

Now there were even more difficulties. A year earlier, in the spring of 1939, the government still afforded the Metis executive formal recognition. By the spring of 1940 that situation no longer prevailed. Frank Buck, chairman of the four-man Metis committee* and now called the Metis Commissioner, informed Norris that the government no longer recognized the association as "representatives of the Alberta Metis population."²³ Behind the scenes Buck was trying to sabotage Norris' efforts to reorganize the association. Buck wrote to Dion, informing him of the February Metis conference and asking rhetorically: "Is this an attempt to undermine your Association and the work that you have carried on for years?"²⁴ The spectre of partisan political interference was also raised. Gearing up for a provincial election in March, Social Credit MLA Lucien Maynard spoke to the Metis of Lac La Biche and proclaimed, "The Metis members on the colonies had no authority to be present at the Metis conference of February 21st...those on the outside are trying to dictate to those on the inside."²⁵

The new obstacles did not affect the strategy for re-establishing the association. Brady and Norris evidently still felt it important to rebuild the unity of the old executive. Unity at the centre might inspire unity at the local level. Brady wrote to both Dion and Tomkins asking for their support for a spring convention, set for May 22.

The letters Brady wrote to Tomkins and Dion contained perhaps the most eloquent expression of his views on the Metis movement. Throughout the letters Brady stressed the importance to the Metis of strong leadership:

Movements and great causes can only advance when they produce leaders of integrity upon whom the rank and file can trust and rely. Leaders should not be above criticism. Let us admit bluntly that as leaders we have allowed a condition of disunity to confuse those whose interests were confided to our charge. We must recognize our mistakes now and have the courage to admit them freely...If we are to survive we must hold to the traditions of our Metis leaders who were the forerunners...of democracy in the last Great West...[Yet] we must avoid the implications of becoming brain-trusters...[and] guard jealously against any tendency which will divorce us from the confidence of the mass of the Metis. If so...in a short time we would no longer enjoy the moral authority and confidence placed in us in the past...To root our organization deeply among the Metis we

*The fourth member was Dr. Braithwaite, one of the original Ewing Commission members.

must concentrate our work in every settlement area. Each colony must become a stronghold of the Metis Association. Here we must take up the smallest grievances, teaching them the value of education and struggle. Our program must always be formulated in close touch with the practical activity of the colonies and the everyday life of our people... The Metis will always be the victims of deceit and self deceit as long as they have not learned to discover the interests of one or another of the classes behind moral, religious, political and social phrases, declarations and promises... Unless a radical change is effected the ideals for which we struggle will be degraded to the nauseating level of political chicanery and petty officialdom."²⁶

Dion's response to Brady's appeal indicated that he was confused about the political situation and his role in Metis affairs. He admitted that there was "a growing discontent among the people" but claimed, "My hands are tied."²⁷ Dion still had illusions of leadership, fostered by his bureaucratic mentors. His days as a Metis leader were over, yet in an ironically condescending letter to Brady, two days before the convention, he stated, "I wish to have it known that the convention proper will be held at Jousard in July. On this date elections can also be held and all aspirants to leadership be given a fair chance."²⁸

Tomkins was more independent than Dion, and his earlier reconciliation with Brady had evidently brought him back into the old executive fold. Tomkins recognized the necessity for gauging the mood of the people and determining their views on the colony issues. He acknowledged that the present confusion would not have developed had the association been maintained. He supported the May convention.

The "Fifth General Convention of the Metis Association of Alberta" took place in Edmonton on May 22-23, 1940. Twenty-eight registered delegates from twenty-two locations, from Calgary to the Peace River, attended. Seven locals were "established and operating," while eleven more were in the "process of organization."²⁹

The convention chose Norris and Brady by acclamation to be president/chairman and secretary, respectively. William Callihoo of Lac La Biche was elected vice-president and Pete Tomkins provincial organizer. Three councillors and a treasurer were also elected.

The Metis officially proclaimed the "resignation" of Joe Dion from the Metis association after formally rejecting his claim that the "proper" convention would be held in July. "Whereas our esteemed brother and past president... has been retired... Be it resolved that the executive committee be instructed to convey to him our sincere thanks for his untiring labours on behalf of our organization and the Metis population and assure him of our earnest wish that he may enjoy the

Life Membership which we hereby convey to him . . . ”³⁰

Two days of discussion at the convention revealed that the problems plaguing the settlement scheme were essentially unchanged. The assembly passed resolutions demanding: that non-indigent Metis be permitted to join the colonies; that the Metis Population Betterment Act be detached from Alberta Relief Authorities; that the act be amended to formally require the signing of an agreement between the government and the representatives of the Metis people. Others asked for a colony to be established in the south for southern Metis who did not wish to move north. Another resolution asked that legislation be passed putting into law the Order in Council by which the colonies had been established. Orders in Council were notoriously insecure and could be withdrawn by cabinet, as had been done with the Order in Council establishing the St. Paul Half Breed Reserve.

The main issue at the convention also concerned the government—even indigent Metis were not moving onto the colonies. The government’s determination to cut costs made any prospect of “betterment” on the colonies remote. The government refused to provide transportation to the colonies. And uncertainty about what lay in store on the colonies made Metis reluctant to leave their home areas where the occasional casual labor supplemented their relief checks.

Convention delegates were also worried that the name of the government-sponsored “settlement (or colony) associations” might undermine the Metis association. One resolution requested that the “Metis Settlement Association” be renamed “Metis Settlement Colony” to avoid confusion with the Metis association. A delegate from High Prairie urged that, “‘Racketeers’ and opportunists within our movement should be mercilessly dealt with,” suggesting that the government-sanctioned associations were already damaging the movement.

Norris considered the convention a success. There was renewed interest in the settlement scheme and in the association. The success was qualified, however. Norris was disappointed at the lack of organizing between the February conference and the May convention. More importantly, while his plea for unity and his attack on opportunism seemed favorably received, there were elements among the Metis at the convention who were hostile to Norris’ political advice.

