3

RITSTJÓRI: *Margrjet J. Benedictsson.*

"MARGRJET JÓNSDOTTIR BENEDICTSSON"

CREATED EQUAL - OUR FAIR SHARE

The role played by Margrjet Benedictsson in the Suffrage Movement in Manitoba 1890 - 1910

Comparison of the motives, tactics, and attitudes of the Icelandic Movement under Benedictsson with the English Speaking Movement as best exemplified by Nellie McClung

Evelyne R. Holenski

OUTLINE

I Introduction

II Background to the English Speaking Movement in Canada

- N.C.W.
- W.C.T.U.
- Canadian Suffrage Association

III Background to the 1st Icelandic Suffrage Movement of America

- Benedictsson's early life
- emigration to Dakota and to Winnipeg, Manitoba
- the role of "Freyja" in the formation of suffrage societies in Manitoba and North Dakota
- American influence and International flavor

IV Discussion of the similarities and differences of the two movements under discussion regarding their reaction to the basic themes prevalent at that time

- Reasons for the vote
- social reform
- democratic right
- role of the welfare state

OUTLINE (Contd.)

V Woman's Role in Society

- marriage
- children
- divorce
- working and working conditions

VI Conclusion

INTRODUCTION TO THE PERIOD

AND

AIMS OF THIS PAPER

The political equality of Canadian women was not achieved spontaneously nor can it be regarded as a byproduct of the suffrage movements in Britain and the United States. There was an active Canadian movement, largely indigenous, which worked with dedication, perseverance, and moderation. Their campaign was completed in a brief span of thirty years. The first national suffrage organizations appeared in Canada in 1890 and by 1920 all women had the federal vote and most had the provincial franchise.

No one can speak with certainty why women emerged around the turn of the century as a distinct interest group. Canada was experiencing a series of economic and social upheavals, as well as a period of expansion and growth. This was to be Canada's century. After the 1890's industrialization and urbanization were the combining forces which produced a growing number of feminists.

The basic achievement of this era was the settlement of the West, thus guaranteeing nation wide prosperity. Rising prices and recovery of world trade made wheat farming highly profitable. Frederick J. Turner popularized the myth that by 1890 the U. S. frontier was closed. As a result of these developments, Canada was swept by a massive wave of immigration.

Between the years 1896-1914, 2½ million people crossed the border.[1]

McDonald's National Policy provided for an east-west trade route. During the wheat boom railways carried settlers and manufactured goods to the West and returned wheat to Eastern markets in Canada and across to Britain. The industry in the East grew up behind the tariff wall and mining as well as pulp and paper contributed to the creation of a well balanced Canadian economy.

The Laurier boom to some extent was superficial as not all Canadians shared equally in the benefits of prosperity. Certain groups and some sections prospered to the disadvantage of others. Among the unorganized, the urban poor suffered most as people left the farms and swarmed into the cities looking for more profitable labour. Immigrants came first to the cities and many remained. As a result, tenements and slums appeared in the major urban centers.

Although prosperity bred a feeling of affluence and well being, it also produced a spirit of conflict and division between capital, labour, races, religions, and sections.

The farmers led a revolt against lost business interests for they were hard pressed to understand why they, the producers of the nation's wealth, were not sharing equally in

the profits. It was their feeling that the East was exploiting the agricultural community and as politicians responded slowly to their complaints the impatient farmers decided to replace them with true farmer representatives. Since the unsympathetic capitalists monopolized vital services such as the railways, banks, grain elevators, etc., the farmers determined to provide their own services. They formed organizations to facilitate collective action and at the same time protect their interests such as the Manitoba Grain Growers Assoc. 1903, U. F. A. 1909, and U. F. of Ontario in 1914.2 The formation of a farmers' party was postponed until after the war when the agrarian revolt culminated in the Progressive Party of 1920.

These economic and social changes affected women, too. Factories drew more and more of the domestic chores away from the home and practical labour saving devices contributed to the growth of woman's leisure time. Young girls from the more affluent homes accompanied their brothers to schools and University and the poor followed their mothers into factories; there they were overworked and underpaid. Women everywhere left the shelter of the home.

Technological change had forced women to enter a male-dominated world. The suffrage crusade was one phase of the women's movement; a movement that in a very real sense meant increased participation of women in activities outside the home.

Few areas of human experience have been more neglected or misunderstood than the woman's lot in the home or her emergence into the mainstream of society; a society dominated by her male counterpart. Perhaps feminism can be best understood as a reaction to the succession of economic and domestic problems associated with urbanization, industrial exploitation, and agrarian stress. To compete on a basis of equality women demanded equal respect under the laws of the state, equal educational opportunities, and protection against economic exploitation. Their most radical demand was a voice in the government.

The women's movement was an international phenomenon. The United States and England produced most of the international leaders in defense of women's political, economic, and social emancipation. Naturally these ideas infiltrated into Canada. But the reality of pioneer life and more especially the scarcity of women with the accompanying appreciation of their skills meant American and Canadian women had a great deal of responsibility and consequently enjoyed rights and privileges, as well as freedom, unknown to women in England.

Sources for the study of this phenomenon are available but somewhat uneven in both quality and quantity, as little history has been written about the movement. Cleverdon's[3] work was concerned specifically with developments at both the provincial and federal level and only hints at its ideological motivation. The majority of Canadian History texts treat

the topic as if it never existed. W. L. Morton in his book, Progressive Party of Canada, suggests a direct connection between the suffrage and temperance campaign.[4]

Roger Graham in The Canadians offers valuable insight into the women's movement which he associates with a general spirit of "moral uplift and reform".[5]

More recently Ramsay Cook and R. Craig Brown in Canada 1896 - 1921 A Nation Transformed incorporate women's history as an integral part of the text, rather than relegating it to one chapter.

Very few Canadian suffragists wrote in any sufficient quantity. Nellie McClung, the leader of the English Canadian campaign in Manitoba published many novels, some of which were directly concerned with suffrage and temperance causes. Francis Marion Beynon, an outspoken critic of women's rights edited the woman's page in the G. G. G. from 1912-1917. The attitudes of other leading suffragists were gleaned from newspaper articles, from letters to the editor, and addresses to women's organizations. Rarely any of the leading women participants have been subjects of biographies during this time, at least.[6] The particular interest which existed was found primarily among those who identified with suffragists and therefore the focus of attention was merely their perception of activities at any one place and time. These limita-

tions make it difficult to generalize about the suffragists as a group. As a result, we have unresearched areas in this field of endeavour.

In one of these "virgin" areas is a Canadian Suffragist who did indeed write in sufficient quantity to justify a valid discussion of her ideas. A truly remarkable woman, Margrjet Jónsdottir Benedictsson, of Icelandic heritage, who during the span of 23 years (1889-1912) made a singular contribution within local, national, and even international circles by her activities and commitment to women's rights. As editor, publisher and printer of an Icelandic periodical "Freyja" (1898-1910), the first and only paper in Canada dedicated to this topic, leads one to suspect the importance of her role in giving the movement both impetus and direction at the turn of the century.

The purpose of this paper is two-fold. In the first instance, her works will be gleaned to serve as an introduction to her ideas in an effort to expand the 'why' of the Icelandic movement and try to understand what motivated her to bear inspiring witness to feminine potential as she demanded equal rights for women.

A basic theme developed during this period in Manitoba history regarding the Icelandic movement under Benedictsson

and the English Canadian movement best exemplified by Nellie McClung[8] that both groups collaborated only in delegations to the government while maintaining their own distinct approach within the movement as they carried on their campaign[9] for a quarter of a century. One cannot discount ethnicity, but it is the contention of this author that there were other contributing factors that played a significant role in creating a barrier that resulted in their separate efforts.

INTRODUCTION TO MARGRJET BENEDICTSSON

- Formative Years in Iceland

- Reasons for Migration

- Life in Dakota

- Movement to Manitoba

Benedictsson was born on the 16th of March, 1866 in the town of Hráfnsstadir in Vididal in Húnavatnssyslu, a valley in north western Iceland. Her parents were Jón Jónsson, a harness maker, and Kristjana Ebenes-dottir Sveinssonar, a minister's daughter. Early in life she displayed precociousness and love of freedom. At her confirmation, at age 12, the minister commented on the intelligence and forthrightness of her answers to the questions pertaining to the Bible. She had a particular aversion to having her hair braided, as was the custom of the time, rather, she insisted in letting it hang free and untied.[10]

She was raised by her father and at the age of 13[11] she was left to fend for herself. As a foster child, she worked hard on a farm, always mindful of the oppressed state of her country, and particularly the effect on the lives of women.

In 1887, at the age of 21, Benedictsson emigrated alone to the United States, settling in Dakota, already a community of Icelandic activity.[12] To support herself, she worked as a domestic servant. She attended Bathgate College, walking the six miles in her determination to learn to read and write the English language. From early childhood she had a burning desire to help those less fortunate than herself, and upon her arrival in Winnipeg in 1889, she decided to become a nurse. When the lack of certain credits prevented her from doing

so, she, undaunted, turned to another love, that of writing.[13] To this end she attended night school, taking up bookkeeping, stenography and journalism.[14]

To fully gain an understanding of the forces that motivated Benedictsson, it is necessary to examine the impact her homeland had in her formative years. Throughout its history, Iceland has been plagued by a series of national disasters causing inestimable damage to property and extolling immeasurable hardship on its people.[15]

It is evident that it was not a desire for a greater share in the government that impelled people to leave the country. One of the first groups went to Brazil which was then an empire, others travelled to the United States, a republic, while the largest number came to Canada, many to Manitoba, which had been granted provincial status a few years earlier. Furthermore, the people moved back and forth across the Canadian - American border not because they were dissatisfied with their respective governments, but hopeful that thereby they'd be able to improve their economic conditions.

Religious intolerance nor persecution was not responsible for emigration for the Lutheran Church, the state church of Iceland had become very tolerant.[16]

Four Icelandic students, Tomas Samundsson, Jonas Halgrimsson, Konrad Gislason, and Brynjolfur Petursson were responsible for awakening the interest of the people in freedom and progress. Together they published and edited an annual periodical (1837-1847)[17] with this purpose in mind. Many people desired to reach beyond to the outside world and discover the possibilities that might exist for improvement in their living conditions.

On the political side Jon Sigurdsson (1811-1879), Iceland's patriot and statesman took over the standard from the early pioneers of freedom and with his motto "never to yield" managed to gain for his country independence in domestic affairs from Denmark.[18] This was to become Benedictsson's trademark, too. She identified her own personal struggle for independence with that of the long and arduous fight her native land experienced against foreign oppression. She related how, as a young girl she read of Sigurdsson's long campaign for responsible government and national freedom. His yearning for liberty was an inspiration. Oppression was mirrored everywhere. She saw the wearied anxious look of the majority of women that impressed upon her the desire that active measures were required to remedy the wrongs of society.

> "Angry and distressed I read the laments of oppressed persons, unhappily married women, and the misfortunes of young girls. And it is this evil that aroused in me and in all honorable persons, a yearning to break down all the fetters that tie people to evil and distress, all fetters by whatever name we call them."[19]

The church has always played a central role in the lives of the Icelandic people, so it wasn't surprising that the first organizations established in the New World were church oriented. Benedictsson was a pious person and continued to be in awe of her Creator all her life. It was a personal feeling, though and she did not want religion to dominate her life and cause the friction that dominated the early life of the Icelanders in the New World.[20] She often remarked... "I take religion like I eat fish. I eat the meat but leave the bones."[21]

As the number of pioneers increased in Dakota, some form of social organization became a necessity. In 1885 at a meeting in Mountain, North Dakota, the Icelandic Evangelical Lutheran Synod of North America was established including churches in Dakota, and points in Manitoba, including Winnipeg.[22]

When its constitution was presented to the congregation at Mountain, it was rejected because women were allowed to vote and were given the privilege of being elected representatives for the conferences. In Winnipeg, this option was left to the discretion of the congregation. In New Iceland's (Gimli) constitution it was written that men and women had equal rights in all church matters.[24] Due largely to this spirit of conservatism prevalent in Dakota, a group became estranged

from the Lutheran Church. The Ethical Culture Society was founded for those who wished a greater tolerance in religious opinions with its basic aim being to keep its members informed on the modern discoveries of science and to awaken appreciation of the arts. [25] Its inaugural meeting was held at the home of poet St. G. Stephansson on Feb. 4, 1888. Its members included men and women later prominent in public life, business, science and exploration, and the Arts. Stephansson has been considered the "greatest Icelandic bard since the Middle Ages," [26] and in appraisement of his poetry F. S. Cawley has ventured the opinion that..."Stephansson is beyond question the equal of any poet that Canada has yet produced in English or French and may ultimately be recognized as superior to all." [27]

Some of the other members were Vilhjalmer Stefansson, famed Arctic explorer, Bjorn Pjetursson, the founder of the First Unitarian Church in Winnipeg, 1891, Dr. Rognvaldur Petursson, minister of that same church at a later date, and Benedictsson. [28] This stimulating intellectual climate exercised inestimable influence on Icelanders both within and beyond the limits of this settlement. The meetings included speeches, papers for discussion on such topics as pertained to the Arts. One of the discussions was on Robert Ingersoll, famed atheist orator and free thinker of the time for whom Benedictsson named her only son, Ingi. [29]

This organization was criticized by the orthodox church

for promoting culture and morality with the aid of books by Ingersoll and material of that nature. This society, the forerunner of the Unitarian Church movement among the Icelanders in America broke up in 1889 when many of its members dispersed. Stephansson took up a homestead in Markerville, Alberta, while Pjetursson, who had been lecturing on the fundamentals of the Unitarian faith on both sides of the border established the First Unitarian Church in Winnipeg in 1891.[30] Benedictsson, feeling akin to his teaching, moved to Winnipeg and became one of the forty charter members of the church.[31]

Another member of that board was Sigfus Benedictsson, who had emigrated to Canada from Iceland in 1888. He was a caustic critic of outmoded institutions and a keen supporter of equal rights for women. As a matter of fact he was the first person to make a move in that direction when he took the side of women's rights in a debate in 1890.[32] He and Margrjet were married late in 1892 and they were to work, not always harmoniously, side by side as the originators and organizers of a sustained campaign that was to culminate in 1908 in the formation of the First Icelandic Suffrage Association of America. Their marriage produced two children - Helena, born Nov. 1, 1894 and Ingi, born April 30, 1900.

BACKGROUND TO

ENGLISH CANADIAN MOVEMENT

a. NCW

b. WCTU

c. Suffrage Organization of Canada

The English Canadian movement always remained essentially moderate, even conservative and failed to produce any very strong philosophical statement.

Women's clubs had existed early in the 19th century. Voluntary community orientated work had long been the prerogative of individuals having spare time. Wives and daughters of Canada's more affluent citizens formed benevolent organizations to uphold and increase the moral tone of society. The N. C. W. was such an organization, established in 1893, [33] to coordinate activities of various existing women's groups and really was most representative of Canadian womanhood. It claimed to represent all women's organizations in Canada; two members from each organization belonged to the council.

Initially the N.C.W. acted with cautious humility. It spoke for women regarding their views on such social issues as immigration, welfare, jails, etc. By 1900, the membership had benefitted from an influx of professional women and more emphasis was put on documenting their grievances and training their members. On the whole, the body was conservative for it tended to endorse a cause only after it became generally acceptable. [34] The N. C. W.'s reaction to the suffrage question is a good indication of the reaction of most Canadian women.

The W. C. T. U. was represented in the N. C. W., but it remained a powerful national union in its own right. Both

these organizations wished to reform society; however the W. C. T. U. came to the realization that nothing could be accomplished without the vote. Many women became suffragists because of their dedication to the temperance cause which in their opinion required legislative action.

Genuine suffrage societies were small and scattered across the country. Women who belonged to these organizations were generally more radical, more dedicated to the cause than those who worked through the N. C. W. or the W. C.T. U. They had different priorities. The N. C. W. and W. C. T. U. were interested primarily in the social and moral reform of society while the 'real' suffragists believed in women's rights.

