

# Richardson Quits No-Man's Land

The Vigorous Publisher of the Winnipeg Tribune Has Fought Under Fire From Both Parties

By WILLIAM H. MOORE

WHEN the city of Winnipeg was no bigger than a two-paper town, the "Tribune" was its third paper. The struggles and sacrifices involved in the building-up of a newspaper property from this foundation, can be fully appreciated only by the newspaper fraternity. In the last year of the eighties, when the "Tribune" was born, Winnipeggers were sharply divided into hard-shell Grits and dyed-in-the-wool Tories, and looked upon partisan editorials as the staff of life, preferring to have even their daily diet of news served up with a salt-and-pepper partisan flavour. With this in mind, it is not a matter of surprise that the "Tribune"—sometimes Grit, sometimes Tory, and more often neither Tory nor Grit—did not meet with immediate favour.

And to make matters worse, the new paper had to overcome a news monopoly. The press service franchises at the time were practically in one man's hands, and this one man had no terms to offer the would-be intruder. News for the columns of the paper had to be brought in by special wire with high tolls and collecting costs that voraciously ate into the slim receipts of the initial issues. If R. L. Richardson, "the man behind," had not been in possession of the youth that believes in Destiny and looks upon life as a prolonged hurdle race, the "Tribune" would have been still-born. As it turned out, the paper had many a narrow escape from death through lack of nourishment in its infant years. However, a coroner's jury was not called upon to perform an autopsy over the body of the "Tribune." Lack of partisan patronage, and news-gathering difficulties seemed to strengthen rather than stunt its growth. The news monopoly was finally overcome; and the experience gained in the early days in which news was gathered in out-of-the-way corners and through other than the ordinary channels, served to brighten the "Tribune's" pages and supplement the usual news when in after years it had acquired associated press privileges.

Fortunately, a rush of immigration to the country, largely from the United States, consisting of men and families who had not been classified and pigeon-holed by the party organizers, greatly facilitated the "Tribune's" success as a news purveyor. News-editors and reporters were brought from the United States, men who added "pep" and "ginger" and the condiments with which Americans have become accustomed in their daily newspaper meal, men who knew just what the newcomers wanted and how they preferred to have it served up. The paper began to bristle, and even the older inhabitants who frowned upon its political vagaries, bought it because of its news-value.

There is nothing quite like the Winnipeg "Tribune" in Canadian newspaperdom. It is moulded after the pattern of papers in the large cities of the North-Western States, and is Canada's most glaring example of sensational journalism: red ink—expensive in these days of dear chemicals—and huge double-column headings, are freely used to call attention to the great events of the day; and, if, perchance, there are no great events, the red ink and scare headings are used for the baseball scores or matters of like unimportance. They have become a part of the ordinary make-up of the paper. "Extras" are issued upon the slightest pretext. The "Tribune" must be first with the news and if, as sometimes happens, it is ahead of the news, then the mistake is corrected by issuing an extra "extra." In short, all the devious arts known to sensational journalism are practised by the Winnipeg "Tribune." The managing editor is a staid Scotchman, but it is a long road from the Winnipeg "Tribune" to the Glasgow "Herald." It is only fair to add that it is a long road from Manitoba to Scotland.

TO-DAY Winnipeg is a three-paper town, according to the recognized measuring-gauge of publishers, and the "Tribune" is not its third paper; as a matter of fact, it is a serious contender for first place. The once antagonizing editorial policy has, through changing times, become a strong factor in making for circulation. Men may no longer be safely classified as Grits and Tories by way of reference to the family-tree, and have learned to turn their political coats as quickly as the "Tribune" ever did. Nowadays in Western Canada political coats are made

with reversible sides, as even the most casual student of public affairs in the Prairie Provinces must know.

Compulsory education in national schools, the English language, taxation of railway lands, prohibition of the liquor traffic, public ownership of public utilities, civil service reform, and a customs tariff low enough to rank as free trade, are some of the planks in the "Tribune's" platforms. One of the first parts which it played in public life was in connection with the Disallowance Question, ending in the breaking of the Canadian Pacific monopoly in Western Canada. The "Tribune" advocated sending Canadian troops to the Boer war and supported a naval grant to the motherland even before it was proposed by the Borden Government, and approves of vigorous Canadian participation in the Great European War. Born "a trust-busting" the "Tribune" hit the anti-corporation trail as natur-



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ally as a duck takes to water and followed it with more vigour than discrimination.