The convention set formidable tasks for the new executive. The overall goal was to rebuild the association to its former strength and position as the sole voice of the Metis. But in the meantime the colonies were going ahead. With the government refusing to abandon their own official settlement associations, the executive favored informal control of boards through the election to the boards of loyal association members. Throughout the summer and fall Brady and Norris were

active in the Metis colonies and communities. They organized MAA locals and helped set up the Metis boards on the colonies. Norris was elected to the board of the Atikameg colony. The convention had legitimized the Metis executive, and their influence was again felt throughout central Alberta. But organizing the colonies and rebuilding the association were massive undertakings, and the executive could not spread themselves thinly enough. Two months after the convention, Pete Tomkins resigned as organizer, citing a heavy official workload as the reason. And in late 1940 Malcolm Norris joined the army.

There were divisions in the socialist camp regarding the war in Europe. Communists opposed Canadian involvement (and went to jail for their stand) while most CCF'ers supported it. Norris was among the supporters and was somewhat bewildered by the CP position, which kept Brady out of the army.³¹

Norris' decision was influenced by developments in the Metis movement as well. It had always been Norris' role to rally the Metis to action: he had been the visible leader, the inspiration and driving force behind the movement. As 1940 wore on, it became clear that his call for unity and a non-partisan movement had fallen on deaf ears. Opportunism was rife among the Metis' local leaders; many were openly supporting the Social Credit Party, and there was a scramble for positions and influence on the government-sanctioned boards. In Norris' vernacular, everyone wanted to be a "big shot." To Norris the deterioration of Metis unity was a rejection of his leadership.³²

On March 9, 1941, Malcolm Norris, as president of the association, called for a suspension of association activity until after the war.³³ Now without the formal backing of the association, Brady was obliged to deal with provincial bureaucrats as an individual. Both Brady and the government had to compromise. The government needed a minimum measure of success. Without the co-operation of Metis spokesmen, attracting Metis settlers would not be easy. This was all that remained of the association's former influence.

Through 1940-41 Brady gradually gained the confidence and respect of the bureaucrats. Dr. Braithwaite and Frank Buck, who had previously tried to sabotage the association, saw in Brady an effective and tireless organizer, and they did not hesitate to use his energies. Brady's continuing work with co-operatives received the highest praise from Buck and Braithwaite,³⁴ a factor which guaranteed a political truce if not an alliance.

Throughout 1940 the colonies continued to take shape. The Metis were given relief in return for building roads into the colonies, preparing village sites and cutting timber for their homes and schools. Each family was given a one-acre residential lot in the village as well as land on the colony. The government's guiding principle was economy.

The building of schools was the responsibility of the settlers, who were given the standard government grant of \$150 to buy materials. Only in "some cases" did the government furnish "nails, windows and shingles"³⁵ for private homes.

There were dramatic differences in the progress of the colonies. Relying on commercial fishing and provincial highway construction, the four colonies in the Peace River area—Keg River, Big Prairie, High Prairie and Utikuma Lake*—were doing well. Over the fall and winter of 1940 not a single family on these colonies received relief. But the colonies in the northeast, where the agitation for land had begun, were poor in resources and jobs were scarce. Hunting and trapping, combined with heavy relief payments, dominated the economies of the Elizabeth, Fishing Lake, Wolf Lake and Goodfish colonies. Three other areas originally set aside for settlement were withdrawn at the Metis' request, as unsuitable.³⁶

Some "progressive" Metis were allowed to settle on the colonies. By the end of January 1941 of the 300 families who had settled, three-quarters had received relief at one time, and one-third were receiving relief at the time. Brady feared a rapid influx of large numbers of indigents and considered the gradual pace of settlement, caused by low funding and the painfully slow clearing of land, to be a blessing in disguise.

Brady evidently remained at the Atikameg Colony throughout 1940 and much of 1941, even though low prices eliminated his job as manager of Atikameg fisheries in the spring of 1940. It is not known what he did for employment for most of 1941, but it seems he was still engaged, on a voluntary basis, with the colony project, and he spent much of his time organizing a fishing co-op at the Goodfish Colony. Brady seemed determined to work for the colonization scheme despite its drawbacks. That determination and the political situation facing the Metis association led him, in December 1941, to take on the paid job of supervisor/superintendent of the Wolf Lake Colony.³⁷

Accepting the supervisor's position was the final step in Brady's compromise with the government and an indication of how much Metis unity and political independence had deteriorated since the 1940 convention. Developments on the colonies had outstripped the association's ability to deal with them. To have any influence on the scheme, Brady and the association had to work within the government's framework or abandon the colonies. With the unity of the association undermined by the government's settlement associations, the last chance to effectively influence the settlements rested in the supervisor positions, which held veto power over the advisory boards. When

*Also called the Atikameg Colony.

Brady was hired, Tomkins and Dion were already supervisors. By 1942, William Callihoo, the MAA vice-president, was hired as well. The transition from the moral authority of the association to the formal power of the state was complete.

Brady justified his decision to take on the "administration" of a colony as a final test of his strategy of allying the "progressive" Metis elements with the nomadic Metis. According to Brady, the Wolf Lake Colony was about evenly divided between the two groups. He had the trust of the people and the support of Metis administrator, Frank Buck.

It isn't clear just what role, if any, Brady saw for the association in early 1942. The suspension of activities, despite grumbling by Tomkins and others, seems to have been generally accepted. The association's main function since 1940 had been to legitimize the executive as the voice of the Metis. The employment of executive members by the government could be seen as co-opting the leadership, or it could be seen as recognition of the leadership's legitimacy. Whatever Brady's view of the complex situation, the stability of association authority was, in 1942, about to be challenged. The Catholic Church, always a threat, had found, in Joe Dion, the ally it needed to make its move on the colonies.