The idea of an international organization of women originated among the American suffragists. They had been active since their ejection from the 1840 Anti-Slavery Convention in London. They desired some effective means of getting their views before the women of all countries. In 1888, the American National Women's Suffrage Association sponsored the 1st meeting of International Council of Women. Dr. E. Stowe, the founder of suffrage activities in Canada attended. (She had been exposed to the American influence while attending Medical College, for at that time, women in Canada could not study within their own country. She always was more radical, and as such, found an admirer in Benedicts-

son, who featured her in 'Freyja' as an outstanding woman fighting for the right cause.) The convention called for the formation of a National Council in every country represented, and this resolution was passed. [35] The movement faltered, but in 1893 America called another World Congress and Lady Aberdeen was elected president of the International Council, a post she held until 1936. [36] On October 2, 1893, the Canadian National Council was formed; Lady Aberdeen, the wife of the newly appointed governor-general was to become its first president. [37] This Council, under her direction immediately disassociated itself from the American suffragists.

The W. E. A. and the W. C. T. U. became affiliates of the N. C. W. in the hope of using the council to further their aims. Both were disappointed; Lady Aberdeen informed the suffrage groups that the council could not endorse their cause, as the subject, though not touching party politics, was of a controversial nature. [38]

Lady Aberdeen dominated the N. C. W. Her personal whims probably had much to do with the rejection of women's suffrage and the temperance cause. She intensely disliked the essential spirit of the American people and their ways of dealing with the woman question. She therefore disassociated herself and the N. C. W. from its American originators and repulsed the W. C. T. U. as originally an American movement. She never became an ardent suffragist. She endorsed the movement publicly only in 1909 at a meeting of the International Council of Women

which had accepted women's suffrage five years earlier in 1904. Her approval was by no means enthusiastic. [39]

In 1910, the N. C. W. took the president's lead and passed a resolution in favour or women's suffrage (71 for - 51 against). [40] The large number opposing suggests the council's conservatism depended upon more than Lady Aberdeen's opinion.

The executive of the NCW. belonged to the social and political elite of the country. Members were sufficiently provided for to allow them to engage in club activities without financial concern. Those with jobs belonged to an intellectual elite including authors, lawyers, and physicians.

Benedictsson viewed the NCW.'s approach to the woman problem much too conservative. Although the Council endorsed a certain demand for women's rights it hesitated to support the suffrage; it was not prepared to alter radically women's social position as devoted wives and mothers. In an article following the Council's pledge for suffrage, she said she was happy that Lady Aberdeen was not ashamed of working for this cause. At the same time she intimated it was a long time coming. [41]. It was obvious Benedictsson had little in common with the N. C. W., neither the financial security of its members nor their social thought. Lady Aberdeen was never featured in (Freyja), and this is a good indication they were poles apart in aspiration.

According to the N.C.W., the ballot would bring women into the political arena formerly a male preserve. Any change which so threatened traditional sexual relationships was bound to cause panic among those who represented the status quo and might lose the Council considerable support.

The W. C. T.U. originated as an American movement with the basic aim of achieveing moral purity through society. It crossed the border and discovered in Canada many converts to the temperance cause.

The prime objective of the W.C.T.U. was the prohibition of the sale of liquor throughout the dominion. This American-British-Canadian prohibition was a logical extension of reformers' progressive philosophy; liberty was not license and, if one abused one's liberty thereby causing injury to others, it not only could be, but should be restricted. Drinking was so frequently associated with drunkenness and drunkenness with poverty and mistreatment of woman and children, that it became a moral obligation to remove the cause of so much evil. Prohibition of alcohol became synonymous with prohibition of child abuse. The liquor dealers, members of the big business interests which controlled the life of the common man had to be defeated. Society classified men as drinkers or non-drinkers. Women presumed abstainers became the chief allies of the prohibitionists.

To a degree, Benedictsson shared this view of most

English speaking feminists.

Temperance societies were strong in Iceland. The first one was formed in 1883. [42] It was not surprising that having been identified with the Good Templar movement in their homeland, that lodges dedicated to that end would be quickly organized. Largely, through the efforts of the Icelandic Society, the 1st Temperance Club was formed in Winnipeg, 1883, comprising 30 members both men and women. [43] The two later lodges - Skuld, 1911, and Heckla, 1887, exercised considerable influence throughout the Icelandic settlement in curbing the use of alcohol. [44]

Benedictsson was a member of the "White Ribboners", a branch of the W. C. T. U. which was formed Feb. 1898, consisting of 20 members of Icelandic descent. [45] She attended the Good Templar meetings and 'Freyja' was the vehicle by which news of upcoming events were advertised, as well as news of their activity.

Benedictsson called upon the temperance societies to continue their work and not to "pull in their oars". These societies are not to blame for it is difficult to accomplish a purpose while the government grants liquor licenses to anyone who requests them. She spoke of the 'cunning ways' of legislatures and the great paradox of putting a temperance man into finance and he'll soon forget about temperance.

This to Benedictsson was one of the most pressing social issues. She felt courses should be taught in the schools on the physical and moral degeneration growing from alcohol.

She was not in favour of prohibition. It really depended on whether or not one views the problem from the point of view of society or individual needs. To Benedictsson this measure would limit the rights of the individuals who can use alcohol in moderation. To curtail these rights should always be the last resort, but one could be forced to do that, if it really became a necessity. 46

The temperance women soon realized that prohibition would become a fact only when they could add electoral support to that of the male abstainers. From the early 1890's, the W. C. T. U. campaigned for women's suffrage across Canada. Many women were prohibitionists first and suffragists only as a result of this prior conviction. They wanted the ballot in order to banish the demon drink and its complimentary evils from the land. As with the N. C. W. the idea of women's duties was more important than women's rights.

The aim of the W. C. T. U. and the N. C. W. was to reform society with the major difference between the two organizations being the means. The N. C. W. was satisfied with indirect influence which they felt proved effective; the W. C. T. U.

wanted direct representation in the government. The N. C. W. was converted to the W.C. T. U.'s way of thinking after 1910. It concluded that the long list of reforms would never be implemented until women had the ballot. The women in both organizations wanted the vote primarily to reform society.

The N. C. W. and W. C. T. U. competed with the Canadian Suffrage movement for attention and support of Canadian women.

Dr. Emily Howard Stowe was the founder of the Canadian Suffrage movement [47] and a firm believer in equal opportunities for men and women. While attending a Medical College in the United States, she came in contact with the American feminist movement. Their ideas influenced her thought and later formed the ideological base for the 1st Women's Suffrage Association which she organized in 1883. [48] This organization was an outgrowth of the Toronto Women's Literary Club, organized by Stowe in 1877, a conservative cover for suffrage propoganda. In 1890, she coordinated the various suffrage clubs that had appeared across the country into a Dominion Enfranchisement Association - Canada's 1st National Suffrage Association. [49]

In 1907, the D. W. E. A. became the Canadian Suffrage Association. Dr. Augusta Stowe Gullen, daughter of its first president, Dr. Stowe, was its president. [50] She inherited her mother's interest in women's rights and gathered around

her sympathetic followers.

This society never attracted a large membership. The first priority of Canadian women was the amelioration of social and moral conditions. This goal they believed could be best achieved without associating with disreputable suffrage organizations. It was easier and more respectable to work through the N. C. W. and the W. C. T. U. Only a radical minority considered women's rights worth an open confrontation.

Benedictsson was a great admirer of Stowe and became a very good friend of Gullen. They corresponded on a regular basis discussing their organizations and important matters pertaining to same. Theirs was the same ideology, born of the American movement steeped in women's rights. It is not surprising that Gullen's organization lacked membership. In a personal letter dated April, 1912, Gullen said she'd endeavour to get up a bill for co-guardianship of children and she asked "why don't you do the same in Manitoba?" [51]

Both women rejoiced in the militant campaign of the women of England. At a C. S. A. meeting in Ottawa, Gullen was willing to adopt the English way, that is go to jail, go on hunger strikes, etc., but she was voted down. [52] Benedictsson was very much in sympathy with the English women and very impressed with Emma Goldman when she visited Winnipeg. [53]

BACKGROUND TO

1st ICELANDIC SUFFRAGE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

Dr. Yeomans appears to have been the prime mover in the formation of the first English speaking Suffrage Society in Manitoba - The Equal Franchise Club, 1894. [54] She had been preceded by the Icelandic group, who, after her departure, continued the fight for equal rights. In 1894, they, too had formed a society, [55] dedicated to this cause, although activity had begun prior to that time.

Benedictsson spanned the years often referred to as the "doldrums of the movement". She bridged the two phases, as the 1st generation of suffragettes had laid down their arms and the succeeding generation had yet to come to the fore.

By temperament, she was well fitted for her role. Her deep ancestral roots in her homeland coupled with the international flavour of her experience form the twin poles around which her thought evolved. She took her lead from the American movement, and in particular from Elizabeth Lady Stanton, who was her idol.

It was inherent in the very nature of the Icelandic people to form societies with the express purpose of preserving and cultivating the liberal and progressive spirit of culture, which has through the ages, characterized that nation. Women were most prominent in their function as well as direction. They enjoyed a position not commonly accorded to their sisters on the continent.

The Icelandic Society was formed in Winnipeg Sept. 6, 1877, consisting of men and women, the latter being quite prominent in both the congregation and Sunday School. 56 In 1881, this group was reorganized and renamed the Icelandic Progressive Society and according to its revised constitution of May 6th of that year, among its first aims formally accorded equal rights to men and women. 57

The first Icelandic women's society consisting mostly of members from the Progressive Society was formed in October, 1881 with the pledge to bring cheer, alleviate suffering, and other charitable projects. On the 8th of February in 1884 it sponsored "Thorrablot", a mid winter festival. Among the speakers was B. L. Baldwinson, an agent for the Dominion government, who gave a lecture on equal rights for women. 58

These societies died out by 1890, not due to lack of work, but rather because the church organizations took over their role to a large degree.

The struggle for women's rights gained momentum after 1890 with the arrival of Benedictsson whose enthusiasm and drive added impetus to the social thought of the time. This period had seen the formation of women's societies throughout the Icelandic communities in Manitoba; clubs which served to break down the isolation experienced by so many rural women

and provide the organizational base for Benedictsson to build a major organization to serve women's needs.

In the ensuing struggle for social justice and equality, women began to demand female emancipation; a reaction to economic and social pressures in their own experience. For the first time they were organized for purposes other than charitable works. In an article entitled "Women's Societies", Benedictsson expressed her views on how these Ladies Aid groups should operate:

> "Each society should first endeavour to allay their own needs of their members and protect them in every way... they should be less institutions of a charitable nature and more of life or health insurance societies ... Executive members would gain from the experience involved in the financial responsibility."[59]

She turned their eyes on their own status as women. It was obvious that without basic legal protection they had no recourse if a husband failed to support his family and women's property was no longer their own if they chose to marry. She questioned the authority of the husband, his almost unlimited power over his dependents. Inspired by new ideas of the rights of the individual she continually slammed what she termed "marital bondage":

> "There is no question so important as the emancipation of women from the dogmas of the past - political and social ... no woman should forfeit her individual rights or independent existence and no man should assert over her any rights or power whatsoever beyond what he may exercise over her free and voluntary efforts."[60]

Therefore women came to discover and deplore their own inferiority and demand equality and freedom. It was necessary, according to Benedictsson, to establish their legal existence as "persons" by gaining their right to share with their husbands in control of family, property, and financial concerns. [61] She deplored the idea of farm women working side by side with their husbands, and losing all at the whim of their partner.[62]

Benedictsson's broad vision was one of equality, a woman as a self-supporting equal partner with men in <u>all</u> [63] things in the state and in the home. She appealed to the basic principle that every human being is unique and sacred and has the inalienable right to determine his or her own destiny.

She outlined a 3 prong attack on how women could best be organized to serve this end. Suffrage groups had to be formed with responsible leaders that were knowledgable on the subject and could carry on the work of educating and recruiting members. [64] Speaking tours would be conducted from time to time to add impetus to the cause. Public opinion needed educating. Benedictsson firmly believed that the biggest stumbling block was not men but apathetic women. [65] Pressure on the government via petitions must be maintained. [66]

Suffrage was crucial as a tool in acquiring other rights, social, political, legal, and economic. However, while

awaiting the vote, she insisted women use two important weapons, already available, freedom of speech and freedom of the press. At this time, with such important matters at stake, the Ladies Aid Societies should put aside church work and join together into one big organization to fight with speeches and petitions, for in numbers there is power. 67 Those who have the municipal vote should be urged to cast their ballot for men sympathetic to the cause. As members of the School Board they can directly influence curriculum, and thus indirectly educate young people in the ways of equality for the good of mankind. She suggested a course in Political Science be a necessity, thus both boys and girls would learn together the rights of citizenship, etc. 68

In the absence of the vote, Benedictsson urged women to use a weapon sharper than all others to influence the political environment. She wielded a powerful direct influence over the men in her life and could win her desires through the exercise of her charm. The weapon - love - could influence the husbands and sons to vote for candidates supporting equal rights. 69

Benedictsson's life was a busy round of travelling, lecturing, and lobbying, all squeezed into a busy schedule. She was a popular speaker at a time when lecture was among the chief forms of entertainment. Yearly she toured, a very dominant figure, making her rounds from the Interlake area into Saskatchewan, through the Argyle district, and into North Dakota. Travel was difficult and the audiences not always receptive.

Abuse, ridicule, and slander was an accepted part of their experience. Benedictsson stated that 1906 was her best year for she received so much criticism. This was a good sign for women were awakening and became more conscious of the equal rights question. [70]

Educating public opinion was an exhausting process. Benedictsson lamented continually at the general apathy of the majority of women and she continually battled against the timeworn traditions that enthroned them on pedestals caring for little beyond their home. They accepted this degradation claiming they had all the rights they wanted. [71]

In 1898 a dream was realized when the Benedictsson's, through the help of a loan arranged by friends, were able to set up a printing shop in a little red shanty in north Selkirk. [72] It was here the 20 page Icelandic periodical "Freyja" had its origin, the only paper in Canada dedicated to the women's rights question. [73] For the next twelve years Benedictsson kept it afloat, despite monumental debts, health problems, marriage breakdown, loss of her home through property settlement, and the weariness of a constant search for advertisers and subscribers. Despite this struggle, she remained true to her ideal that the paper would be independent of political and religious affiliation. [74]

Its readership was confined to the Icelandic population from the Interlake area to North Dakots and Minnesota and west through Saskatchewan into the State of Washington. The exact circulation is unknown. In the first three months, 300 subscribers 75 were recorded and in each succeeding issue lists were printed.

This paper made a tremendous contribution to the woman's cause. It mirrored the status and struggles of women, news on organizations, of pioneers in all walks of life from all over the world. It was more than a vehicle for carrying news, it spoke for the many women who were not yet ready to espouse the cause and extended sympathy to the exploited woman and the social outcast. Serial stories were carried attacking the legal structures that deprived women of their rights. Of interest to the community was a list of upcoming events such as meetings, socials, etc. It gave the movement a focus and direction as it led and fought with vigour. Benedictsson's advanced views on social issues were mirrored in the editorials and leading articles which inveighed against the problems of marriage breakdown, inequities of divorce procedure and matters associated with alcoholism. It took up the cross on behalf of the unfortunate women as it dealt with forthrightness on these matters that affect all mankind.

The first issue declared its purpose as devoted to woman's political, economical, and social rights and stated its aims. Freyja shall be quite independent in all matters;

its purpose being to bring knowledge and enjoyment to all readers. Freyja will not without cause get involved in matters that cause dissention such as religion and politics. There is however no subject pertaining to human and moral issues that does not concern 'Freyja', and we will not be pledged to keep silent about it. Matters pertaining to the progress and rights of women will always be our first and foremost concern. Freyja will support prohibition and anything that leads to the betterment of social conditions. Our motto is humanity and equality. [76] True to these aims, over the years most articles were directed to women's contemporary role as wife and mother and to the progress and rights of women as well as supporting both temperance activity and anything that leads to the improvement of social conditions.

