimately acted upon by the Dominion government. Indeed the rebellion naturally came in for a good deal of notice. Votes of thanks to the N. W. M. P. and the volunteers were passed, and recommendations to the central authority to grant pensions to the widows and families of those killed were unanimously agreed to. Amongst other interesting items was the application of 95 districts for schools under the Oliver-Ross ordinance. The federal authority was asked to establish a Supreme court for the Territories, and thus avoid the cumbersome and expensive process of having to go to Manitoba. A board of education was also established, and finally the Dominion government was asked not to apply the fiscal policy of protection to the Territories as the same was believed to be oppressive to the settlers, and, further, that officials should be selected from residents in the Territories. It remains to add that full legislative powers were already visible on the horizon. The elected members now outnumbered the official and appointed members of the council, and the Lieutenant-Governor lamented the great difficulty of consulting the members of the council in their executive capacity when not in session and expressed a hope that some arrangement might be made under which he would have the benefit of such assistance, thus foreshadowing the establishment of an advisory council, ministry or board. The immediate arrangement was that the local members should have access to His Honor on matters affecting their respective districts.

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GOVERNOR J. H. ROSS, The Government Candidate.

was the making of Ross and the beginning of the making of Davin, the latter evidenced by the fact that Mr. Davin's next opponent was a foe of his own household, politically speaking of course, viz.: Mr. Tweed, of Medicine Hat.

The End of the Northwest Council. The session of 1887 was the last of the Northwest Council. It may be noted that it was at this session that Mr. F. W. G. Haultain, the present premier, first took his seat as a legislator, having been elected as the representative of Macleod. The actual legislation effected was but a continuation of the work already indicated. There was a grain blockade "owing to the absence of millway facilities" in consequence of which "the settlers, with their granaries full, have been precluded from obtaining as profitable a market as they might otherwise have done." and representations were made to the C. P. R., on the subject, resulting in a promise that should not occur again. But it was, Mr. Ross obtained a committee to draft a memorial to the Dominion government respecting the future formation of the constitution of the Territories, and his proposal (as usual) was that the committee should consist of the elected members of the council. This was agreed to except that Mr. Haultain's name was added. Mr. Ross had an audacious manner of ignoring the official and nominated members of the council, a little circumstance that is an indication of a grudging principle of his political action, always in the Northwest, and now in the Yukon, viz.: an implicit faith in the people, and in those that the people select to represent them. Thus ends the Northwest Council. It is good to think in that it laid the foundations for a large Territorial legislation that exists at the present day, and of all the men who improved the Northwest, none has left so deep and lasting a record as James Hamilton Ross.

The first session of the first legislature of the Northwest Territory assembled in October, 1888, with Mr. Joseph Royal as lieutenant-governor, Mr. Dewdney as minister of the Interior, and Mr. Forget as minister of the Interior. The assembly consisted of 22 elected members, the Lieutenant-Governor had no longer a seat in the House, but selected three from four members to form an advisory council. So far therefore as there was a premier he may be said to have already occupied that position, a "Prime Minister" when it assembled, he had sat in the council but one session. Mr. Ross continued to represent Moose Jaw. Even the great measure of autonomy granted did not work to the satisfaction of the newly constituted assembly. It was felt that the Lieutenant-Governor did not allow his advisory council that control of financial matters which it was thought they should have; and as control of expenditure was the question that was warmest of the assembly, the position of Speaker of this House.

sanctity of their private life. A Candidate For the Dominion Parliament. Another important event in Mr. Ross's career took place before the Northwest council again met. The Dominion government had acceded to the demand of the council so strongly urged by Oliver and Ross for parliamentary representation of the Territories. Two seats in the Senate and four in the House of Commons were allotted and in 1887 there was general election. The West Assiniboia Mr. Ross was selected the standard bearer of Liberalism, his opponent being the late Mr. Davin. It required courage and an iron will even to avow Liberalism, let alone championing it in the Northwest in those days. A short time ago Mr. A. L. Sifton, and quite recently Mayor Finlay, of Medicine Hat, have spoken of the disdain with which Liberals were regarded by their neighbors at the period under review. The strong personality of Sir John Macdonald and the fascinating fallacies of the National Policy dazzled and dazed people and Liberals were regarded not merely as persons holding certain opinions but as traitors to the people and false to the country. Particularly was the Northwest believed to have the special care of the powerful Sir John, who, aided by Sir Charles Tupper, promised all the blessings of the earth and the heavens as well for the prairies of the west if its settlers would but fall down and worship the inventors of the N. P. The task Mr. Ross undertook, therefore, was no light matter, but he was equal to the occasion. He had already established a reputation as a lucid debater and persuasive exponent of his views. He now showed himself not only an effective platform speaker, but a powerful orator. The contest of 1887 is the topic of conversation to-day, and we are told how Ross handled Davin without gloves. It must indeed have been a splendid fight. Davin's off-shoulder fireworks and Ross's ponderous ennobling reverberating as from amid the Scotch mountains whence the blood within him came. It was a fiery and a powerful fight. The contest of 1887 is the topic of conversation to-day, and we are told how Ross handled Davin without gloves. It must indeed have been a splendid fight. Davin's off-shoulder fireworks and Ross's ponderous ennobling reverberating as from amid the Scotch mountains whence the blood within him came.

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Troublesome Times in the Legislature. A new speaker was then proposed, but as the votes for and against were equal the clerk declared no election had been held. The members dispersed and next day the assembly was prorogued by proclamation. The full significance of this action on the part of Mr. Ross will never be forgotten. It at once drew to him the attention and confidence of the people as showing him to be a man who did not allow his private interests to interfere with his public duties. He was elected to the Speakership at the first session of the legislature, and could from his position have held aloof from the trouble that divided the House. He was not a rich man and the emoluments of his office were a consideration. Farther than this, his stepping down from the Speakership was a bitter and a sharp rebuff about a "tie" in the respective strength of the parties, and his action made imminent a dissolution and new election when he might have lost his seat. None of these things were in Mr. Ross's mind. It was his conduct in a striking action which perhaps better than any other revealed his chivalrous courage and lack of self-seeking in a good and noble cause. It was the floor of the House that he held the floor of the House in debate. They were very good boys for the rest of the life of the assembly.

The assembly met again in the following December and immediately re-elected Mr. Ross to the Speakership. The election was unanimous. The new government under Mr. Cayley did not live long. An ordinance dealing with the executive had been disallowed upon which Mr. Cayley and his colleagues resigned on the 12th December, and Mr. Haultain again formed a government. The opponents of Mr. Haultain's government evidently thought it better for them to have Mr. Ross silent in the chair than to be subjected to his views on the subject of the floor of the House in debate. They were very good boys for the rest of the life of the assembly.

The first session of the third legislative assembly was opened by Lieutenant-Governor Mackintosh in 1896, and Mr. J. E. Betts, of Prince Albert, was elected Speaker. He was a man of high repute for he made a good Speaker being possessed of many of the qualities as a presiding officer that distinguished Mr. Ross. That gentlemanly and dignified became a member of Mr. Haultain's government and remained so long as he was a member of the assembly. It was tedious, nor is there space, nor is it necessary to detail the work achieved by Mr. Ross while a member of the Haultain administration. He was at it with something new every day. Or rather—not new. In the earlier part of his career he had been a member of the reforms so strongly and so frequently urged by Haultain, Ross and Oliver; and what were the demands sent up to Ottawa year after year for the redress of grievances. Year by year both classes of demands have been accepted to in some measure and the process is still going on. 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