In early March 1942 the government demanded Dion's resignation. Buck explained his decision to Brady, claiming that Dion was incompetent in several areas and would have been fired had he not resigned.³⁸

Within two weeks of his forced resignation, Dion, accompanied by Father Gauthier, visited the northeast colonies. Brady, isolated at Wolf Lake Colony, was informed of Dion's visits by Dr. Phillip Quesnel. Quesnel had testified for the association to the commission and was now a colony supervisor. Quesnel wrote: "These visits always give rise to trouble. I know that he is trying to get back as President of the Metis Association and from there, what then?"³⁹

Without informing any of the executive, Dion called a convention for June 22 at Fishing Lake.⁴⁰ Dion and Gauthier's agitation among the Metis of the northeastern colonies was widespread by June, and news of it had reached Cross, the minister of health, who was alarmed. In a confidential letter Buck advised Brady to be present at the Fishing Lake meeting of June 22.⁴¹ This direction, he stated, came from the minister. Tomkins and Bill Callihoo were similarly requested to attend. As far as Buck was concerned, there was no doubt that Dion was attempting "to disrupt the Metis program [and] disrupt and disorganize the Metis Association."⁴² There are, however, no records of this meeting nor any indication that it ever took place.

The Social Credit government soon succeeded in having the Church end Fr. Gauthier's political activities and, without Gauthier's active

collaboration, Dion's agitation was weakened. But Dion maintained his alliance with the clergy, which had great influence in the north-east—especially at Fishing Lake, the only colony to possess a Catholic mission.

Partly to counter Dion and the clergy, Brady called a general convention. He had no hope of reorganizing the association but simply hoped to re-establish the association's political authority.

The convention took place August 2 but with far fewer Metis communities represented than in 1940. The colonies were represented as were two districts in the Peace River area. The northeast was represented only by the Metis area supervisors.⁴³ Familiar resolutions were passed at the convention, demanding non-denominational education and recognition of the role of "progressive" Metis as leaders of the colonies. A new executive council, with Brady as secretary and Tomkins as president, was elected. But these were almost formalities. Brady used the convention to level a stinging attack on those trying to disrupt the Metis movement.

His first target was the Catholic clergy. Brady gave a brief history of the clergy's role in association affairs; they had ignored the association from 1932 to 1935; at the 1935 Ewing Commission hearings they had promoted themselves as guardians of the Metis; and in recent years they had taken to denouncing the association. Now they had changed their tactics again:

From a position of aloofness they turned to the tactic of boring from within. Instead of denouncing the Metis movement, the R.C. [sic] is embarrassingly conciliatory, denouncing only what they choose to style "unChristian leaders."⁴⁴

Brady reminded the Metis of the role the clergy had played in 1870, 1885 and in the betrayal of the Metis who settled the St. Paul Half Breed Reserve. Characterizing the clergy as "incurable politicians," he warned that in every instance "where we have permitted outside interests to influence or protect us we have been defeated. This must not recur."⁴⁵

Bare-fisted as the attack on the clergy was, Brady's hardest blows were levelled at the Metis people themselves. Adopting the tough-minded critical role normally played by Norris, Brady told his Metis brethren that they had reached the most critical stage in their movement. Only they could ensure its survival:

At this moment our greatest danger comes not from outside but from within our own ranks. To the question: "What can prevent the success of the Metis Areas?" one observant non-Metis

replied—somewhat cynically—“Nothing but the Metis. . .” We are born individualists. Most of us ride pet hobbyhorses which express our ambitions, jealousies, and fear of the future. . . We must effect compromises not by giving up convictions but by enlarging our vision to include the convictions of others. Sometimes in our meetings we. . . are more intent on making a point or gaining an advantage than we are on advancing our movement. Success is not won in that way. If we continue in that manner we, like the children of Israel in olden days, may be condemned to wander in the wilderness for another fifty years until this unfit generation dies off.⁴⁶

Brady lauded the work of “Metis trappers, hunters, farmers and laborers” who were building the movement, but he had doubts about the integrity of many in the movement. Opportunists among the “progressive” Metis were pandering to the Social Credit Party and many of the nomadic Metis appeared unwilling to work. Earlier in the year Brady had received a despairing letter from Dr. Quesnel:

Am I mistaken, Jim, when I come to the conclusion that these children will have to be led by the hand indefinitely? Jim, won't they ever understand that work is a necessity of life? Tell me, my friend, are all our efforts useless?⁴⁷

Brady indicated his opinion at the convention:

I once attended a Metis Association meeting (Lone Pine) where a majority were opposed to work of any nature and reiterated the conviction that they should be supported free by the government. If that is all our principles mean the sooner the Metis Association goes out of existence the better for all of us and for the country at large.⁴⁸

Despite his pessimism Brady continued his efforts at Wolf Lake and other colonies well into 1943. It was becoming evident that the four northeast colony sites, including Wolf Lake, were inadequate. They afforded poor farm land and insufficient grazing land for the anticipated number of settlers. In February 1942 Brady tried to have these colonies abandoned and replaced by others in the Peace River area, where other colonies enjoyed rich farm land as well as timber and wildlife resources. He also promoted the migration of “the better or more desirable class of settler”⁴⁹ from the northeast to the Keg River Colony in the northwest. None of these efforts was successful.

Brady's work at Wolf Lake was his most intensive commitment to the

colony scheme yet, and seemed almost a deliberate confrontation of his doubts about the Metis' class alliance and the role of the state in Metis liberation. Within months of taking on the position, his doubts were being confirmed and recorded in his Wolf Lake diary.⁵⁰ The nomadic Metis and ex-treaty Indians were not progressing as agriculturalists: "As long as the pursuit of hunting and trapping can be followed there will never be a genuine effort on the part of this type of Metis to become self-sustaining." Brady concluded that only "under the impact of unbearable economic misery" or in the face of an "overwhelming majority" of agricultural Metis would the nomads show any interest in farming. By the spring of 1942 Brady was recommending that "during the formative stages of the Metis areas . . . no further application should be received from any Metis with an inclination toward the nomadic life."

Among the nomads Brady found the former treaty Indians to be the most "non-co-operative and obstreperous . . . Settlers whose immediate antecedents have been treaty Indians with very few exceptions revert to the nomadic life and display an aversion to physical effort which distinguishes them markedly from other racial groups." Brady attributed the failure of the Wolf Lake Colony to "the selection of the original settlers who were mainly non-treaty or people whose parents were at one time treaty Indians." By the end of 1942 his frustration led him to recommend the barring of non-treaty Indians from the colonies altogether.