Leading an attack through 'Freyja' and personal contact vis a vis lecture tours, Benedictsson urged women into societies which then served as a kind of forcing area which propelled them into enlarging horizons and new experiences. As a result of her organizational ability and hard work, four societies had pledged to work for the suffrage cause - The 1st Icelandic Unitarian Church 1904, Gimli 1906,[77] Argyle 1908, [78] and Mountain, N. D. 1909. [79] Men had joined the Mountain organization, as well as women. [80]

Benedictsson had always dreamed of forming a society based on Icelandic membership and comprising membership on both sides of the border. [81] To this end she founded the 1st

Icelandic Suffrage Society of America in 1908, with headquarters in Winnipeg. (see Appendix A) She bacame its first president. This organization received world-wide recognition with congratulations from the C. S. A. 83 in Toronto, the N. S. A. in the United States and the International Women's Suffrage Alliance comprising numerous countries overseas. 84

The Canadian Suffrage Association recognized Benedictsson's work in inviting her to attend the Quinquennial Convention of International Women's Suffrage Alliance in Toronto and their own convention following; 85 but lack of funds prevented her from going.86 Benedictsson was vice president at large in the C. S. A. (see appendix B)

The breadth of this organization was illustrated when Mrs. Haldora Olson from Duluth, Minnesota and Mrs. Anna K. Magnusson of Blaine, Washington were given honorary memberships for their special work and dedication to equal rights.87

Benedictsson answered requests on how these equal rights societies could be successfully formed, and how they could become a powerful component among Western Icelanders not only to fight for rights but also to sustain the Icelandic language and culture. She recognized the fact that many members were American citizens but there was no reason they could not work together constructively through the International Suffrage

Association, for their ideas, methods and desired ends were the same. 88

The first article gave instruction on the formation of suffrage societies, while the second one gave insight into its operation to ensure a greater success.

In the country points individuals form clubs. Three members or more are to be chosen from each of these societies to form a larger organization with headquarters in a town. From this group further members join a parent body, such as the 1st Icelandic Suffrage Association of America. In this way there is a common link from the grassroots country scoiety through to the large organization.

These groups must work closely together to accomplish their goal. The representatives from each group must not only be knowledgable but willing to study all aspects of the subject, for it is their duty to attend meetings and offer explanation, if so needed. Furthermore, they are to travel to new areas and promote the formation of new societies. A secretary is chosen whose duty it is to inform all clubs of news events concerning their cause. At election time it is necessary for all members to meet and discuss the best method to use in influencing candidates, regardless of party affiliation, to become sympathetic to their cause. 89

REASONS FOR THE VOTE

ROLE OF STATE

Benedictsson argued that women deserved the vote as a right of citizenship. It was a democratic right that men and women were equal, free, and independent members of the human race, and as such deserved the free exercise of their individual rights and liberties. [90] In an editorial she viewed the movement for women suffrage as only one phase of the eternal warfare of all centuries for human liberty. Less than half the men qualified to vote, actually do vote. She questioned whether all men be disenfranchised because of those few, and furthermore what reason could possibly be given for denying half of mankind the right and privilege to cast a ballot. [91] Women are governed by existing legislatures and yet have no say in their creation. Women were dead under the law; widows and spinsters owning property were taxed. In reference to these two groups, a thundering article "Taxation without Representation is Tyranny" appeared denouncing the fact they had no say in how their tax dollar was spent. [92]

To the English speaking group the vote provided the means to an end; a way to enact the moral and social reforms they supported.

The suffragettes' democracy had restrictions. At no time in their crusade for political justice did either party suggest an unlimited franchise. They were not eager to be swamped by the illiterate masses, therefore, insisted that it be granted on the same basis as men, that is, with a property qualification clause. This was Benedictsson's belief, too. [93]

McClung did suggest a new standard for eligibility to be measured by a literacy and intelligence test in the hope that women's suffrage would strengthen the native Canadian vote and offset the flood of immigrant votes. [94] This question did not seem to concern Benedictsson for she never mentioned it.

To a certain degree the democratic right argument espoused by Benedictsson was an expedient, a particularly forceful argument in a community governed by direct representation. Being opportunists the social reform suffragist (English Canadian) supported reforms which produced a society she desired. The democratic suffragist advocated democracy when it suited her purpose.

State intervention was acceptable to the suffragists as they felt that the government had an important role to play. In an industrial setting, individual interests had become collective interests and these could be protected only through collective control, that is, through the government.

Benedictsson frequently published articles relating the plight of woman in the throes of poverty. In 1903 appeared a translation of a letter to the president from a person in Washington, D. C. who listed her household expenses and pointed out that the family income from a sober, hard working husband was insufficient to cover the costs. She was implicit in her

ideas, that the state should get involved in social welfare schemes. [95] At the same time, attention was drawn to the plight of the married woman who had no choice but to give birth to chidren without means of supporting them. Benedictsson called for the government to instigate action and include courses on family planning to be taught in schools. [96] Freyja was at pains to allow the mother the right to rear her own children rather than have them placed in an institution. An article was printed concerning an Indiana Conference where the merits of orphanages versus parental care were debated. [97] The point was that it was cheaper and more humane for the state to give the widow an allowance in order that she might rear her children in her home rather than to place them in a state supported orphanage to be dependent on the whims of philanthropists.

The suffragettes believed the government had a role to play in the regulation of public morality. McClung felt men could be made moral by law. She stressed the argument that prohibition would cure the drink problem by removing the temptation. [98]

Benedictsson felt the state should support institutions where alcoholism be cured. The government sets up quarantine to prevent the spread of smallpox so why not medical centers to cure alcoholics. This parallel seems to indicate one alcoholic dragging others down with them. These men are held

by an iron claw and must receive treatment. She disagreed, though, with prohibition. It restricted the rights of the individual. Why should the right to take a drink be taken away from the numbers who drink in moderation? Secondly, those who are alcoholics will drink in secret anyway. Therefore, they must be treated to rid themselves of this meglomania. 99

The suffragists accepted the Welfare State but they were not socialists. They believed the government had certain functions to fulfil, such as assuming control of necessary community services, protecting the weak from exploitation, and creating a healthy physical and moral atmosphere.

Naturally the suffragists belief in positive government increased their desire for the ballot. Politics had invaded the home, and women had therefore to invade politics. Municipal regulations determined hygienic conditions, the nature of milk and water supply, the purity of food, and the social environment. Legislatures regulated the conditions under which factory women laboured, the tariff which affected the cost of living, and foreign relations which might lead to war and sacrifice of their sons. Without the vote, women had no control over these issues. 100

Suffragettes were willing to go to any length for the sake of the character of the country and the future of the race.

They recommended segregation of the feeble-minded who should be placed in a special home. [101] According to Benedictsson, measures should be taken to prevent the perpetuation of their species by discouraging marriage between those and others. [102]

Benedictsson worked from the philosophical presumption that life is change. She equated progress with the extension of democratic rights, and condemned the "brute force" theory which attempted to keep women in place because of physical weakness. Quoting John S. Mills' adage "might is right", she slammed this notion as an outgrowth of ancient history with no relevance at this time. [103] The individual is the basic unit of society, woman is an individual, and thus entitled to political representation. [104]

WOMEN'S ROLE IN SOCIETY

Canadian suffragists on the whole were divided over the issue of woman's social liberation. The majority were unwilling to change the status quo. Benedictsson, as part of a radical minority attempted to re-evaluate woman's role in society. Marriage threatened woman's individuality. Traditional society believed that at marriage a woman and her husband became one and that one was the husband. The wife's personality merged into his and she no longer had the right to independent thought and action. She had but one role, that of wife and mother.

Benedictsson had very definite views on marriage. A woman was not a man's appendage, but rather a social unit, a citizen, and a person. [105] The home could never be regarded as her full sphere. Engaging in activities outside the home broadened her intellectual interests and allowed her to be more of a companion to her husband and thus making marriage a more meaningful institution. [106] She challanged the Icelandic women to read more.[107]

In an article devoted to making marriage work, she compared it to a company which has two compartments governed by each company member. The departments are the domestic and the provision. Both are of equal worth to the company and both need a good, industrious, and faithful foreman if the company is to survive. The money that the foreman of the provisions department earns does not belong to him individually, but to the whole company. By running the house, cooking his

food, mending his clothes, serving him and doing all other jobs that are required to make a house a home, and, of course, the bringing up of the children the woman is sharing equally in all things. [108]

Benedictsson devoted much space and passion to the cause of woman's emancipation. While never disowning a woman's role as wife and mother, she clearly wished to see it liberalized and women in the family recognized as an equal partner in a business concern. The prejudices these women challenged, the fears they overcame, had their origin in nature's decree that woman is childbearer and by extension child rearer and homemaker. Benedictsson stated that women are aware of all matters under the sun, for then sooner will the barriers fall and the idea that it is unladylike to know and let everyone see that they have the knowledge and desire to do other things than make porridge and have babies because, in consideration, neither one is that hard to do, nor should that be woman's only objective in life. [109] Habit and custom had combined to make her a creature believed to be capable of little else. Benedictsson reported on the ingenuity of woman, that God had set apart for them a corner close to the spring of knowledge. To support this statement she commented on the inventions credited to women - the cookstove, a machine that makes screws, a new microscope, a carrier for a baby. They certainly could do more. For too many years women have been mothers and nothing else. [110] This has hurt woman as a wife, as a mother, and as an individual.

All her activities and thoughts have been turned in that direction locking out all other development and progress. This condition can only have serious repercussions on the quality of life for all mankind. [111] There was little doubt that Benedictsson wished to see woman's role expanded into public life.

Children proved a dilemna to the suffragists. Their social conscience could not quite permit neglecting them in order to satisfy the mother's other than domestic needs. McClung recommended that women wait till their families grew up, maintaining, in the meantime, some outside interests. It was her thinking that a woman of fifty still had twenty good years ahead of her. [112]

According to Benedictsson, it is merely a point of view. If you must go out to work, as is often necessary, no one calls that neglect. Only if we, as women, go to the 'House' to listen to proceedings, are we considered guilty. Often half the gallery is filled with women and who is to say that the knowledge gained from this outside activity is not going to help the child? [113] It is true that woman's first mission is in the home, but if she does her duty to her sons and daughters she must not wait but continue the battle for the vote, for then she'll have a voice in all things that will make for a healthier and better future for her children which is necessary for the welfare of all mankind. [114]

Benedictsson believed an unhappy marriage should be terminated. Concerning the relationship of a woman to her husband she had very definite views. She urged women to seek help as soon as warning signs appeared indicating a problem in their marriage. She indicated a frank discussion with someone else could often save a union, but this help had to be obtained before the hurt, like a cancer, had engulfed the whole body. [115] This notion in very similar to the counselling services we enjoy today.

She was very much against a marriage that continued only for convenience sake. When love is gone, tolerance impossible, separation is the only solution. [116]

Another kind of convenience marriage she deplored was women latching on to a man strictly for the sake of security, thinking it degrading to work to support herself.

> "There is nothing more pathetic or pitiful on God's green earth than women hanging on to men with the one idea in mind." [117]

Benedictsson had very liberal ideas concerning divorce. "Freyja" continually published translated news items concerning new or revised divorce laws. One of the articles was a translation of Elizabeth Cady Stanton's view that both marriage and divorce should be civil rather than religious contracts. Sigfus Benedictsson described the ideal way of

divorce in "A Philosophical Divorce". If couples discovered they were not in agreement on many subjects, then they could separate without bothering the Court of Justice, but part as good friends. [118] Both he and his wife held out a plea for more liberal divorce laws in Canada and pictured the situation of a couple forced to live together for lack of divorce opportunity "he to support her forever, no matter how loathsome she became, she to give him all authority over her freedom. She to be in the same position as a servant, obedient and humble in everything that she could not demand a wage or change her position even though she wanted to do so". [119]

Benedictsson pitied the children of unhappy marriages. There are men that mistreat their wives, and these women live in continuous fear of their life, in addition to illness, poverty, anxiety, and tireless slavery. What influence has this on children, and the woman herself? [120] Children have the 'right to be well born' and parents should commit themselves to that end. [121]

The Benedictssons' appeal for a more liberal divorce law was a measure of their own domestic relations which were strained. They separated in 1905, [122] and not on the amicable terms as stated in their "Philosophical Divorce". They were never divorced. Perhaps, as many of the early suffragists, Margrjet married to better herself, for oppor-

tunities for a single woman, without funds were limited at that time.

The English Canadian feminists stressed more the sanctity of marriage and motherhood in what was known as their "maternal feminism" as exemplified by McClung. According to Strong-Boag, McClung regarded women's involvement in politics as an extension of their guardianship and housekeeping role.[123]

The suffragists rejected the Pauline doctrine of feminine inferiority. Strong-Boag justifies their campaign on two philosophical levels. The egalitarian represented the demand for rights as natural to all human beings and the inegalitarian based on the notion of feminine superiority as only women were blessed with the spiritual and moral resources to reform society and thus could apply this principle to legislative politics. [124]

Like Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Benedictsson appealed to Anthropology to support the argument for suffrage. She printed a translation of Stanton's "The Matriarchate" and used this theory as a basis for many of her speeches as well. Once in a peaceful golden age women had ruled home and tribe, and as free, independent individuals had helped to create their civilization. Mother love, associated with caring for their children, had led to the development of domesticity. Their

long period of suppression by man had resulted in a cultural inferiority, to be corrected through education. Political activity would broaden women's minds and enlarge their consciences. [125] Never at any time did Benedictsson assume a higher morality for women; her appeal was always to the ideal of equality.

The suffragists wished to provide women with alternatives to marriage, but were not prepared to discard the institution. They wanted to raise the married women's status to enable her to engage in activities outside the home, but they still felt that the natural destiny of most women was that of wife and mother. This is clearly pointed out in the novels written by the suffragists. The heroine in each case ends up happily married - Helmi in Painted Fires, Pearl in Purple Springs, Elizabeth in Viking Heart. [126]

Although Benedictsson did not actually condemn the marriage institution, it was evident throughout her writings that she favoured the need for women to take on a public role rather than an expansion of domestic activities. Her two children grew up very much on their own and she had a particular aversion to housekeeping duties. [127]

It would seem reasonable to speculate that Benedictsson wished to create a new woman. "Freyja has taught us to be bold and independent." [128] She wrote often about the characteristic traits necessary to make one a whole person. It's

the spirit within that creates and determines one's character. The most precious gifts are love and freedom, but to be a total person it is necessary to have the greatest of all gifts, that of human compassion, [129] which she considered the highest of human values.

The plight of the working class citizen was of utmost concern to her. She deplored the conditions and low pay women received, especially domestic servants. [130] She was in tune with the plight of these women who often, after working a long day, had little but exhaustion to offer their families. This was her experience. So many other suffragists, like McClung, had difficulty in coming to terms with these conditions for they had always had ample financial security.

It was often necessary for a wife to work, and in an article Benedictsson extolled the merits of work exchange. If a man was disabled, could not find work, or was too lazy to work, why could he not stay home and perform the household duties? Not every woman is suited to the domestic role, why do we demand a woman should be a cook? She can go out to work and bring home the cheque. She could pay someone to do household tasks if her husband was unwilling to become a complete domestic. The irony of this situation, according to Benedictsson, was the fact that the woman would bring in the money that would pay the taxes, and she had no say in how

that tax dollar should be spent. [131]

The last issue of Freyja came out in August, 1910. In her final editorial, Benedictsson indicated ill health forced her to lay down her weapons, but only for a while. She promised to work faithfully in the background until such a time that she could resume her work. [132]

In reality, the paper ceased publication as Sigfus Benedictsson put a hold on all mail addressed to "Freyja" and refused his wife access to the printing press he owned which was in direct violation of the property settlement of 1907. (see appendix)C,D)

The Benedictsson's aired their marital problems in the Icelandic press. In a ringing indictment of her husband, Margrjet's letter stated "You are really getting smart, my Fusi, first you stop my mail, then you still the printing press, and now you bring our son back to me". [133] (In a previous settlement the couple were each awarded custody of one child.)