There is a strange fascination for some men in a struggling newspaper enterprise. R. L. Richardson did not have to bear the burden of the early days alone. D. L. McIntyre, who went to school with Richardson at Balderson's Corners, "somewhere in Ontario," had been West, acquired means, and placed a part of them at the service of his old schoolmate's journalistic venture. A. B. Bethune, who has a penchant for writing, took part in the new enterprise and was unsparing in his labours to spread the "Tribune" doctrines. The triumvirate was assisted by J. J. Moncrieff, a Scotchman of rugged integrity with a inordinate appetite and capacity for work. This group of four men believed in themselves and their mission, and were rather proud of being regarded by the community as Ishmaelites.

It is impossible for one who was not within the inner circle, to weigh the separate services rendered by the members of this group in the making of the "Tribune." But certain it is that Moncrieff, who was on hand when the paper first came off the press, nearly 30 years ago to-day its managing editor, has contributed substantially to its success. It is he, I suspect, who has done the organizing, answered complaints, looked after the innumerable details, and generally oiled and regulated the works.

I have referred to R. L. Richardson as "the man behind"; it would probably have been more accurate to have called him the "man in front." Newspapers in Canada are invariably mixed up in politics. And

the "Tribune" is no exception to the rule. Although not partisan in the general sense of the word, the "Tribune" is by no means politically colourless. As a matter of fact, it is essentially political, aggressively and militantly political. The only difference between it and the ordinary paper, lies in the fact that, instead of drawing inspiration from one of the two great parties, the "Tribune" has followed a course mapped out for the conduct of public affairs by R. L. Richardson. And, looking from the outside in through "Tribune" windows, Richardson is the most interesting figure in the group and his the dominant personality of the paper.

FOR nearly three decades Richardson has presented a problem of varying importance to the politicians who would gain support in Western Canada—an elusive, undecipherable problem. Politics is sometimes described as a game, sometimes as warfare, and often as other things not pleasant to the ear. If politics be a game or warfare, then Richardson neither plays nor fights like most men. Perforce, Richardson, being out of the ordinary, is an interesting man.

Between the trenches of the Liberal and Conservative parties, there used to lie a vast "No-Man's-Land," possession of which was coveted by neither party, and it was from there Richardson of the "Tribune" did his fighting. He was at his best when, with a grenade in each hand, he deftly hurled them impartially to the left and the right. As might be expected, this sort of thing often brought about reprisals, and explosives were diverted from the Big Party trenches to "No-Man's-Land." When they came thick and fast, R. L. Richardson abandoned his ground and volunteered for service in the opposing trench.

Once upon a time, quite a few years ago, after having signed up for service with the Liberals and received command, he exploded with malicious intent a bomb within the Liberal front line trenches and, it is said, was court-martialed out of the party. The commanding officer of the Western battalion to which Richardson belonged was Clifford Sifton. The Honourable Clifford was righteously indignant at the conduct of his subaltern, and for years afterwards trained the party machine guns upon Richardson, who had retired to "No-Man's-Land." But in 1911 another bomb was exploded in the Liberal front-line trenches, and coming on the eve of a bayonet charge by the enemy, produced disastrous results. Sir Clifford and R. L. Richardson may be good friends now, for all I know. Their ways of leaving the Liberal party bear a resemblance.

There was, however, this difference: the Richardson bomb was not as effective as that of his successor, and he shared the fate of unsuccessful rebels, while his more successful imitator was glorified as King Maker. Such are the fortunes of war! To this day, men remember the Richardson episode and say "he is not dependable."

AND this statement is unfair. Any party leader can stake his life upon the loyalty of R. L. Richardson, so long as the party is kept true to the faith which is within Richardson, and not a minute longer. It is true that he has wandered from "No-Man's-Land" to the Liberals and from the Liberals to the Conservatives, and back into "No-Man's-Land," in a manner that has somewhat bewildered and shocked the orthodox politicians; but in these vagaries, I believe, his motives always have been honest.

Not long ago there was mimic warfare between some children that I know, and one youthful commander reprimanded her eight-year-old brother for deserting regularly when rations were being served in the opposite camp, and returning only within the home lines in time for rations. But not so with R. L. Richardson. Even his bitterest opponents will admit that greed for nations was never behind his change of parties. He has manifested, over and over again, a contempt for the good things which the party in power traditionally provides for politicians and newspaper men.

R. L. Richardson was never at his best in either