Brady attempted numerous structural reforms on the colony and continued to promote co-operatives but with no success. His suggestion to the authorities that they send more agricultural settlers was not followed; instead they were diverting such settlers to the better agricultural land in the colonies of the northwest. Brady's doubts about the colonies were confirmed by his experience at Wolf Lake:

. . . these colonies are threatened as much by success as by failure. For if they do not succeed it means misery, ruin, dispersal and a general rush for safety. If, on the other hand, they attain prosperity they attract a crowd of members who lack the enthusiasm and faith of the earlier ones and are attracted by self-interest.⁵¹

The failure of the colonies had broader implications for the autonomous Metis struggle. For while ex-treaty Indians were the most unco-operative, the nomadic Metis were inclined to "the chase" as well. Brady's cherished alliance between the "progressives" and the nomads was breaking down into open hostility. In the late thirties Brady, despite his doubts, still held out hope for a "national [Metis] union of all classes and grades." In October 1942 he concluded:

Of course the Metis as a national unit are breaking down and disintegrating. This is true. Our breakdown has been a complex and lengthy process. It is not simply a spontaneous process, but a struggle connected with the conflict of classes. We have a rich historic experience of that conflict.

[The Metis] have no independent social base other than the working class. With the working class as the necessary assisting force we can be strong. If we go against the democratic forces we are converted into nothing."⁵²

The demise of the Metis association was an expression of the breakdown of the Metis national unit. While the government had directly undermined Metis unity by establishing parallel associations, there was a more fundamental cause of the organization's decline. Brady would later write: "[The association] was created by the economic forces which created havoc with us during the depression and there was a crying need for it. With a change to better times... that need was negated to some extent."⁵³

Brady's other doubts about the colony scheme concerned the reliance on the government for support of Metis self-determination. These doubts, too, were strengthened by his Wolf Lake experience.

...no capitalist government would ever agree to the complete abolition of the Metis question. The Metis are part of the reserve army of labor whose mission it is to put pressure on the labor market to ensure low paid workers. Here there is already one hiatus in Metis rehabilitation... Thus it will not be a question of rehabilitation... but of restricting certain undesirable sides of [the question] and limiting certain excesses... objectively, no reconstruction of the Metis will come about.

You cannot compel a government to cause themselves a loss for the sake of Metis requirements. Without getting rid of capitalism and abandoning the... private ownership of the means of production you cannot bring about Metis rehabilitation.⁵⁴

Brady's Journal entry for 1943 records an "exodus" of Metis from the northeastern colonies to the more prosperous agricultural colony of Keg River, suggesting that those interested in agriculture abandoned Wolf Lake and its sister colonies. In the spring of 1943 Brady's conclusions about the colonies, the Metis national struggle—and even his first doubts about Metis co-operative enterprises—had their inevitable effect. Brady was a Marxist and his political actions always had a firm theoretical base. If his experience in testing out that theory proved it

incorrect, Brady had but one choice. His experience made further work on the colonies impossible. The breakdown of Metis national unity meant that the Metis' place was in the general democratic struggle. In 1943 that struggle was an armed struggle, and he had reminded the Metis of its importance at the 1942 convention:

Faced as we are by the gravity of the international situation we realize that our true destiny is not bound by the success or failure attendant upon Metis deliberations. . . It is bound up with our continued existence as Canadians who fight [for] those liberties to which we are all devoted and the preservation of which is dependent upon our Victory.⁵⁵

Many hundreds of Metis had already confirmed their place in the democratic struggle by joining their fellow workers in the Canadian army. In June 1943 Jim Brady followed their lead. By October he was on a troop ship headed for England.

III

The War Years 1943-1947

9

Jim Brady and the North West European Campaign

CONSIDERING Brady's strong anti-fascist sentiment, it might seem curious that he did not join the army much earlier. His decision was delayed, in the first instance, by his adherence to the Communist Party's position on the war and, secondly, by his commitment to the Metis struggle.

The CP's slogan, "Keep Canada Out of the War," was based on its analysis of the conflict as a "phony war."¹ Communists saw Britain and France abandoning eastern Europe to Hitler and fascism in the hope of joining Germany in a crusade to smash the Soviet Union. Brady's Journal entry in 1939, "the phony war—under surveillance," and the 1940 entry, "another geopolitical argument and near internment," suggests that he narrowly escaped the fate of many Communists, who spent long months in jail for their opposition to the war.

When Germany attacked the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, the CP in Canada announced that the war was now genuinely anti-fascist. The Party became perhaps the most vigorous supporter of Canadian involvement, promoting the war effort with a new slogan: "A National Front for Victory."²

At this time Brady was deeply involved in the Metis cause. He could not abandon the colonies as long as there was hope for success. When that hope ran out in 1943, Brady turned to the battle against fascism.

Brady's war experience included eleven months of daily combat without leave. He kept a daily account of his impressions—battles of the northwest Europe campaign, the countries he fought in, soldiers he fought with and against, and experiences with the civilian populations. The following are excerpts from Brady's war diary, "Jottings from a Record of Service in the North West Europe Campaign, July 9, 1944—May 8th, 1945"³ by Gnr. J.P. Brady, 50th Battery, 4th Medium Regiment (French Canadian), Royal Canadian Artillery.

The Normandy Beachhead—the break out:

Aug. 25 [1944]: Still resting at Bellou. Went to Livarot with Sgt. Moreau, Lemieux and Huot and had a bath. Seen enemy wreckage everywhere. Stupendous destruction. German prisoners were awaiting transport to the rear in Livarot. The riversides were literally black with them. Thousands covering acres of ground. . . We seen the trial of 15 S.S. men held in the town square by the F.F.I. military tribunal. They were charged with crimes against humanity. Seven were acquitted. . . the remaining eight were convicted of looting, murder, rape and sentenced to be executed by firing squad. They were immediately taken to a French cemetery [sic] and shot. A huge concourse of French civilians witnessed the execution. A French officer made an anti-Fascist speech. One of the most gripping impressions was to hear hundreds of French voices raised in that most stirring and loftiest of all national anthems, "La Marsellais." Casey and I went to see the demise of these S.S. killers. . . I was emotionally calm at the sight—as if noxious vermin was being destroyed. Later with Lemieux we visited a French family, chatted in a latticed arbour in a beautiful flower garden, treated to wine and later to Calvados. . .