The Markland and Otto Icelandic Ladies Aid groups challenged the community through Heimskringla to get the paper going while Margrjet was still in Winnipeg. [134]

In answering the challenge, Benedictsson stated she would require at least $1,000 to get the paper back into operation. [135] She urged all people to assist in this effort. (see appendix for statement of amount received - $86.00 E)

Disheartened in spirit and broken in health, Benedictsson and her two children moved to Blaine, Washington in 1912. There among friends and relatives, she was to live to reach the age of 90 years. (see appendix F)

The two suffrage groups continued to operate within their own sphere with the exception of the brief intervals when petitions to the government were being circulated. To explain the 'why', authorities have pleaded mystification, while others have offered the theory of ethnic barrier. There are those too, that are totally unaware of the existence of any Icelandic group in this crusade. It is this paper's contention that this isolation was born more of ideology, for in principle they were united, but in character, temperament, and opinions as to method fervantly divided. This distinction was crucial; the differing viewpoint encompassed in the conservation and the radical, those who placed particular social reforms ahead of women's rights.

Benedictsson was truly committed to her ethnic background and throughout her writings expressed an intense desire to form an Icelandic society to work for women's rights and at the same time to preserve the Icelandic identity and culture. Following the founding of the 1st Icelandic Suffrage Association of America, she expressed the wish that many other Icelandic societies would commit themselves to equal rights, and the necessity to work in close cooperation following the ideals that 'our' people would value and acknowledge. We love dearly our Icelandic heritage and we must work to protect and sustain these ethnic ties that bind us together. "Freyja" has laid the foundation, and our movement is but a seed of a

CONCLUSION

much larger organization, but as members in a united effort we can do a great deal. 136

Our position, says Benedictsson, has always been one of action rather than acquiescence. To be successful, we must work in closer relationship with the English movement that are involved in similar activities, although their ideas fringe on social reform. 137 We have among us now educated women and girls who can step out of our movement and carry forward with strength of purpose and distinction. Our movement will not be hindered though we work with the English interests. With these words in mind, "Failure is Impossible", may we walk dauntlessly toward this cause, with the full knowledge that our work is necessary and good. 138

Benedictsson spoke and wrote English well. She contributed articles to some of the leading women's journals in the United States - "Eugenics of America", "The Lightbearer", "Women's Standard", and the "Progress". 139 (see appendix 5) She read widely; Freyja contained translated articles from papers throughout the United States. She quoted John S. Mills, Charlotte Perkins Stetson, and others showing familiarity with their works. Yet, there is no hint that she addressed English groups on the suffrage question. Hardly could the question of ethnicity created so large a barrier.

Benedictsson attended all meetings arranged by the

English speaking groups and wondered why more Icelandic women did not take advantage of the opportunity. [140]

At no time did 'Freyja' feature an English speaking Canadian suffragette in an article complete with pictures (with the exception of Stowe Gullen, a contemporary and in tune with her ideas). This seemed to be an indicator as to the women Benedictsson regarded as remarkable.

Benedictsson felt it necessary to maintain pressure on the government. Throughout the earlier years, the Icelandic women worked with the W. C. T. U. on petitions. The Icelandic branch, the "White Ribboners" collected 530 names [141] and Benedictsson, because there was no group in Selkirk collected 224 [142] names during a two day period.

Following the formation of the First Icelandic Suffrage Association of America, Benedictsson urged this pressure to be increased. It was necessary to espouse their cause in every constituency to awaken, not just the candidates, but all individuals regardless of party affiliation to the necessity of having a voice in the government. It was of utmost importance to influence a member of parliament who would speak on behalf of their cause. [143]

The Icelandic Association had a petition printed for all

Manitoba with room for 100,000 names. The suffrage clubs of Winnipeg, Gimli, and Argyle circulated the petitions throughout the province. These made their way to the Legislative Building in 1910. The petitioners, Johanna Johsdottir et al, and Miss S. Stefansson et al, asked for an act to be passed to enfranchise all women whether married, widowed, or spinster, on the same basis as men. The first petition was laid upon the table, and the second one was read and received. [144]

It is unfortunate that Benedictsson's work was interrupted at a time when the stage was getting set for a final victory. The movement was gaining momentum as women from all walks of life were awakening and giving greater thought to this crusade. The Farmers' organizations and the Labour groups combined sympathy and support, giving impetus to the movement as it headed down the stretch to its fulfilment in 1916.

The most significant legislation advancing the status of women was their enfranchisement. In the absence of Premier Norris, T. H. Johnson moved the third reading of the Suffrage Bill. He spoke on the importance of the day ... "January 27, 1916, will be a milestone in the history of the province". How fitting it was that Johnson, son of an Icelandic suffrage pioneer [145] and a descendant of the people who took the lead in this movement should give the final reading. [146]

Benedictsson was not present in Manitoba to see the results of her labour. On the vote being granted women in 1916, she simply stated that she was happy to have been part of the grassroots history on so important a cause for all mankind. 144

She attributed the success of the Icelandic movement, in part, to the many men who steadfastly supported the women. They served on committees, spoke at meetings, and contributed experience and confidence. 148 In this regard they were building on an existing Icelandic tradition of respect for women.

Every woman who cherishes freedom owes a debt of gratitude to Margrjet J. Benedictsson. Under the most adverse financial conditions she set the standard for women; a person whose vision spanned tomorrow while others were taking their first steps to freedom.

Her interest in women's emancipation went far beyond women suffrage to equal rights under the law and in all human relationships.

Recognizing women's need for economic independence, she rejoiced when they entered new fields of activity in business. Realizing how much women suffered under prevailing marriage

laws, she publicly advocated liberal divorce laws at a time when divorce was not a 'nice' topic for discussion.

She came to realize that before women could be completely free they had to revise their own thinking. Urging them to reject all aspects of women's inferiority and demanding not only legal and political reform, she stated social changes were necessary to insure justice and equality for all.

Independence of thought, self-respect, courage to enter new fields, devotion to the ideal of freedom, with no compromise, were the ideals that Benedictsson had held up to women. Her life in Manitoba, short as it was, served as a challenge to women to complete the work that had so unfortunately been interrupted.

Throughout her ninety years she wore many hats, as writer, editor, publisher, poet, lecturer, suffragist, wife, mother, single mother, and worker - a remarkable epitaph for any person. Her personality and power of speech were her greatest assets. Determined and independent, she, at times was fanatical in her zeal for causes close to her heart. Her most often used word, at time like these, was "Berjast" (fight). Homor and sarcasm were her two weapons, and her adherence to Christian principles left her undaunted in the face of almost insurmountable opposition.

Benedictsson should have a share in the laurels for the victory of women suffrage in Manitoba as she was the pioneer fighter for equal rights in the province. She kept well in touch with innumerable prominent leaders of Women Suffrage and Social Reform in the United States and other countries, and the influence she had on public opinion in Manitoba can never be estimated. It is the hope of this writer that some day soon in the history of reformers in Manitoba, her name should rank most prominent in the battle. To echo her words:

> "Freyja has worked among Western Icelanders in this cause, a good cause, so I have no doubt that our work and Freyja's in this great movement, will be recorded in the annals of history, not just among Icelanders in this land but among the English speaking people both in the United States and Canada. If we can be victorious in this mission it is of greater value than wages. That is the sacrifice we lay at the altar of our adopted land and our nationality." 149

Appendix A

First Icelandic Woman Suffrage Association of America

AFFILIATED BRANCH OF THE CANADIAN SUFFRAGE ASSOCIATION

(MEMBER OF CANADIAN NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN)
(MEMBER OF INTERNATIONAL SUFFRAGE ASSOCIATION)

President,
Margret J. Benedictsson, 536 Maryland St.
Recording Secretary,
Mrs. Caroline Dalman, 538 Victor St.
Vice-Recording Secretary,
Mrs Thora Johnson, 770 Simcoe St.
Corresponding Secretary,
Margret J. Benedictsson, 536 Maryland St.
Scandinavian Corresponding Secretary,
Mrs Helga Bjornson, 665 Alverstone St.

Vice-President,
Miss H. Kristjansson, 533 Agnes St.
Treasurer,
Mrs. G. Pjetursson, 706 Simcoe St
Vice-Corresponding Secretary,
Miss H. Kristjansson, 533 Agnes St.
Auditors,
Mrs G. Palmason, 675 Agnes St.
Miss S. Christie, 647 Beverly St

WINNIPEG, MAN. CANADA 191

This old letter head shows you the names of the officers of our First Icel. W. S. A. of America.

Appendix C

KNOW ALL MEN by these presents that whereas by a Power of Attorney dated the 30th day of September, A. D. 1903, and duly registered in the Land Titles Office at Winnipeg on the 18th day of January, 1907, under Number 765, I, Margaret J. Benedictsson, wife of Sigfus B. Benedictsson of Winnipeg, Publisher, appointed the said Sigfus B. Benedictsson to be my Attorney, with the powers and authorities therein mentioned, And whereas I am desirous of revoking such Powers;

Now therefore I do hereby revoke and make void all and singular the powers and authorities by the said in part recited Power of Attorney, given to or conferred upon the said Sigfus B. Benedictsson.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF I have hereunto set my hand and seal this 27th day of May, A. D. 1910.

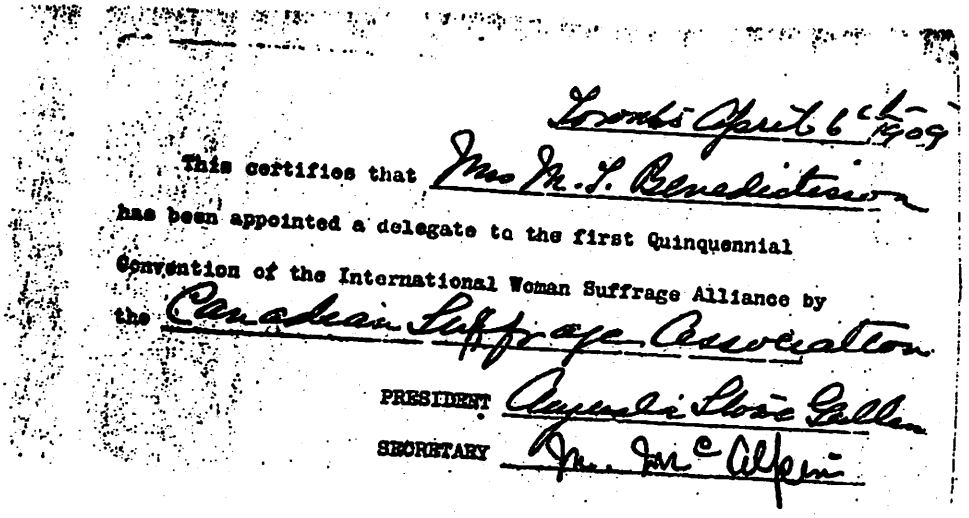
SIGNED, SEALED AND DELIVERED: M. J. Benedictsson
in the presence of
F. S. Andrews

SWORN before me at the
City of Winnipeg, in the
Province of Manitoba, this
Third day of ~~June~~ July, A.D. 1910.
F. S. Andrews

A Commissioner in B.R. &c.

These proceedings obviously provoked Sigfus and he put a stop to Margrjet's mail and refused her admittance to the printing shop.

APPENDIX B



London, April 6th 1909

This certifies that Mrs M. S. Benedictsson

has been appointed a delegate to the first Quinquennial

Convention of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance by

the Canadian Suffrage Association

PRESIDENT Dr. Augusta Stowe Gullen

SECRETARY Mrs. McAlpine

Appendix E

Vér, undirritud leggjum hér með fram upphæðir þær sem fylgja nöfnum vorum, í þeim tilgangi að hjálpa Margrétu Jónsdóttir Benedictsson til að endurreisa kvennréttinda blaðið Freyja —

J. H. Johnson		25 00/100
[illegible] Jonsson		5 00
[illegible]		
Kristrun Sveinungadottir		6 00
		5 00
[illegible] Lindal		5 00
[illegible] Sigurdsson		[illegible],00
[illegible] Eirickson		1,00
[illegible] Markusson		1,00
[illegible] Jonsson		1,00
Bjarnason		1,00
Mrs Helga Halldorsson		2 00
O Johnson		
Mrs Margret Sigurdsen		1 00
Frá Kvennfélag Markland		$6,00
Mrs Daniel Sigurdsson		1,00
Andrés Skagfeld	Hove	2 00
Guðbrandur Erlendsson	Hallson	1 00 fyrirfram
Steina Sopher og Katrín Magnusson	Hallson	5 00
Oddfríður Johnson Otto		1,00
		86 00

Appendix D

~~Original~~

Skifta=Samningur. Division of Property

Hjónanna Sigfúsar B. og Margrjetar J. Benedictsson

In the Division of Property settlement, Sigfus was awarded the printing press with the stipulation that Margrjet be able to use it for her work on "Freyja".

Dagsett þann 12 dag Júní M. 1907 að Winnipeg Man.

Undirritað og innsiglað

S. B. Benedictsson

M. J. Benedictsson

Vottar

Sigm. Pétursson

APPENDIX G

LUCIFER.

THE LIGHT-BEARER.

ENTERED AT THE CHICAGO POSTOFFICE AS SECOND-CLASS MAIL MATTER.

PRICE FIVE CENTS. CHICAGO, MARCH 15, E. M. 306 [C. E. 1906]. WHOLE NO. 106

MARGARET J. BENEDICTSSON, Winnipeg.—Just now I received the latest copy of LUCIFER with the picture of your illustrious father and his closing farewell before the prison bars shut him out from the life and sun and action and liberty. Be of good cheer yourself and keep him in such, for he is the martyr of our woman's cause—a great and grand man, whom the coming ages will worship, not as a god-myth, but as the incarnation of all the noblest elements known to mankind. Please let the few friendly words from a full heart of gratitude, and a foreigner who has grasped your and his teachings and is trying to teach the same to her country people through a small monthly magazine, and who knows what persecution is for the very same cause by her own country people's papers, reach your father in his prison, so he may know the (his) cause is being fought by many nations, in many languages. I used to be an inhabitant of the great United States for years, and I loved it as the land of freedom and justice. But now I am grieved to the very heart at this disgracing news, grieved to see Liberty bow its beautiful wings to such injustice as the courts of that great Union have meted out to one of its best and noblest sons—grieved beyond expression, for I fear that if injustice be so easily crowned in that land of liberty, it will still more easily ride on the ruling wings of power in other lands.

STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES
HEALTH SERVICES DIVISION BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS
OLYMPIA, WASHINGTON

Appendix F

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
PUBLIC HEALTH STATISTICS SECTION
CERTIFICATE OF DEATH

REG. DIST. NO. 01 — STATE FILE NO. 23681 — REGISTRAR'S NO. 98

1. PLACE OF DEATH a. COUNTY: Skagit
b. CITY OR TOWN: Anacortes
c. LENGTH OF STAY (in this place): 8 yrs
d. FULL NAME OF HOSPITAL OR INSTITUTION: Welling Nursing Home

2. USUAL RESIDENCE (Where deceased lived. If institution: residence before admission.) a. STATE: Washington b. COUNTY: Skagit
c. CITY OR TOWN:
d. STREET ADDRESS: Anacortes, Washington

3. NAME OF DECEASED (Type or print): Margret Jon Benedictson
4. DATE OF DEATH: 12/13/56
5. SEX: Fe
6. COLOR OR RACE: W
7. MARRIED, NEVER MARRIED, WIDOWED, DIVORCED: Widowed
8. DATE OF BIRTH: 3/16/66
9. AGE (In years last birthday): 90 yrs
10a. USUAL OCCUPATION: Housewife
10b. KIND OF BUSINESS OR INDUSTRY:
11. BIRTHPLACE (State or foreign country): Iceland
12. CITIZEN OF WHAT COUNTRY?: USA
13. FATHER'S NAME: Unknown
14. MOTHER'S MAIDEN NAME: Kristiana Ebenes Dotter
15. WAS DECEASED EVER IN U. S. ARMED FORCES?:
16. SOCIAL SECURITY NO.:
17. INFORMANT: Mrs G. N. Dalstead, Daughter 331

18. CAUSE OF DEATH — MEDICAL CERTIFICATION

	Condition	Interval between onset and death
I. Disease or condition directly leading to death (a)	Coronary occlusion	5 minutes
Due to (b)	C V A	5 hours
Due to (c)	Arteriosclerosis	10 yrs
II. Other significant conditions		

19a. DATE OF OPERATION:
19b. MAJOR FINDINGS OF OPERATION:
20. AUTOPSY? Yes ☐ No ☒
21a. ACCIDENT SUICIDE HOMICIDE:
21b. PLACE OF INJURY:
21c. (CITY, TOWN, OR TOWNSHIP) (COUNTY) (STATE)
21d. TIME OF INJURY:
21e. INJURY OCCURRED While at work ☐ Not while at work ☐
21f. HOW DID INJURY OCCUR?