Aug. 27: A beautiful Sunday. A peaceful scene with French peasants going to mass—the war seems remote—We visit the village of Notre Dame de Courson—Here I see the most beautiful girl in my varied and useless life. . . a Venus of the Bocage. . .

Sept. 6: The British are in Holland. The Americans are probing the Siegfried line. We proceed toward Belgium. . . We received a tumultuous welcome in the French villages before we reached the Belgian border—hugs and kisses and bands with burning effigies of Hitler in the town square of Loker. . . Our vehicle entered a roadside *estaminet*. We called for beer and the proprietress burst into tears when she heard the English language. She spoke English learnt in the same pub as a little girl from the British troops of World War I. Thousands of Tommies, Aussies and Canucks took their last drink in the Reningelst pub, shouldered their packs, marched up the Menin Road, into that terrible cauldron of destruction that was the Ypres Salient and on into history. . .

- Sept. 7: . . . We halted our convoy momentarily in Ypres and I done traffic control while my boys quaffed a beer at a nearby *estaminet*. Engaged in a pleasant conversational contre-temps with two attractive Belgian ladies on subjects both divine and profane. Their intellectual attitudes were a forceful example of the truism that only French culture has pointed the way to the art of truly civilized living. . .
- Sept. 8: Many prisoners came during the night. . . The Poles were very antagonistic to the Russians found among the prisoners. Most Poles I have met, particularly the officer class, are typical Fascists of the Pilsudski school and are as fundamentally vicious in their political philosophy as any Nazi. . .
- Sept. 18: Still in action at Belle Houefort. Enemy is putting up a terrific resistance but half our objectives have been taken. Had a letter from Norris advising that his son Pte. R.J.F. Norris, North Nova Scotia Highlanders, had been killed in action July 25. Wrote to the Chaplain of the North Novas enquiring concerning the circumstances of his death.
- Sept. 21: At Belle Houefort. Still in action. German resistance growing feeble. . . The local population do not seem friendly. There is a visible air of dissembling and simulated good will. This attitude seems characteristic of all the coastal population. It was true in Normandy. A French woman cursed us in the *estaminet*. . . she had a son in the Luftwaffe.
- Oct. 11: At Maladegm. Action continues. . . Over 90 Canadians are buried in a temporary cemetery near our gun position. Among them are Johnny Daigneault, St. Paul, a boyhood playmate, and Sgt. Harvey Dreaver, Leask. Sask., an almost legendary character in the Regina Rifles. . .
- Oct. 12: At Maladegm. Raining. Unit in action. Stiff fighting along the Leopold Canal. Met Leo Dubois whose family were our neighbours in St. Paul. . .
- Oct. 16: At Maladegm. Still firing. Met Dubois again. Heard from him that Gagnon, Gibeault and Brosseau from St. Paul had been killed in action. In late p.m. went up to Maladegm and had portrait taken for the home folks.
- Nov. 24: At Brussels. Went down to Waterloo. . . Had an interesting conversation on collaborators. She enquired what I thought about the shaven head techniques toward

women collaborators. I thought it sadistic in many cases. As she stated the case to me I found myself in agreement. The poor little factory girls who obeyed their biological urges and slept with Germans were mobbed, forced to kneel in the streets and their heads forcibly shaven. Meanwhile, the real collaborators like the former mistress of the high placed Gestapo and S.S. elite officers had suffered no such indignities. They had promptly moved into the Hotel de Grande Bretagne with British and American officers. The important pro-Nazis were escaping punishment wholesale. . . .

Nov. 28: Moved to Brakkenstein, a suburb of Nijmegen. The anti-American and Canadian propaganda spread by the English has had some effect among the Dutch. Enroute in convoy a wild eyed Dutchman came out of the crowd, ran along Lieut. Matte's gun carrier and vily insulted him at every turn and in very good English. . . . He finished his tirade with the fervant hope that the Nazis would kill everyone of us. I jumped off my vehicle and seized his throat, held him off the ground and asked him what he thought would happen if I were an S.S. man. He paled and struggled feebly. A group of Orangemen rushed up and seized him and took him away as the crowds watched silently. . . .

Nov. 30: At Brakkenstein. . . . It was here that the 82nd Airborne came down in Sept. South of Brakkenstein is their Divisional cemetary [sic] where 2,500 of their dead lie buried. No better outfit ever marched in any army than these boys. We Canadians were treated royally by them. They have a good natured comradship towards us, unlike the reserved dourness of the Imperials. . . . The bedlam of small children begging for food at meal time is unnerving. Some of them are so hungry they actually howl like little wolf whelps while others whine weakly. . . .

Dec. 12: At Brakkenstein. . . . Had a long letter from Capt. Cox, Chaplain of the North Nova Scotia Highlanders. He informed me Russell [Norris] was killed in action July 25 during the assault on Tilly La Campagne. Death was instantaneous from a mortar shell. He was buried along the road to Bourgeouse. A good lad. I am writing Malcolm.

Dec. 13: At Brakkenstein. In billets with the Rossen family. They favor a Nazi victory because of their anti-red feelings.

It is safe to assume that the majority of Dutch people are pro-Nazi. . . as befits a first class colonial power. My observations lead me to place the Nazi sympathizers in the countries I have seen as follows: France 30%, Belgium 60% and Holland 90%. An ineradicable conclusion after my experiences. . . The British are up to the same game in Greece. With the Nazi jackboot not yet off their necks they are bending every effort to save the status-quo. The British imperialists are as much a danger to world peace as the Prussian militarists. . .

Feb. 8: At Kappel. The advance into the Reichswald begins. A heavy barrage begins at 5:00 a.m. and German strong points. . . are smothered in a tornado of fire. . . Canadian and British infantry begin to advance. . . In the first greying dawn I see the tense flushed faces of the Worcestors as they go through Kappel to assault the Reichswald—already corpses are being brought back lashed to the tops of ambulances. . . In the first hours our troops have stormed and taken Cleves and the Siegfried line is penetrated on a wide front. At 11:00 a.m. we fired another barrage as the 2nd Canadian Division goes in with the Maissoneuves leading the assault. The outer Nazi defences have crumbled in a terrible inferno of fire and destruction. Our unit kept up a steady and sustained fire for 13½ hours. . . The thunderous vibration rolls for hours. Eighty-five miles away in distant Brussels, windows rattle. . . civilians pause in the street, listen and say “The Canadians are attacking the Siegfried line.” Later, long lines of prisoners come in. Some reel drunkenly, others stare vacantly, some shamble along in tears—while others laugh hysterically. . .

Feb. 24: Moved out at daylight to Louisendorf. . . We are under enemy observation. . . I was uneasy so dug a 6 x 6 foot dugout. . . reinforced by logs and covered by four feet of bricks, iron and earth. . . Was in the middle of a field when we were fired upon by multiple mortars. No cover. Laid down in tank track. After a lull we got up and started to run. Another salvo landed almost immediately. Nearly a direct hit. The blast nearly blew the battle blouse off my back. Suffered shock and difficult breathing. Laid down in the deep tank tracks and never moved 'til dark. . . In my absence my dugout held 14 men and withstood two direct mortar hits. . .

Mar. 5: At Udem. . . Nazi resistance visibly crumbling. No one

shows any real fight except the die-hard Nazis. The average Wehrmacht soldier surrenders in droves, meek, abject and friendly unlike the arrogant, strutting supermen we took in Normandy who would sneer and spit in your face. What a commentary on the German mentality. How true is the characterization of the German character as given by that Anglo-Irishman, the Marquis of Donegal. "The Germans are a race of ferocious sheep, ever ready and willing to follow any leader or Feuhrer who will show them a gap in the hedge of international law and lead them to good raiding in their neighbor's pasture."

- Apr. 6: At Valkenhorst . . . I took an S.S. partybook from a dead crew member. The perverted Nazis racial philosophy was grimly revealed in its pages. The document duly recorded all the bearer's ancesters [sic] back to the year 1710, attested to his Nordic purity and freedom from any Judaistic taint. (Later I gave this startling booklet to my Jewish friend Max Weinlof of Edmonton.)
- Apr. 12: . . . Off to England tomorrow. First leave in 17 months.
- May 1: Great news. The Red Flag is flying over the Reichstag in Berlin. Enemy resistance is collapsing everywhere. . . At 10:26 p.m. we heard over the German radio that Reichsfuehrer Hitler was no more—having died a glorious death in the struggle against Bolshevism. . .
- May 8: At last the wondrous day. Victory in Europe. Our crew however are silent and thoughtful. Anti-climax. There is no feeling of exultation nothing but a quiet satisfaction that the job has been done and we can see Canada again. . .
- May 9: At Hensen. We assemble and parade before our O.C. Col. Gagnon and march to a memorial service in the little rural church nearby to commemorate those of our regiment who fell in the campaign. The Colonel begins to read the 36 names of our fallen. Tears are in his eyes. He falters and hands the paper to the Adjutant who calmly folds the paper and puts it in his pocket and quietly says: "It is not necessary. They were comrades. We remember."
- May 13: The Dutch Oranje are active. Five thousand Dutch S.S. are in cages in Utrecht. In Markelo we see a little Dutch girl almost a child with clipped hair and pregnant—what an aftermath of war, wholesale misery—we witness the sadistic emotions of revenge and it sickens the human spirit. I welcome a long letter from Norris to keep from baneful

thinking.

May 19: Re-attestation circulars for Pacific distributed. Not many volunteers for Japan. Everyone wants to go home.

But not everyone could go home, and Jim Brady was among those who would be obliged to remain in Europe on occupation duty. Brady's last entry in his diary of the war was August 27, 1945:

Walked back to Nordwijk during the night. Laid in a tulip field and rested for an hour under the stars. What beautiful peace and serenity. Towards dawn I slept a few hours in a barn at Rijnsberg. A buxom Dutch girl brought me a glass of milk and wished God Speed as the sun rose glistening on the dew above the waving tulip fields. . .

Brady's diary ended here, but his occupation duty did not. It was several months before Brady could return to Alberta.

10

Malcolm Norris and the Indian Association of Alberta

WHEN MALCOLM NORRIS joined the army in 1940, it was, at least in part, due to his frustration with the Metis movement. In 1942, after spending a year and a half stationed in Ontario, Norris was "remustered" in the RCAF and transferred to Calgary, where he took up the cause of treaty Indians. Norris had already played the role of catalyst in the Alberta Indian movement in 1939. His close friend and political colleague, Johnny Callihoo, had just taken on the leadership of the League of Indians of Alberta. Callihoo, who had assisted Norris in the organization of the Metis association in the early thirties, approached Norris for assistance in organizing the Indian League.¹

Norris' commitments to the Metis movement prevented him from taking on more than an advisory role, but a personal attachment, harking back to his childhood excursions to the Michael (Calahoo) reserve, ensured his interest in Indian issues.

The history of the Indian movement in Alberta goes back to 1920. At that time Fred Loft, an Iroquois from Brantford, Ontario, attempted to establish the League of Indians of Canada. The only positive response to his nation-wide appeal came from the West, and during 1920-22 he made trips to Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, where he held conferences with Indian chiefs and councillors.²

Loft made no further trips west but did maintain contact with western Indian leaders. The organization he left behind—widely known as the League of Indians of Western Canada—was plagued by ineffective leadership. The League languished throughout the mid- to late-twenties, began holding conventions again in 1929, held a final convention in 1932 and then split into two groups: the League of Indians of Alberta, led by Joe Samson, and the League of Indians of Western Canada, under the leadership of John Tootosis, in Saskatchewan.

Treaty Indians were administered under the Indian Act by the Indian

Affairs Branch* of the federal government. Because the Indian was a ward of the state and did not have the franchise, there was little political input into Branch affairs. The IAB, run by ex-military men, was virtually immune from political monitoring and was, in practice, accountable to no one. Left to its own devices for decades, the Branch, devising its own philosophy of Indian "administration," reduced what little benevolence may have existed in the original treaties to an apparatus of oppression.