JAN 21 1957

22. *I hereby certify that I attended the deceased from* 5-20, 1956, *to* 12-13, 1956, *that I last saw the deceased alive on* 12-12, 1956, *and that death occurred at* 10:5_ _m., *from the causes and on the date stated above.*

23a. SIGNATURE: [signature] MD
23b. ADDRESS: 1301-10th St Anacortes
23c. DATE SIGNED: 1/1/__

24a. BURIAL, CREMATION, REMOVAL: Cremation
24b. DATE: 12/17/56
24c. NAME OF CEMETERY OR CREMATORY: Green Acres Crematory
24d. LOCATION: Bellingham Washington

DATE REC'D BY LOCAL REG.: 12-17-56
REGISTRAR'S SIGNATURE: Frank Kinney Jr
25. FUNERAL DIRECTOR / ADDRESS: Bryson-Engdahl Mortuary, Anacortes Wn.

S. F. No. 7784—10-55—30M. 43454.

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THE FOREGOING IS A TRUE COPY (PHOTOGRAPHIC) OF THE RECORD ON FILE WITH THE WASHINGTON STATE BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS, OLYMPIA, WASHINGTON

WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH SEAL

Fred W. Goodrich
FRED W. GOODRICH
State Registrar of Vital Statistics

Footnotes

1. J.M.S. Careless, A Story of Challenge(1953) P.304
2. W.L.M. King, Industry & Humanity (1947)P.P.490-491
3. C.L. Cleverdon, The Woman Suffrage Movement in Canada(1950)
4. W.L. Morton, The Progressive Party of Canada(1950) P.30
5. Roger Graham, The Canadians P.P. 197-201
6. Candace Savage, Our Nell, A Scrapbook Biography
7. Freyja Vol. XII 2-3, 1909
8. R.C. Brown & R. Cook, Canada Transformed 1896-1921 (1974)
9. C. L. Cleverdon, Op. Cit. P. 49
10. Heimskringla, February 21, 1951
11. Interview with Einar Simonarson, a lawyer in Bellingham, Washington, U.S.A. and a personal friend of Margrjet Benedictsson for 35 years. Aug. 9, 1979.
12. Heimskringla, February 21, 1951.
13. Heimskringla, ibid.
14. Heimskringla, ibid.
15. F.J. Bergmann, "Sigtryggar Jonasson", Almanak 1907, P.30
16. Olof Sigurdson "Icelandic settlements in Manitoba and other points in America" unpublished thesis P.33
17. ibid. P.33
18. ibid. P.30
19. Freyja Vol VII-I, 1904
20. For a full account of religious difficulties see the just finished thesis by Jonas Thor. University of Manitoba.
21. Simonarson to author, August 9, 1979.
22. Fridrik Bergman "Landnum Islendinga íNorður Dakota" Almanak, 1902

cont...d

23. ibid

24."Framfari" , Vol. I No. 6 December 22, 1877, PP 22-23

25. Rognvaldur Petursson Timarit (1919) P.119

26. William C. Wonders "Scandinavian Homesteaders", Alberta History, Summer 1976, P.2

27. F.S. Cawley, Scandinavian Studies (1938) Vol. XV

28. Simonarson to author, August 9, 1979.

29. Loa Benedictsson to author, August 9, 1979.
(Loa is Ingi's widow, and Margrjet's daughter-in-law)

30. W. Kristjanson The Icelandic People in Manitoba (1965) P.280

31. ibid. P.280

32. Sigfus Benedictsson: Private letter to Mrs. H. Danielson, August 5, 1946.

33. C. Cleverdon, op. cit. P.12

34. Freyja, Vol. XI-12, 1909

35. Rosa L. Shaw, Proud Heritage (1957)P.2

36. Rosa L. Shaw, ibid, P.3

37. ibid, P.3

38. John T. Saywell, ed. Canadian Journal XXX, 1960

39. Canadian Annual Review 1909, P.136

40. ibid, 1910, P.312

41. Freyja, Vol. XI-12, 1909

42. Joe T. Peck to author: January 6, 1977.
(Beck was a member of the Good Templars and was chosen Chief Templar in 1930)

43. ibid.

44. W. Kristjanson, op. cit. P. 264

cont.....d.

45. Heimskringla, February 22, 1898.

46. Freyja, May, 1899

47. V. Strong-Boag, Introduction to In Times Like These (1972 reprint)

48. ibid.

49. ibid.

50. ibid.

51. Augusta Stowe Gullen's Private letter to Benedictsson, April, 1912.

52. Freyja, Vol. XI-4, 1908.

53. Freyja, IX-9, 1907

54. C. Cleverdon, op.cit. P.51

55. H. Davidson to author, March 4th, 1980.Mrs. Davidson's mother, Mrs. Solmundson, was a member of that club and Mrs. Benedictsson was its president.

56. Fridrik Bergmann, "Saga Islensku Nylendunnar i Fenum Winnipeg" Almanak, 1903, P.46

57. ibid.

58. ibid.

59. Freyja, April, 1898.

60. Personal Papers: Benedictsson

61. Heimskringla, February 21, 1951.

62. Personal Papers: Benedictsson

63. ibid. The underlining is Benedictsson's

64. Freyja, Vol. VIII-12, 1906.

65. ibid. Vol. Y-3, 1907

66. ibid, December, 1898.

67. ibid, March, 1898.

cont....d.

68. ibid, Vol. IX-7, 1907.

69. ibid, March, 1898.

70. ibid, Vol. IX-12, 1907

71. ibid, Vol. X-II-12, 1908; Vol.X-10,1908.

72. Skuli Bachman to author, February 4, 1979.
(Mr. Bachman, now 86 years, lived in Selkirk, Manitoba)

73. Freyja, Vol. XI-2, 1908; Vol. XI-6, 1909.

74. ibid, Vol. XI-6, 1909.

75. ibid, April, 1898.

76. ibid, February, 1898.

77. ibid, Vol. XI-9, 1909; Vol.VIII-II,1905; Vol.XII-2-3,1909

78. ibid, Vol. XI-6, 1909

79. ibid, Vol.XII-6, 1910

80. ibid.

81. ibid, Vol. XI-6, 1909.

82. ibid, Vol. X-6,7, 1908.

83. ibid, Vol. XI-3,1908

84. ibid.

85. ibid, Vol. XI-12, 1909

86. ibid.

87. ibid,Vol.XII-6, 1910

88. ibid, Vol.XI-6, 1909

89. ibid, Vol.VIII-12,1906;Vol.XI-6,1909.

90. Personal Paper:Benedictsson

91. Freyja, Vol.X-II,12,1908:Vol.X-9,1909.

92. ibid, Vol.VII-4,1904

93. Personal Papers: Benedictsson

94. Winnipeg Voice, June 9, 1916.

95. Freyja, Vol. VI-3,1903.

cont..d.

96. ibid, September, 1899.
97. ibid, Vol. X-3, 1907.
98. V. Strong-Boag, Introduction to In Times Like These (1972)
99. Freyja, May, 1899.
100. Rosa L. Shaw, op. cit. pp. 37-75
101. ibid. p. 60
102. Freyja, April-May, 1899.
103. Personal Papers: Benedictsson
104. ibid.
105. Heimskringla, February 21, 1951.
106. Personal Papers: Benedictsson
107. Freyja, July, 1896; Vol. IX-3, 1906
108. ibid, May-June, 1900
109. ibid, Vol. IX-12, 1907
110. ibid, October, 1899
111. ibid.
112. Nellie McClung, "Speaking of Women" MacLean's Magazine: May, 1916. P.12
113. Freyja, Vol. IX-3, 1906
114. ibid, October, 1899
115. ibid.
116. ibid, Vol. VIII-8, 1906.
117. ibid, Vol. VII-12, 1905
118. ibid, Vol. IX-9, 1907
119. ibid, Vol. VII-12, 1905; Vol. VIII-2, 1905; Vol. VIII-4, 1905
120. ibid, Vol. XII-9, 1910
121. Personal Papers: Benedictsson
122. Personal Papers: Property settlement; Benedictsson.

cont.d.

123. V.Strong Boag, Introduction to In Times Like These(1972 reprinted)

124. ibid.

125. Freyja, Vol. VII-12, 1905

126. Nellie McClung Painted Fires (1925)

Purple Springs (1922)

Laura Goodman Salverson The Viking Heart (1923)

127. Simonarson to author, August 9, 1979.

128. Freyja, Vol. IX-12,1909

129. ibid, February, 1900

130. ibid, Vol.XII-8, 1910

131. ibid, December, 1898.

132. ibid, Vol.XII-12,1910

133. Personal letter: Margrjet Benedictsson to Sigfus Benedictsson

134. Personal Papers:Benedictsson

135. Personal letter: Benedictsson to Heimskringla

136. Freyja, Vol. XI-6, 1909

137. ibid, Vol. XII-2,3,1909

138. ibid.

139. ibid.

140. ibid, Vol. IX-9, 1907

141.ibid. May, 1901.

142. ibid, February, 1901

143. ibid, Vol. XII-6, 1910.

144. Manitoba Journals, 1910, pp.14,22,79,97.

145. Logberg, May 27, 1927.

146. Free Press, January 28, 1916.

147. Simonarson to author, August 9, 1979.

148. Freyja, Vol X-6,7; Personal Papers: Benedictsson.

149. ibid, Vol. XII-2,3,1909.

Bibliography

1. Primary Sources

Margrjet Benedictsson: her papers | Canadian Annual Review 1904-1910

Freyja Margrjet Benedictsson ed.

2. Newspapers & Periodicals

Icelandic Almanaks 1882-1910

Heimskringla

Logberg

Timarit 1918-1920

Winnipeg Voice

3. Articles

Thompson, Joanne "The Influence of Dr. E.H. Stowe on Women Suffrage Movement in Canada"

Ontario History, Vol. 54, No. 4, December, 1962,

Voisey, Paul, "The votes for Women Movement", Alberta History XXIII,3,Summer, 1975.

Wonders, William, C. "Scandinavian Homesteaders," Alberta History, Summer, 1976.

4. Unpublished Works

Bigurdson, Olof,Icelandic Settlements in Manitoba and other points in America

University of Manitoba (unpublished thesis) 1929

5. Secondary Sources

Brown, R.C. & Cook, Ramsay, Canada 1896-1921 A Nation Transformed, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Limited, 1974)

Burnett, C.B. Five for Freedom,(Connecticut:Greenwood Press Publishers, 1968)

Careless,J.M.S., Canada; A Story of Challenge, (Cambridge:University Press,1953)

cont...d.

Careless, J.M.S. & Brown, R.C.(eds) The Canadians 1867-1967, (Toronto MacMillan of Canada, 1967)

Cleverdon, C.L. The Woman Suffrage Movement in Canada, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974) First printed 1950

Cook, Ramsay & Mitchinson eds., The Proper Sphere:Woman's Place in Canadian Society, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1976)

Flesner, E. Century of Struggle, The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1959)

King, W.L.M. Industry and Humanity (Toronto: Thomas Allen Co., 1918 abridged 1947)

Kraditor, Aileen The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement 1890-1920, (New York: Garden City Anchor Books, 1971)

Kristjanson, Will The Icelandic People in Manitoba, (Winnipeg: Wallingford Press, 1965)

Lindal, W.J. The Icelanders in Canada Winnipeg: Viking Printers, 1967)

Matheson, Gwen ed., Women in the Canadian Mosaic, (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1976)

McClung, Nellie, Clearing in the West, (Toronto: Thomas Allen,1935)

_____ In Times Like These, (Toronto:University of Toronto Press, reprint edition, 1972)

_____ The Stream Runs Fast(Thomas Allen,reprint edition,1965)

Morton, W.L. The Progressive Party in Canada, (Canada: University of Toronto Press, 1950)

cont...d.

Shaw, Rosa L. Proud Heritage A History of the National Council of Women (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1957)

Sinclair, Andrew The Better-Half The Emancipation of the American Woman, (London: Lowe & Brydone, 1966)

Stephenson, Marylee Women in Canada, (Toronto: New Press, 1973)

Stetson, Charlotte.P. Women in Economics (Boston: Small Maynard & Co., 1898)

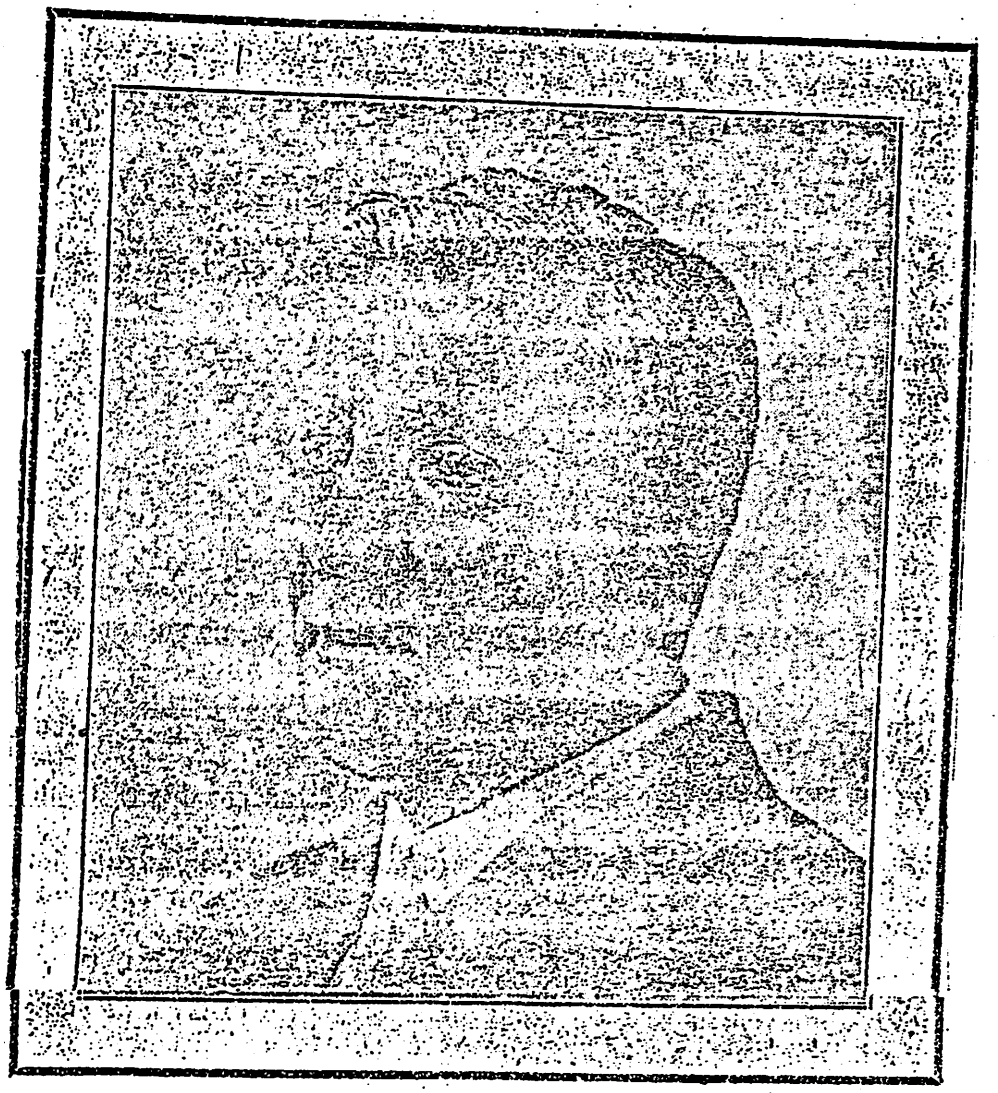
Thorsteinsson, Th.Th., Saga Islendinga i Vesturheimi (Reykjavik: Boka Felag Odds Bjornssonar, 1961)

Trofimenkoff, Susan & Prentice Alison, The Neglected Majority: Essays in Canadian Women's History, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1977)

Zaremba, Eve ed. Privilege of Sex: A Century of Canadian Women, (Toronto: Anansi, 1974)

Thomas Herman Johnson (1870-1927)

Educator, Lawyer, Legislator



R. Evelyne Holenski
443025

History 11:733

Professor E. Rea

PREFACE

Thomas Herman Johnson was born in the year that Manitoba became a province. He was but nine years of age when his family left Iceland and immigrated to the Canadian west. For fifteen years he was a prominent figure in the political activities of Manitoba; the land he adopted as his own.