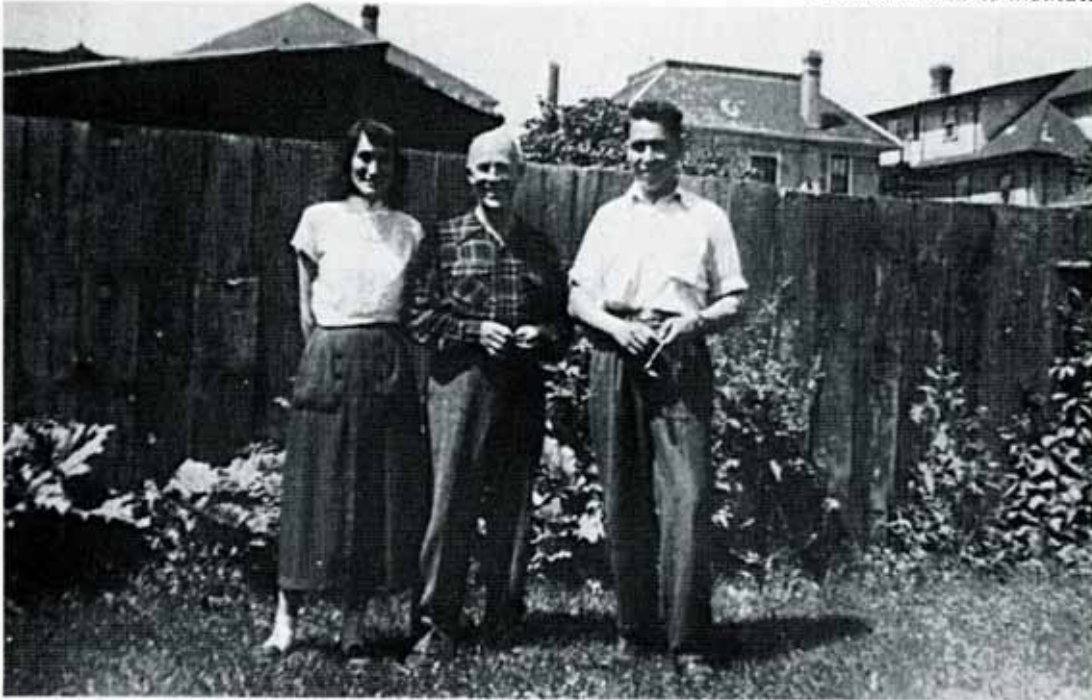
Every aspect of Indian life was influenced or controlled by the Indian agent. The treatment afforded Indians on the reserves depended on the disposition of the particular agent. To the paternalistic IAB administrators any sign of independence, any demand for even limited autonomy, was rejected as "not in the best interests" of the Indian. Agents could use broad discretionary powers to demand compliance.³ These barriers to independence and integration into Canadian society were accompanied by a vicious repression of Indian language and traditional cultural practices. Indian dances and ceremonies were strictly forbidden; the speaking of Indian languages in school was often severely punished, and Indian culture was systematically ridiculed by teachers and the clergy.⁴

The forced isolation of the Indians on reserves had advantages and disadvantages. There was a great potential for political unity, for all Indian grievances and problems came from one source—the IAB and the Indian Act it administered. But the Indian's isolation and the lack of the vote proved to be major barriers to social and economic progress. With no votes to be gained by championing the Indian cause, politicians were inclined to treat the Indian with neglect. Restricted to reserves, the Indians were out of sight and out of mind of the Canadian populace.

In their isolation Indians clung to traditional political ways. Elders made decisions exclusively. Yet their high standing in the Indian community did not equip the elders to deal with an alien political and social system. Most were illiterate so could not read the treaties or the Indian Act, the source of their rights and their colonial status. Totally without power under the Indian Act, their decisions had no practical meaning, and their protests often did not go beyond their own councils.⁵

In the late 1920s Indian leadership began to change as the first generation of educated Indian spokesmen rose to challenge both the elders' exclusive right to speak for Indians and the arbitrary power of the Indian agents. John Tootoosis, Johnny Callihoo and others made

*The Indian Affairs administration was usually a branch of a federal government department; at other times it was part of a multiple department and still later a department of its own. Its fluctuating status did not reflect any change in its role or policy, and to avoid confusion it will be referred to as a "branch" throughout this book.



John Laurie, I.A.A. Secretary (centre) with Indian artist Gerald Tail feathers and Irene Tailfeathers, late forties.



The Executive Council of the I.A.A., 1946. front row, 1 to r: William Morin, Cree; Malcolm Norris; Dan Minde, Cree; Albert Lightning, Cree; John Callihoo, Cree; Henry Lowhorn, Blackfoot; Ben Calf Robe, Blackfoot; Bob Crow Eagle, Peigan. Back row, 1 to r: unident; unident; unident; Dan Wildman, Stony; Sam Minde, Cree; Joe House, Stony; John Laurie.

Glenbow-Alberta Institute



Johnny Callihoo, I.A.A. President, on left, 1952.

Saskatchewan Archives



John Tootoosis, President of the League of Indians of Western Canada

their living off the reserves and generally refused to accept the officially sanctioned positions within the band councils—councils which depended on the Indian agent for their authority.

These men represented the first threat to the IAB's absolute power. IAB officials spared no effort to neutralize the resistance which built up behind these unofficial Indian leaders. When threats failed, they called in the RCMP. Fred Loft's campaigns of the early twenties were closely monitored, and Indian agents routinely informed the RCMP of planned meetings, letters received, etc.⁶ Tootoosis and others were harassed by the police, followed and even arrested. But this harassment was little more than an annoyance to determined Indian leaders. One simple tactic did, however, stymie the early efforts of Indian Leagues. The IAB simply refused to recognize any "unofficial" Indian organization or leader. Petitions or resolutions forwarded to Ottawa over the name of Joe Samson of the Alberta League or John Tootoosis of the Saskatchewan League were treated as their personal grievances and the IAB replied not to them, but to their agents.⁷ It was a closed political system from which the Indians could find no escape.