This is not intended to be an exhaustive study of this politician's life, but rather represents only what the writer has been able to accomplish with limited material and time. However, from the sources available there emerged a man of strength and character dedicated to the building of a better society where more might come to enjoy the amenities of life. His career stood as an inspiration and a challenge to foreigners as he overcame his immigrant status to rise to success in so short a time. Newcomers to this land, like T. H. Johnson, had many obstacles to overcome in making the transition from immigrant to Canadian citizen. The inability to speak English and lack of adequate capital were factors that hindered their adjustment and hence affected the process of assimilation with the dominant British-Ontarian group bound together by common language, experience, and heritage.

It is the intention of this paper to deal with T. H. Johnson's role in politics as a member of the Liberal Party in the Manitoba Legislature (1907-1922). To facilitate matters the paper has been divided into three sections. The first part will deal with his early life and rise to public

office. His years in opposition, (1908-1915) will be analyzed briefly in the second section, and the third part will discuss his years as servant of the crown (1915-1922), with specific emphasis on the 1915 to 1920 period.

To what extent, as the first ethnic cabinet minister in the Norris government, did T. H. Johnson represent the Icelandic people? Furthermore, how was he viewed by members of his Viking race? These questions will be dealt with in the concluding paragraphs of this study.

W. J. Kristjanson in his book, The Icelandic People of Manitoba, summed up T. H. Johnson's contribution to the province, and it is to the ideas expressed in the following quote that this paper gives considerable attention:

> "The most outstanding contribution of an Icelandic person to public life in Manitoba in the earlier years was that of Thomas H. Johnson, Minister of Public Works and Attorney-General in the Norris administration. He is said to have been the driving force in the growth and accession to power of the Liberal Party in Manitoba in the period before 1915 and the key man in the Norris cabinet from 1915-1922."[1]

This study is based primarily on the Icelandic Press - the two weeklies - Lögberg and Heimskringla and the Manitoba dailies of that period.

Early Life

Thomas Herman Johnson was born on the 12th of February at Hedinshöfða in Þingeyjarsýslu in Iceland. In 1879, the family came to Manitoba settling first at Nýja-Ísland (Gimli) where they homesteaded for nearly two years. In 1881 they moved to Winnipeg where they lived for five years. In 1886, when T. H. Johnson was sixteen years of age, they moved to Glenboro, Manitoba.

Reverend Dr. B. B. Jonsson, pastor of the First Lutheran Church in Winnipeg wrote concerning T. H. Johnson's ancestors in Iceland:

> "Thomas H. Johnson comes of a sturdy stock in Iceland. His ancestry was a pronounced intellectual type. Some of his progenitors were noted statesmen... A near relative was in his day an outstanding figure in judicial circles... Mr. Johnson was a worthy scion of a talented ancestry."[2]

His early education was received at the Central School[3] in Winnipeg, and in 1888 he secured a third class teacher's certificate. In 1889-90, he entered Gustavus Adolphus College at St. Peter, Minnesota, graduating in 1895 with a B. A. To supplement his income, he taught during the summer months at "Hecla" Public Country School, five miles south of Glenboro.[4]

This must have been a hectic time for, according to Kristjanson the ..."enrolment at Hecla in that year was 120 and the pupils sat three abreast in their seats with an over-

flow on the woodpile and doorstep."[5]

The principal towns in the Argyle Icelandic Settlement were Glenboro, Cypress River, and Baldur. The first settlers in this district came from Nýja-Ísland (Gimli) during the period 1880-86.[6] They left due to religious disputes between Rev. Pall Thorlaksson and Rev. Jon Bjarnason which divided the settlers.[7] The staunch supporters of Rev. Bjarnason moved to Argyle where a congregation was formed in 1884 called the Frikerkja (Free Church) signifying non-adherence to any state church (Johnson's elder brother Kristjan was a deacon). The Free Church congregation was divided in 1885 and the Frelsis (Liberty) congregation was formed, of which Johnson was to be an earnest member.

Before the age of twenty, Johnson took an active part in community affairs. At the first meeting of the "Frelsis Sofnadur" (Frelsis Congregation) held at the Hecla School in 1889, he was elected secretary. Further entries of March 15, 1890, April 7, 1890, June 10, 1893 and June 13, 1893 show that he was chosen to head various committees to aid in community work.[8]

As a profession, Johnson chose to study law and articled with Richards and Bradshaw, a firm of able lawyers. Called to the bar in 1900, he worked with Edwin Loftus (Loftus & Johnson). Following the retirement of Loftus, he was associated with G. R. Howard and later joined S. J. Rothwell and Hjalmer

Bergman (Rothwell, Johnson, & Bergman). Upon Rothwell's death in 1924, the two Icelanders continued in partnership (Johnson & Bergman). Johnson had the distinction of being the first Icelander to practice law in Manitoba.[9]

When it came to politics, there was little question as to which party he should support. He came in contact with Liberal tradition early. The serious nature of his thinking, was, no doubt, greatly influenced by his brother, Kristjan, a leader in the community of Icelandic settlers at Argyle who were "almost to a man, ardent Liberals".[10] There were several reasons for this. The long-term member for the constituency of Mountain, which included the predominantly Icelandic Argyle district, was the Honorable Thomas Greenway who was popular with the Icelanders. Leading men in the community, including Kristjan Johnson, had influence on the rank and file: Between the years 1875 and 1877 the Dominion Government (Liberal) loaned the Icelanders sums of money amounting to $80,000.00 to see them through the first trying years.[11] This personal contact with a Liberal administration may have had an effect on the electorate. Then, too, the term "liberal" aroused a freedom loving people, who, for centuries had waged a continuous struggle for liberty in their homeland.

T. H. Johnson was interested in politics and in the early years of the twentieth century directed his efforts to advance the cause of the Liberal Party of Manitoba. He was one of the founders of the "Young Men's Liberal Club" in Winnipeg

and was chosen as the first president of the "Icelandic Liberal Club".[12]

It was in these two organizations that he received his apprenticeship for his later years in public life. He gained knowledge and received training which brought him to the forefront as a good speaker and an excellent debater.

In 1904, he was elected a member to the School Board in Ward 4. In this area, which was part of Winnipeg's central core, the Scandinavians were the largest ethnic group, second only to the British.[13] (see Appendix I) Here, among his people, he established a political base.

Following three years of service on the School Board, he was urged to run as a member for West Winnipeg in the provincial election of 1907. His opponent was ex-Mayor Thomas Sharpe, a man of considerable prestige. Johnson's victory was cleanly won; he carried his constituency by a splendid platform fight backed by a strong organization.

Among the principles he stood for, and continued to support through the years were the breaking of the lighting monopoly enjoyed by the street railway, the granting of liquor licences only when the majority of the people favoured them and the enforcement of the Factory Act, the Fair Wage clause in contracts and the amendment of the Workmen's Compensation for Injuries Act.[14]

Years in Opposition 1908-1915

The Liberal group in the new Legislature of 1908 was only a small one, but the training Johnson received as a member of this minority was of lasting value. During the course of the first week he delivered his maiden speech; a ringing indictment of the manner in which the Conservative administration entered into large-scale government ownership - the telephone purchase.

The Legislature, in 1906, approved the Manitoba Telephone and Telegraph Act which empowered the government to establish a Telephone Commission which was to acquire the Bell properties in the cities and its long distance facilities within Manitoba. The Act also allowed municipal councils to expropriate local privately-owned systems with financial help from the province. In a municipal referendum in 1906, 60% of the municipalities approved public ownership, and on January 15th, the province took over telephone service as the Manitoba Government Telephones.

While generally supporting the policy of public ownership, Johnson's criticism was directed against the transaction itself. Had a good bargain been made with the Bell Telephone Company? The Government had stated they could instal a system at a cost of $100 per phone. Why then were they buying out the Bell Company at the rate of $232 per phone? There had been much haste in the matter. Why had the govern-

ment not waited for the opening of the Session, which was near at hand, to get the opinion of the whole House before the deal was concluded?[15] Another point of contention was the government's refusal to appoint a commission to operate the telephones, but kept them under the control of the Department of Telephones. In 1912, H. A. Robson was appointed Public Utilities Commissioner with control over the province's various utilities.[16] Johnson criticized this move as arbitrary, as one man would be responsible to, and be controlled by the government.[17]

Johnson continued his fight to break the monopoly of domestic lighting enjoyed by the Winnipeg Electric Railway Company. However, each time he brought the question up in Legislature, the Government voted down the proposal to give to the city the right to supply electric light to the homes of the citizens.[18].

Skilled in repartee, often caustic in his remarks on government activities, he was a driving force to be reckoned with and gave the Liberals some measure of credibility at a time when they most needed it.

According to the Free Press his shafts of satire and wit at the expense of ministers and the government rank and file were among the highlights of the legislature sessions. One of these incidents occurred on the afternoon of February

16, 1910, when Johnson was refused an adjournment of debate at 4:30. He spoke for nearly two hours, addressing most members of the government, thus forcing an end to the day. Referring to a remark made earlier by Mr. Lyon that the government was composed largely of farmers, he continued... "Where were they? The Minister of Public Works was surely not a farmer, or he would like to ask the speaker since when the Minister of Public Works had taken to farming? It was sometimes urged against the Minister that he farmed the revenues of the province to the political advantage of his party, but he wasn't aware that he farmed anything else."[19] There was truth in these statements, as was to be determined in the years to come.

The Telegram gave a different report of those afternoon proceedings. Johnson had"meandered on" and people, both in the gallery and chamber had grown tired and left.[20]

With the approaching election of 1910, the Liberal party had little electoral appeal. As in 1903 and 1907, the Conservatives under Roblin, again posted an easy victory at the polls. Norris was the new leader of the opposition and Johnson was described as "an able lieutenant and in his criticism of government both strenuous and fearless".[21]

The next four years saw an ever increasing pressure for reform. There was a desire for greater direct participation in government. The suffragette movement was interested in seeking the vote for women while the temperance forces were

looking for controls on the sale of alcohol. A demand for closer supervision of working conditions in factories was sought. There was a growing dissatisfaction with the Coldwell amendment and a desire to instal English as the common language of instruction, as well as the implementation of compulsory education. These issues demanded attention but the Roblin administration was unwilling to introduce measures. The slackening of the economy enhanced the demand for reform, and the rising unemployment in the cities and declining prices in agricultural products turned many away from the Conservative Party.[22] In an attempt to gain office, the Liberals seized these protest movements as their own and in so doing became a more positive political force. Some of the provincial groups that had passed resolutions favouring the Liberal Party were: The Political Equity League, the Manitoba Social and Moral Reform Council, the Orange Order, the Grain Growers Association, the Temperance League, and the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches. In 1914 the Liberal Party adopted a reform program as their platform for the upcoming election.[23]

Despite the support of the various reform groups the Liberal Party lost; the government won twenty-eight of forty-nine seats. Following the redistribution of seats in 1912, Johnson was elected in Winnipeg Center. (see appendix II)

The Election Act was misused by both parties. Johnson charged the Conservatives with corruption in the bye-election at Gimli in 1913, where E. L. Taylor (Conservative) was elected.

In 1912 the Government spent $12,788 in the riding for drains, roads, and bridges, and in 1913 a total of $93,534 was spent indicating moneys being improperly used in influencing voters. On February 6, 1914, he accused the Government citing nine specific charges of this Act being violated. He made a formal declaration to the House..."that bribery was extensively practised and that corrupt treating was carried on throughout the constituency to a degree never before known".[24]

E. L. Taylor, the member in question, answered charges made by the opposition, by producing affidavits which, besides involving numerous outside Liberal workers, conveyed charges against three prominent members of the Liberal Party, namely S. Hart Green (Winnipeg North), W. Molloy (LaVerendrye), and T. H. Johnson (Winnipeg Center). According to sworn testimony they were guilty of handling funds, of distributing liquor, and buying votes. T. H. Johnson was charged with handling funds for defraying expenses of the campaign.[25] Denials were made on both sides.

Charges of corruption against the Conservative organization erupted again that year as the 1914 election approached. On March 15, T. H. Johnson's move for a Royal Commission of inquiry into alleged naturalization of frauds in Winnipeg was rejected. He described the Government's manipulation of the electoral lists in Winnipeg as a "gigantic plot".[26] He stated ..."this scheme is so extensive that no fewer than 1500 bogus

naturalization papers have been made out."[27] His contention was that the immigrants could be bribed by having their naturalization papers hurried through ahead of the regulation minimum time. Election officials could get voters by changing the spelling of names of some foreign electors.[28]

To better facilitate the War Effort, a short session of the Legislature was called in September 1914. The Minister of Public Works, Dr. Montague, announced at this time, that due to errors by the architect, the original cost of the new Parliament Buildings would be exceeded by 50%, or a total cost of $4,500,000, instead of nearly $3,000,000. A. B. Hudson, and particularly T. H. Johnson, were suspicious of these new estimates.

> "During the recess between sessions, Johnson asked for copies of all vouchers and correspondence which had been tabled in the Legislature on the subject of the new Legislative Building."[29]

During the session of the House in 1915, T. H. Johnson delivered some of his greatest speeches. Mercilessly, he dug into the expenditure of money by the Government on public buildings. Throughout the first six weeks of the Session he and A. B. Hudson continually pressed for information and material covering all manner of public works then underway. At the beginning of March, the Minister of Public Works presented to the House a number of papers including specifications, plans, copies of contracts, etc. relating to the

new public buildings. T. H. Johnson noticed that none of this information related to the construction of the new Parliament Buildings. The hesitation of the Government to bring in these returns raised the suspicion that this building was the key issue.