Social and economic conditions of Indians on reserves were generally superior to those of the Metis and non-treaty Indians in the West. Yet the depression and drought of the thirties affected the treaty Indians as well, and the upsurge in Indian resistance was no coincidence. Political pressure on the IAB to cut costs resulted in a ruthless campaign to save money. The first line of cutback strategy was to eliminate Indians from Branch responsibility. The Branch encouraged many Indians to sell their treaty rights.⁸ The many hundreds of ex-treaty Indians who swelled the ranks of the Metis association throughout the thirties testified to the success of this manipulation. The desperation and misery of ex-treaty Indians was dramatic evidence of the Branch's failure to prepare the Indian for life in industrial society.

In an effort to raise money and squeeze existing Indian populations, the Branch began selling off Indian lands, in violation of the spirit if not the letter of the treaties. Funds for education and agricultural development on the reserves were cut back. But perhaps the most callous of the cost-cutting efforts were the cutbacks in health. From 1931 to 1934 the Branch reduced the per capita allotment of funds for treating Indians from \$10 per annum to \$7.20. The average cost of treating Canadians during this time was \$30 per annum. In 1937 the Branch ordered further curtailments, informing agents that:

...services must be restricted to those required for the safety of life, limb or essential function. There will be no funds for tuberculosis surveys, treatment in hospitals of chronic tuberculosis or other chronic conditions...nor, in fact, any treatment,

except for acute illness.⁹

Not satisfied with this quarter million dollar savings, the Branch in 1939 suggested other economies, including the reduction of days spent in hospital by Indians and reduced amounts of medication for Indians.

These policies engendered anger and resistance, but Branch officials were intransigent. Their indifference, added to harassment, paternalism and threats, demoralized Indians. By the mid-thirties Alberta and Saskatchewan Indian organizations had lapsed into inactivity.

Frustrated by these continued defeats, several Cree chiefs approached Johnny Callihoo in 1938 and persuaded him to take over the leadership of the League of Alberta Indians. Callihoo was an educated Cree, treaty Indian. He had been independent since his youth, when he worked as a freighter and beef contractor, and he was now a successful farmer. While he had never taken a leadership position in Indian organizations, he had been an active member of the Farmers' Union of Alberta, a radical offshoot of the United Farmers of Alberta.¹⁰

Callihoo's first moves received typical Branch treatment. Resolutions passed at the October 19-20, 1938 general convention of the League were forwarded to the secretary of the Branch, T.R.L. MacInnes. Three months later Col. A.G.B. Lewis, the agent for Callihoo's band, received MacInnes' reply. Some grievances were dismissed out of hand because they conflicted with "reports on file;" other requests were simply denied with no explanation; yet others were "receiving consideration."¹¹

In 1939 Callihoo challenged the Branch's procedures.¹² General meetings were held at several reserves. Resolutions were notarized by a lawyer, and a resolution authorizing Callihoo to sign all resolutions was passed and the submission sent to the minister in charge of the Branch through the League's lawyer. The minister, Thomas Crerar, was asked to establish a Royal Commission to investigate the Indian Act. It was all to no avail. The lawyer received a vaguely threatening letter from the secretary of the Branch; the minister declined even to answer, and this time the secretary sent his replies to the inspector of Indian Affairs for Alberta. To underline the Branch's refusal to recognize the League, the secretary sent separate letters for each of the 22 resolutions forwarded by Callihoo. As a final measure he told his Alberta inspector "in future no replies will be made to questions of this kind, unless submitted through you or the Indian Agents concerned."¹³

The overt suppression of Indian rights to democratic action assured the Indian movement a degree of unity not seen in the Metis movement. The lack of interest of politicians in the Indian cause also eliminated the potential divisiveness of partisan politics. But in 1939 Indian unity was

disrupted by ideological divisions which would characterize the movement for decades. Indian nationalism was making its first appearance, and Johnny Callihoo encountered its most determined advocate, John Tootoosis,* president of the League of Indians of Western Canada.

Alberta and Saskatchewan Indians had split into two separate organizations in 1933, but Indian leaders from both provinces still attended one another's conferences and met to discuss mutual problems. In 1939 a joint conference of Treaty Six Indians, whose territory overlapped the Alberta-Saskatchewan border, was held in Battleford. The meeting was hosted and chaired by John Tootoosis.

Varying accounts of the meeting agree that at some point during the meeting Tootoosis refused to allow Callihoo to speak.¹⁴ The action infuriated Callihoo and the other Alberta Indians attending the meeting, one of whom, acting as secretary, immediately stepped down.

In his account of the incident Tootoosis claimed that Callihoo "spoke like a Metis" in a mixture of English, French and Cree. According to Tootoosis this Metis patois was confusing Indians at the conference, and he asked Callihoo to speak Cree. Accustomed to the patois, Callihoo inadvertently slipped out of the Cree again while addressing the delegates, whereupon Tootoosis ordered him to sit down.¹⁵

To many it seemed a simple clash between two strong personalities. Yet the dispute, with its nationalist overtones, had been so public and humiliating that Callihoo felt obliged to seek the advice of his old friend and political confidant, Malcolm Norris. Norris advised Callihoo to ignore Tootoosis and not to pursue a reconciliation. Norris had known Tootoosis since the early thirties and may have believed that his narrow nationalism would make a reconciliation difficult. Norris was also an advocate of strong, provincial Indian organizations, and he may have reasoned that relations with Saskatchewan Indians could wait.

Most of Norris' advice to Callihoo was directed at strengthening and democratizing the organization. A common feature of the Alberta and Saskatchewan Leagues was their loose structure and undemocratic methods. Neither had a formal constitution, by-laws, individual memberships, or democratic election of leaders. Norris provided Callihoo with a constitution and by-laws (almost identical to those produced by Brady for the Metis association). In order to make a complete break with the political conduct of the past, Norris advised a change in the name of the organization to the Indian Association of Alberta (IAA).¹⁶

Norris' advice was accepted. The constitution, by-laws, new name

*As of 1981 John Tootoosis is still prominent in Indian circles in Saskatchewan and is a member of the Saskatchewan Indian Senate. He is still a strong Indian nationalist.