The last three weeks of March the opposition, including T. H. Johnson and A. B. Hudson, had the advantage of sitting in on the Public Accounts Committee. The Liberals continued their attack and forced an investigation into the contracts by this committee. Packed by a Conservative majority (11 Cons. 6 Lib.) no wrong-doing was reported. The opposition demanded a Royal Commission to investigate the charges. Roblin had no intention of granting this demand. On the 31st of March, T. C. Norris presented the Lieutenant-Governor with a petition signed by twenty-one opposition members asking that Sir Douglas Cameron not prorogue the House until a judicial commission of inquiry had been established. Roblin duly agreed, but the commission was not appointed for three weeks, during which time much discussion ensued as to the make-up of this commission.[30]

On May 12, 1915, less than three weeks after the Mathers Commission began its hearings, Roblin resigned on behalf of himself and his government. The subsequent report proved the Liberal charges to be true. Thomas Kelly and Sons had been overpaid by some $800,000. Further investigations revealed irregularity in the construction of both the Agricultural College and the Law Courts Building.[31]

That T. H. Johnson was primarily responsible for bringing to light the scandals of the Roblin Government leading ultimately to its downfall bears considerable support. Heimskringla, the Icelandic Conservative Weekly gives full credit:

> "One must thank Thomas completely for getting the Government for his party in the summer of 1915. No one possessed his prudence, his determination, and energetic activity in uncovering the graft of the Conservative Party."[33]

The Free Press states the Roblin Government would not have been exposed, had it not been for the activities of the members of the Opposition - principally two - T. H. Johnson and A. B. Hudson.[34]

A. I. Inglis in his thesis on "Some Political Factors in the Demise of the Roblin Government * 1915" supports the view that T. H. Johnson played a leading role in the attack on the Government in the Public Accounts Committee.[35]

T. H. Johnson played an important role in opposition 1908-1915. His skill in debate and perception of weaknesses and inconsistencies in Government made him a thorn in the side of the Cabinet. He particularly enjoyed bearing down on Roblin, whose Government he believed to be standing in the way

of progress and the proper administration of provincial affairs. Roblin on more than one occasion stated..."I will harpoon his hide in a hundred places and trample him in the mud."[36]

Minister of the Crown (1915-22)

The Liberal Party under T. C. Norris took office on May 13, 1915, following Roblin's resignation. T. H. Johnson was appointed the Minister of Public Works. He brought with him a wealth of knowledge of the business and problems of the province. It was soon determined that he possessed first rate administrative ability. The report of the Public Works Department tabled in the Legislature for the year ending December, 1916, attested to this fact... "the most voluminous, comprehensive, and detailed report of the kind on record in this province".[37]

The Heimskringla was disappointed in T. H. Johnson's appointment. It was the contention of this weekly that had Johnson not been a foreigner he could have been Premier. He had all the tools for that high position, but the fact he was not born in Canada, deprived him of that lofty height.[38] However, he had the distinction of being the first Icelander to become a Cabinet Minister in a Canadian government.[39]

T. H. Johnson was to play a key role in many of the issues that demanded a solution at the turn of the century. It is these issues and the part he played in them that will be discussed here. These included women's suffrage, temperance, direct legislation, compulsory education and bilingual teaching, all drawn from the Anglo-Saxon ranks. In sponsoring these measures, he was taken over by the Wasp dominated reform movement. As will be determined, the Icelandic community

was in agreement with Johnson's views. As a matter of fact the Icelandic people had taken the lead in temperance, and in particular, women's suffrage. Johnson's chief interest, however, lay in measures for promoting social welfare. The care of workers, the unfortunate, and the indigents was always first and foremost in his thoughts. The fact that organized labour was beginning to play a larger role in politics and demanding enforcement of acts regarding working conditions more than likely influenced his thinking.

When the Legislature opened in January of 1916, the Government immediately began its work to carry out its 1915 platform. (see appendix III)

The most significant legislation advancing the status of women was their enfranchisement. In the absence of Premier Norris, Johnson moved the third reading of the Suffrage Bill. He spoke on the importance of the day. ..."January 27, 1916, will be a milestone in the history of the province."[40] How fitting it was that Johnson, son of a suffrage pioneer[41], and a descendent of the people who took the lead in this movement should give the final reading (Iceland had enfranchised women in 1913).

The drive for suffrage had existed as early as the 1890's in Manitoba. The Heimskringla states it had its beginning in 1887 or earlier among the Icelandic people. The first step

was the women voting in church affairs. In Icelandic settlements the ladies were active in the "Kvenfélag" (Ladies Aid) which was an organization affiliated with the church doing community work. Then came Freyja, the Icelandic ladies paper edited by Mrs. Margrét Benedictsson. She, through her writings, fought continually for the women's right to vote.[42] Icelandic suffrage workers played a prominent role in the campaign. Two petitions, circulated in the Icelandic communities, were presented in the Legislature in 1910.[43]

The Manitoba Political Equity League was formed in 1912 to unite all those in sympathy with the movement. The Grain Growers Guide gave its support. The Good Templars, of Icelandic origin, supported women suffrage in the hope the female vote would go anti-liquor.[44]

Following the victory, Johnson was pleased to receive a message from the Icelandic Suffrage Association of Baldur, his former home.

> "We do appreciate your achievements in pushing to a climax this good cause which was started among our people nineteen years ago by Mrs. Margrét Benedictsson."[45]

The most notable legislation achieved by the Norris administration was in the field of education. During the 1916 session the disputed Coldwell amendments were repealed by a unanimous vote of the House. That same year a compulsory act was passed, requiring parents and guardians to see that

their children, ranging in age from seven to fourteen, attended school. T. H. Johnson had been an advocate of compulsory education since his days on the School Board and while in Opposition he had continually fought for this principle.[46]

The Government's most controversial achievement was the curtailment of bilingual instruction in the province's public schools. Section 258 of the Public Schools Act had stated that when ten of the pupils in any school speak the French language or any language other than English as their native tongue, the teaching of such pupils shall be conducted in French, or such other language that had the majority.[47] Under these conditions any language had an equal status with English. This, in effect, provided for compulsory multi-lingualism. Thornton, Minister of Education, and T. H. Johnson felt that this kind of instruction threatened the province's whole educational system. In outlining its defects, they stressed that confusion would occur with the growing number of nationalities seeking to take advantage of the Act. To give further evidence to the cosmopolitan origin of the people, Johnson said:

> "...that the variety of languages in which copies of the scriptures had been distributed in Manitoba and Saskatchewan was further evidence of the complexity of the problem. In these two provinces the scriptures had been distributed in no less than 45 languages .... multi-lingualism such as we are faced with in this province is an abomination that cannot be permitted to continue."[48]

T. H. Johnson's views are supported by the Icelanders. Heimskringla reports:

> "We do not want bilingualism. We want everyone to help at building one nation, one people, with one language - English - and not Italian, German, Danish, French, Polish, or Russian. From the latter would result madness, devil's judgement, and continual bickering."[49]

The last night of the debate on this question, T. H. Johnson rendered personal testimony to the effectiveness of English teaching to children whose mother tongue is not English:

> "I was taught at a time when I knew not a word of English and the teacher did not know a word of Icelandic... I taught in a rural community that was completely Icelandic and the children did not know English. My idea was, and still is, that the best way to teach a child any language is to put him up against the necessity of learning it."[50]

Despite divided feeling on the issue in the Legislature, English became the only language of instruction recognized in Manitoba Public Schools.

Temperance feeling has a long history in Manitoba. What has hindered its success has been the division within its ranks. There were those who wanted a complete ban on the

sale and use of liquor, while others wished only to see certain restrictions placed on this trade in order to remedy its worst evils.

Liquor could be legally sold in three places -(A) wholesale shops,(B) bars and(C) clubs. The clubs had to receive a special charter from the Legislature. They were originally organized for social purposes, but a growing number emphasized drinking and gambling.

T. H. Johnson had long been a critic of the management of the liquor traffic of the Roblin administration. He had become especially prominent by his strong denunciation in the Legislature of the "clubs of that class."

In 1914 his motion that the Acts incorporating such clubs should be repealed, their licences cancelled, and the nine specifically named clubs should be investigated was turned down.[51] In 1915, he spoke of the clubs as having become a serious menace to the life of Winnipeg ..."they have forfeited any rights given them in the Legislature ... my feeling is that the clubs mentioned in the bill should have their charters revoked."[52] The bill was barred by a technical objection. The Government stated a member had no right to bring in a bill to amend a private Act without first filing a petition.

In late February of 1916, T. H. Johnson's bill, a replica of the one he endeavoured to introduce in the last

session of the House but was ruled out on a point of order, passed its third reading without a word of protest. It was fitting that T. H. Johnson, to whose political destruction most of those clubs were pledged, should have been the author of the bills that sponged them from the slate.

When the referendum question, "Are you in favour of bringing the Manitoba Temperance Act into force?" passed with a two to one majority, T. H. Johnson was pleased. He was especially happy with Winnipeg Center going by a majority of 1800 votes for there were forty or more hotels in that constituency. The campaign had a very familiar ring. ... "in 1914, Mr. Dixon and myself went up against the liquor element. Center Winnipeg had repulsed the liquor men before today. This time, the people have simply repeated the dose."[53]

The movement in favour of direct legislation began with the formation of the Direct Legislation League of Winnipeg in 1906. At the Liberal Convention of 1910, the party had moved and seconded a resolution endorsing the principle. T. H. Johnson as that time referred to it as the "Magna Charta of Modern Times".[54]

At a meeting of the Icelandic Liberal Club he spoke on direct legislation: "It is necessary that this important legislation become effective as soon as possible."[55] He went on to say that if this principle was declared ultra vires, it should still be used in an advisory capacity. No one

offered an opinion against this view.

The Initiative and Referendum Act which had embodied the principles of direct legilation did fail to win the approval of the Appeal Court of Manitoba. Its refusal was based on the contention that such legislation would impair the lieutenant governor's use of the veto. There was little unhappiness with the demise of direct legislation. With the passing of Roblin from provincial politics, it was no longer necessary to press for this principle as the Norris government was bringing in reforms.

In keeping with the growing importance of the urban working class, T. H. Johnson was the prime mover of labour legislation. Several Acts were extended from the previous administration. He sponsored labour bills to amend the Factories, Building, Trades Protection, and Bake Shop Acts, and placed them under the supervision of the Bureau of Labour. Speaking on this subject, he explained the lack of coordination between the Acts and he felt that these defects could best be remedied by bringing all labour legislation under the administration of one body.56

T. H. Johnson's Fair Wage Bill provided for the appointment of a commission of three persons who would annually prepare a fair wage schedule to apply for government contracts. Thus rates of pay recognized by the trades organizations and by employers of labour shall be adopted. This was the first bill in a Canadian Legislature to give statutory recognition

to the fair wage principle.[57]

The Shops Regulation Bill set a minimum 60 hour week and 14 hour day for young persons and women. In keeping with the School Attendance Act no child under the age of 14 could work.[58] The following year this was amended to sixteen year olds.[59]

The provision for a minimum wage for women was one of the government's more generous Acts. Johnson carried the bill through the Legislature which called for a board being set up, represented by workers and employers empowered to fix the minimum weekly wage, the hours per day, and week, and the conditions under which the girls worked.[60]

The Workmen's Compensation Act was radically altered. Johnson took the lead in several amendments over the years for adequate compensation to persons unable to work through injury, and that these same claims should be settled without delay.[61]

Johnson's chief interest lay in helping those in need. The unfortunate, the elderly, the indigent all had a warm place in his heart. He was always looking for a more effective way of improving the moral calibre of prisoners. Prison reform to him involved a system of prison farms where inmates could work in a healthier environment.[62]

It was primarily through Johnson's efforts that the

lives of mental patients were improved. All Selkirk inmates were transferred to Brandon, leaving the Selkirk buildings for a school for the feeble-minded. Prior to this time no provision had been made for sub-normal children and adults, capable of some useful work but who needed to be kept under proper protection and supervision. It was Johnson's feeling that the province should take more responsibility for these people.[63]

On November 10, 1917, T. H. Johnson was transferred from the Ministry of Public Works to the post of Attorney-General and Minister of Telegraphs and Telephones.

In 1917, the Government stood for provincial support in all war activities and the belief in Union Government during wartime. Of the ministers, other than the Premier, T. H. Johnson was ... "the most notable in his advocacy of these principles."[64]

On June 4, 1917, in the absence of Norris, he addressed 4,000 citizens in Winnipeg voicing the unanimous cooperation of the Manitoba Government with Sir Robert Borden in his conscription effort. The Icelanders were in agreement with this view as can be shown by the large number of men and women that took part in the war. Of the 1303 Icelanders in the Soldiers' Book of 1923, close to 1100 are Canadian.[65] (APPENDIX IV)

In February, 1918, T. H. Johnson was the provincial representative at an Ottawa meeting with federal authorities

regarding the war effort. Upon his return, he issued a solemn warning to the people of Manitoba:

> "Canada's faced with the greater part of the responsibility in keeping the troops of the allies in the field in the fight for the liberty of the world and unless Canada rises to the responsibility her allies will be in danger of starvation."[66]

In consideration of the period 1915-22, the year 1916 is marked by the most important series of measures in the history of the province; important in their character, and in their realization of pledges given by the Norris administration while in opposition. Following this remarkable session, legislation waned.

The years 1915-1920 were politically quiet ones; the small opposition often voted with the Government. The only real criticism came from the French members on school matters. A spirit of nonpartisanship in politics prevailed. In 1918 the Liberals and Conservatives joined to elect a Union Candidate, R. Jacob, in a North Winnipeg bye-election.

The Liberal Party went from a large majority in 1915 to a minority in 1920. The reform movement that had done so much for the initial victory had collapsed. The temperance and suffrage groups faded away after attaining their objective. With the obliging Liberals in office, the need for direct legislation was no longer there, and its supporters fell away.

The movement lacked a firm foundation, drawing primarily from Anglo-Saxon ranks. Strains of wartime further weakened this movement.

With the collapse of the reform movement which he had supported, T. H. Johnson's role changed in 1918-19. In the latter years of his Cabinet ministry, he became more of a good-will representative for Manitoba and Canada.

He was forced to miss the 1919 Session due to an attack of Spanish influenza.[67] However, in the fall of that year he was the only Canadian representative to take part in an International Labour Convention in Washington.[68] In that same capacity he attended the League of Nations Labour Organization at Geneva in 1920.[69]

Late in 1921, he represented Manitoba in London, at the appeal proceedings before the Privy Counsel in the case of Thomas Kelly & Sons, contractors of the Parliament Buildings.[70] Judgement was reserved.

The energy which he displayed in the 15 years of his political career had undermined his health and made it necessary for him to retire from public life in June of 1922.

The result of the 1920 election probably influenced his decision to some degree. The Liberal Party failed to win a

clear majority (21 of 55 seats). The rise of the farmer and Labour groups, as well as the revival of the Conservative Party worked together to send the Liberals into a minority government. (Conservatives, 7; Labor, 11; U. F. of M., 13; Independents, 4.)[71]

T. H. Johnson always maintained an abiding interest in the ancient race from which he sprang. Since 1890, the Icelanders have held an Icelandic National Celebration in Manitoba every summer, (Íslendingadagurin) and he was always a popular figure at this event.

Many honors have been conferred upon T. H. Johnson. In 1920, he was made a K. C. by the Dominion Government.[72] In 1925, he received the honor of the Grand Knight of the Icelandic Order of the Falcon, an honor conferred upon natives of Iceland who have done great service to their country.[73] The following year the King of Norway conferred upon him the Order of St. Olaf, for his services to the people of that country.[74]

The provincial government commemorated T. H. Johnson's life by sending a bronze portrait to Iceland to be unveiled at the 1000th anniversary of Iceland's parliament in 1930. The province will perpetuate the memory of Johnson by ... "recognizing the important part played by the people of Icelandic origin in the development of the province.[75]

T. H. Johnson died at his home on May 20, 1927 following a lengthy illness. Although not a native of Canada, he

showed an admiration for this country that grew deeper with the passing years.

The words of T. O. S. Thorsteinson, writing in the Icelandic Canadian, bear this testimony.

> "His life was symptomatic of early Icelandic pioneers, one of ambition and hard work, hunger for knowledge, deep concern for the affairs of his adopted land and an abiding interest in the development of his own province."[76]

FOOTNOTES

1. W. Kristjanson, The Icelandic People of Manitoba pp 429-30
2. Winnipeg Evening Tribune May 21, 1927
3. J. W. Chafe, An Apple for the Teacher, p. 16 states that this school was built in 1877 on the land bounded by William, Bannatyne, Ellen and Gertie Streets.
4. Argyle Icelandic First Lutheran Church Minute Book 1885-1892
5. W. Kristjanson, op. cit. p. 322
6. Gudlaugur Magnusson, Almanak, 1899, p. 40
7. Rognvaldur Petursson, Almanak, 1919, p. 113
8. Minute Book op. cit. 1885-1892
9. Th. Th. Thorsteinsson, Vestur-Íslenzkar Ævisögur p. 141
10. W. Kristjanson, op. cit. p. 323
11. Gudlaugur Magnusson, op. cit. p. 33
12. Th. Th. Thorsteinsson, Saga Íslendinga i Vesturheimi p.277 & Logberg, January 6, 1916
13. Alan F. J. Artibise, Winnipeg, a Social History of Urban Growth 1874-1914, p. 157
14. Free Press, March 6, 1907
15. Telegram, January 8, 1908
16. Free Press, May 15, 1912
17. Canadian Annual Review, 1912, pp.500-501
18. Free Press, February 23, 1910
19. Ibid., February 16, 1910
20. Telegram, February 16, 1910
21. Canadian Annual Review, 1913, p. 555
22. L. Orlikow, A Survey of the Reform Movement in Manitoba, 1910-1920, University of Manitoba, (Unpublished Thesis) 1955
23. See appendix III
24. Canadian Annual Review, 1914, p. 587
25. Telegram, February 11, 1914

26. Canadian Annual Review, 1914, P. 605

27. Ibid., P. 605

28. For a full account on election graft see pp. 66-69 of the A. I. Inglis thesis - Some Political Factors in the Demise of the Roblin Government 1915

29. J. Jackson, The Centennial History of Manitoba, p. 184

30. For a complete report of events see the A. I. Inglis thesis op. cit.

31. Lögberg, July 15, 1915

32. Summer for Icelanders begins the third Thursday in April

33. Heimskringla, May 25, 1927

34. Free Press, August 2, 1915

35. A. I. Inglis, op. cit. p.16

36. Hansard, Free Press, January 20, 1916, p. 147

37. Sessional Papers, 1917 & Free Press, January 31, 1917

38. Heimskringla, May 20, 1915

39. Icelandic Canadian, Summer, 1967, p. 66

40. Free Press, January 28, 1916

41. C. L. Cleverdon, The Woman Suffrage Movement in Canada, p. 64
A correction, Johnson's step-mother. His own mother died in Iceland in the early 1870's. Logberg, May 27, 1927

42. Heimskringla, February 3, 1916

43. W. Kristjanson, The Icelandic People of Manitoba, p. 374

44. Winnipeg Evening Tribune, February 20, 1914

45. Free Press, February 2, 1916

46. Free Press, January 16, 1908
Ibid., February 22, 1915
Canadian Annual Review, 1914

47. "How the 1914 Platform Has Been Redeemed," p. 25

48. Free Press, March 1, 1916

49. Heimskringla, February 10, 1916

50. Free Press, March 1, 1916

51. Free Press, March 4, 1915
52. Free Press, March 4, 1915
53. Free Press, March 14, 1916
54. Hansard, Free Press, January 31, 1913, p. 35
55. Lögberg, January 14, 1915
56. Free Press, February 16, 1916
57. Canadian Annual Review, 1916, p. 660
58. Free Press, January 22, 1916
59. Ibid., February 16, 1917
60. Hansard, Free Press, March 5, 1918, p. 107
61. Lögberg, April 6, 1916
62. Lögberg, June 8, 1916
63. Lögberg, August 16, 1917
64. Canadian Annual Review, 1917, p. 720
65. Minningarrit Islenzkra Hermanna, 1923
66. Lögberg, March 7, 1918
67. Free Press, January 22, 1919
68. Lögberg, November 20, 1919
69. W. Kristjanson, The Icelandic People of Manitoba, p. 430
70. Th. Th. Thorsteinsson, Saga Íslendinga i Vesturheimi, p. 278
71. J. A. Jackson, The Centennial History of Manitoba, p. 205
72. Th. Th. Thorsteinsson, Vestur - Íslenzkrar Aviskrár p.141
73. Ibid., p. 141
74. Ibid., p. 141
75. Legislative Scrapbook, B-8, 1929, p. 204
76. Icelandic Canadian, Summer 1967, P. 66

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I Primary Sources

Canadian Parliamentary Guide 1907-1923

Canadian Annual Review 1904-1930

Sessional Papers, Manitoba Legislative Library

T. C. Norris, his papers in the P. A. M.

First Icelandic Lutheran Church Argyle, Minutes 1885-1895

II Political Pamphlets

- The Liberal Platform of 1914
- How the 1914 Platform Has Been Redeemed; A Review of the Administration of the Province 1915-1920

III Periodicals and Newspapers

Icelandic Almanaks 1899, 1919, 1904, 1906

Glenboro Gazette 1927

Heimskringla 1888-1930

Icelandic Canadian 1967

Lögberg 1890-1930

The Manitoba Free Press 1904-1930

Sameiningin 1914-1920

The Winnipeg Evening Tribune 1910-1916

The Winnipeg Telegram 1915-1930

Hansard on Free Press & Telegram 1907 - 1920

IV Secondary Sources

Artibise, Alan, Winnipeg, a Social History of Urban Growth, 1874-1914, Montreal, McGill - Queen's University Press, 1975

Chafe, J. W., An Apple for the Teacher, Canada, Hignell Printing Ltd., 1967

Cleverdon, C. L. The Woman Suffrage Movement in Canada, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1950

Jackson, J. A., The Centennial History of Manitoba, Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Limited, 1970

Kristjanson, W., The Icelandic People in Manitoba, Winnipeg: Wallingford Press, 1965

Lindal, W. J., The Icelanders in Canada, Winnipeg: Viking Printers, 1967

Morton, W. L. Manitoba, A History, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 1957

Thorsteinsson, Th. Th., Saga Islendinga i Vesturheimi, Reykjavik: Boka Felag Odds Bjornssonar, 1961

_____ Vestur-Islenzkar @viskrar, Akureyri: Þjoðraknisfélag i Vesturheimi, 1940

Minningarrit Islenzkra Hermanna, Winnipeg, I. O. D. E., 1923

V Unpublished Material

Inglis, A. I. Some Political Factors in the Demise of the Roblin Government: 1915 University of Manitoba, (Unpublished thesis) 1968

Orlikow, L., A Survey of the Reform Movement in Manitoba, 1910-1920 University of Manitoba, (Unpublished thesis), 1955

VI Interviews

Joe T. Beck. An interview with Joe T. Beck on the role of the Good Templars on the question of temperance. Beck was chosen Chief Templar in 1930. January 6, 1977

Fred Frederickson. An interview with Fred Frederickson of Glenboro, Manitoba, a close relative of T. H. Johnson's wife, the former Aurora Frederickson. January 26, 1977

Mrs. Thomas E. Joly. An interview with Mrs. Thomas E. Joly, only daughter of T. H. Johnson. November 14, 1976

Mr. W. Kristjanson. An interview with W. Kristjanson, author, and knowledgable person on Icelandic people in Manitoba. November 12, 1976 and March 15, 1977

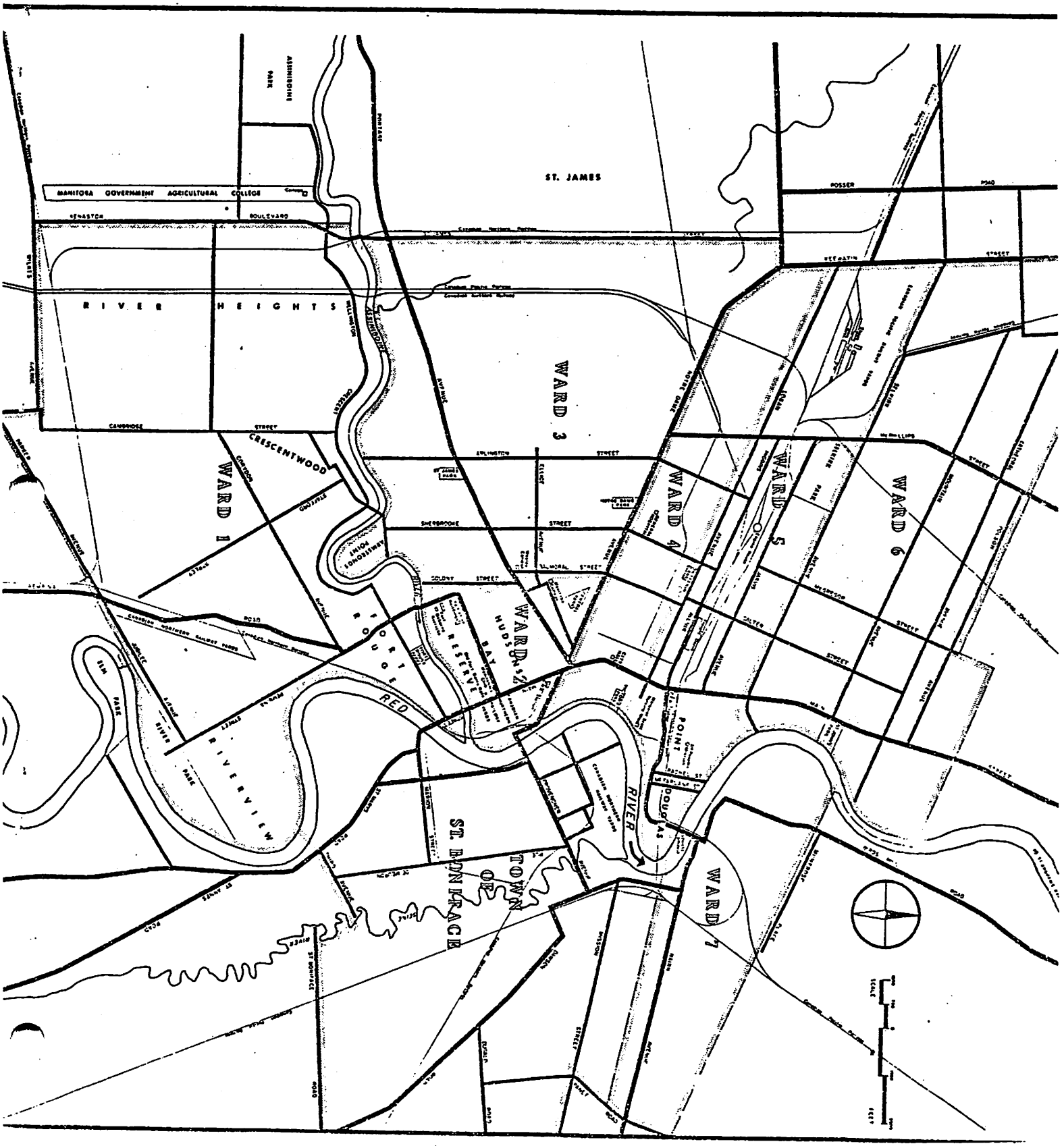
Appendix I

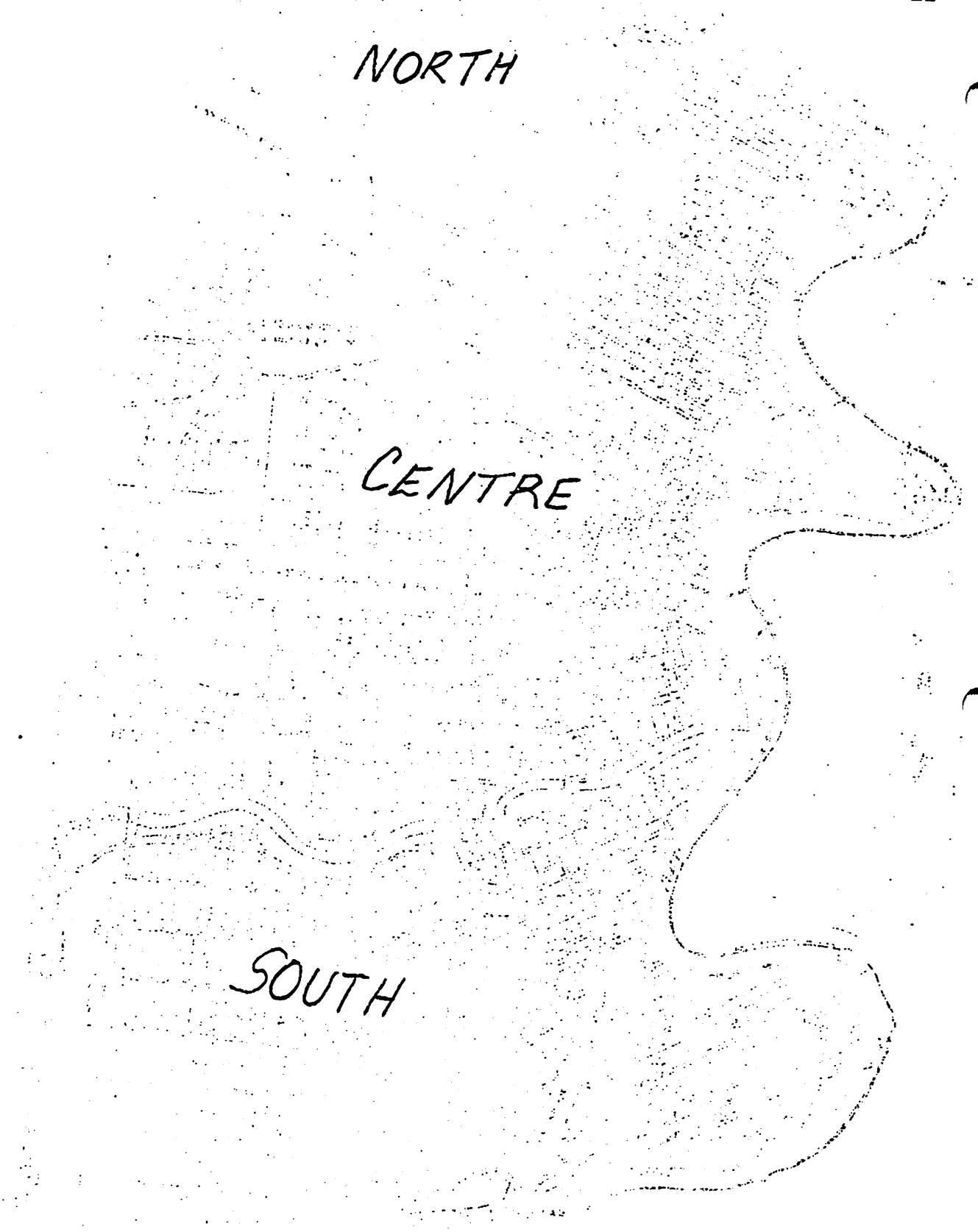
Ethic Groups in Winnipeg's Central Core 1886 - 1916

Ethnic Group	1886 No.	1886 % of total group pop'n	1886 % of district pop'n	1901 No.	1901 % of total group pop'n	1901 % of district pop'n	1916 No.	1916 % of total group pop'n	1916 % of district pop'n
British	10,109	60.2	85.6	14,814	47.4	78.5	54,538	45.4	81.3
Slavic	53	18.0	.5	280	15.8	1.5	2,448	11.2	3.6
Jewish	58	95.1	.5	125	10.8	.6	1,191	8.8	1.8
Scandinavian	648	48.0	5.5	1,446	43.5	7.7	1,315	22.9	2.0
German	282	51.8	2.4	766	33.5	4.1	3,924	61.4	5.9
Others	643	53.9	5.5	1,426	55.3	7.6	3,622	43.2	5.4

APPENDIX I

Map 4/ City of Winnipeg





WPG. CENTRE LIES BETWEEN C.P.R. TRACKS & PORTAGE AVE.

(from L. Orlikow, Reform Movement, 1910-1920)

APPENDIX III

THE 1914 LIBERAL PLATFORM

1. Compulsory education; obligatory teaching of English; larger grants for schools; educational facilities for every child; repeal of the Coldwell Amendments.
2. Referendum on "Banish the Bar"; reduction of licenses; abolition of Proprietary Clubs; resident municipal electors to control number and class of licenses.
3. Women Suffrage.
4. Direct Legislation.
5. Strict laws against electoral corruption; impartial administration of justice.
6. Protection of industrial wage earners.
7. Encouragement of agriculture; extension of practical education; development of co-operative methods, including cheaper money; a Public Abattoir.
8. Good roads through co-operation with municipalities.
9. Encouragement of Hydro-Electric development.
10. Natural resources for the Province.
11. Municipal autonomy in local taxation.

APPENDIX IV

The Icelandic enlistment for the three prairie provinces as compiled by W. J. Lindal from the Remembrance Book (Minningarrit Islenzkra Hermanna) as reported in The Icelanders in Canada, p. 228

1914	31
1915	159
1916	364
1917	82
1918	235
Years Unknown	79
Nurses	14
	964