

INTRODUCTION

The prohibition crusade in Nova Scotia was an integral part of a general movement for progressive reform which swept across North America at the turn of the century.¹ Stimulated by accelerating technical progress and jolted by the intensifying social problems created by industrialization, many North Americans were convinced of the need and feasibility of reform. Concerned with such problems as poverty, disease, human exploitation, the excessive power of corporations, and partisanship and corruption in politics, they placed their faith in governments and legislation as the agents of reform.² Their reform blueprints were frequently optimistic in the extreme. Henry George, whose ideas were popular among Canadian labour, found a panacea in a single tax on land.³ Edward Bellamy envisioned a reconstruction of society upon rational lines to protect the weak from exploitation and redistribute a share of the national wealth to all. In Nova Scotia, A.P. Reid, a medical doctor and director of the Halifax insane asylum, outlined a programme which included a government-sponsored social security scheme and massive government intervention in the economy to mitigate booms and slumps. These measures, he assured his listeners, "would revolutionize society, by enthroning comfort and independence on the cold and heartless pinnacles of crime, dissipation, poverty and misery that overshadowed every civilized land. Darkness will give way to light, and the sombre become diffused with joy".⁴

Millenarian visions were also expressed in religious terms. As the clergy became more socially aware, they searched the scriptures for explanations and remedies for their communities' problems and often found the answer in a more collective approach to salvation. Christ, they discovered, had been concerned not only with the individual but with society: he was "the greatest social reformer the world has ever seen".⁵ He had left a potential design for reform in such teachings as the sermon on the mount, the Lord's Prayer and the golden rule. An ideal community, the Kingdom of God, could be realized on earth if Christ's followers restructured society according to his teachings. The Social Gospel, as the new creed became known, fired the imaginations of a generation of young, idealistic Protestant clergy and thrust them into the van of the many progressive crusades which proliferated in the early decades of the twentieth century.⁶ Roman Catholics too evolved a Social Catholicism which often justified their involvement in these movements.⁷

Within the general campaign to restructure society, goals and emphases, often reflecting differing occupational interests, varied widely. Trade unions grew in strength and their leaders lobbied governments, and

entered politics directly, sometimes with the ultimate goal of creating a socialist state.⁸ Women lobbied governments for health and welfare legislation and sought the franchise as the key to their own emancipation.⁹ Farmers organized cooperatives and entered politics as an occupational group.¹⁰ Even entrepreneurs, while resisting reforms which seemed to threaten their interests, enthusiastically endorsed those which promised them more efficient government services.¹¹ Support for prohibition came from all of these groups. Middle class reformers believed the consumption of alcohol to be involved in practically every social issue with which they were concerned. They saw it as a causal factor in poverty, crime, disease, industrial and automobile accidents, abuse of women and children, and even the subversion of the electoral process.¹² Businessmen found alcohol a barrier to their goal of a more disciplined labour force, while J.B. McLachlan, union leader and radical socialist, proclaimed it a weapon of the corporations in undermining the solidarity and effectiveness of unions.¹³ To farmers the growing consumption of alcohol seemed a part of the general threat to their values and way of life resulting from industrialization and the growth of cities.¹⁴ Prohibition thus drew support from both progressive and conservative elements in Canadian society.

Nova Scotia had a strong temperance tradition dating from the early nineteenth century. While various temperance organizations, including the Sons of Temperance, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and the temperance societies of the evangelical churches did not secure prohibition, they did make drinking less respectable, closing taverns and eliminating rum in the payment of wages. They also succeeded in driving alcohol from the parlour to the woodshed in many Canadian homes.¹⁵ At the turn of the century the progressives brought new allies, a more formidable leadership and a more attractive justification to an already impressive organization for the war on booze.

In 1904 H.R. Grant, a Presbyterian clergyman, left his congregation at Stellarton, Pictou County, for full-time temperance activity. Chairman of the Temperance Committee of the Maritime Synod of the Presbyterian Church, Grant used the Committee as a forum for interjecting the ideas of the social gospel into the debates of the regional Synod and ultimately secured its support for prohibition.¹⁶ In 1907 Grant became secretary of the provincial section of the Dominion Alliance which co-ordinated activities of the various temperance organizations in the province. Ten years later he accepted the office of secretary of the Social Service Council of Nova Scotia, established in 1909 as a co-operative effort by the various Protestant denominations to hasten the coming of the "Kingdom".

Nonetheless, despite the power of the groups which Grant repre-

sented, progress came slowly. Governments were still aware of the prohibition experiment in New Brunswick half a century before when the anger of those barred from their favourite beverage proved stronger than the gratitude of the temperance forces.¹⁷ The Liberals, in power in Nova Scotia after 1882, made gestures in support of prohibition which stopped short of preventing anyone who really wanted liquor from obtaining it. The division of responsibilities between federal and provincial authorities facilitated an ambiguous policy. Only the federal government could prevent the manufacture of alcoholic beverages within the country and their transport across national or provincial boundaries. Only a provincial government could bar their sale and transport within a province. Stalled at the federal level after Laurier declared the results of the 1898 plebiscite inconclusive, prohibitionists focussed their efforts on the provinces.¹⁸ In Nova Scotia, they drafted the bills they wanted introduced, offered their backing to candidates pledged to support prohibition, and mounted a steadily growing campaign of agitation and propaganda. In 1910 the government bowed to their pressure, passing a bill to bar the sale and transport of booze within the province outside of Halifax. By 1914 the prohibitionists were within one vote of the majority they needed to extend provincial prohibition to that city.¹⁹

The advent of war added a new urgency to the progressives' call for discipline and efficiency. Provincial prohibition came into force in all provinces by the end of 1917 and early in the following year the federal government completed the process by barring importation and manufacture. The War also strengthened the progressives' faith that the new society which they envisioned was imminent and would emerge from the reconstruction which would follow the War.²⁰ This optimism was reflected in Nova Scotia at the War's end in bursts of trade union and co-operative activity, forays by farmers and labour into provincial politics and, with women voting for the first time, the overwhelming endorsement of prohibition in the plebiscite of 1920. However, the expectations of the reformers were universally doomed to disappointment. The corporations successfully isolated and smashed experiments with industrial unionism in Amherst in the summer of 1919. An economic recession which began the following summer revealed serious structural weaknesses in the Maritime economy and ushered in a crushing regional depression. Unions collapsed amid massive unemployment and those that remained struggled to retain the gains already achieved.²¹ The farmer and labour political movements, after a significant showing in the 1920 provincial election, quickly disintegrated. Maritimers turned to parties which had some chance of gaining power nationally and therefore offered hope of alleviating the region's urgent economic and social problems. The provincial government indefinitely

postponed such progressive measures as widow's pensions and the minimum wage and deflected other demands for reform with the plea that implementation would have to await financial "justice" from the federal government.²² Journalists and boards of trade led a campaign for the redress of Maritime economic grievances behind the slogan "Maritime Rights", but this movement also tended to raise hopes which, after the Maritimers had been diverted by a series of royal commissions, were ultimately disappointed.²³

Prohibition too could not escape the general disillusionment. It did not yield any dramatic decrease in crime, disease or poverty. Newspaper reports of rum-running, bootlegging and even gang warfare in the underworld (the last taken exclusively from the American press) suggested that prohibition was at best a mixed blessing. Prohibitionists claimed that prohibition had not been given a fair test since the government had not seriously tried to enforce it. When the Conservatives under E.N. Rhodes came to power in 1925 they promised a sincere effort at enforcement and appointed D.K. Grant (no relation to H.R. Grant), clergyman, lawyer and prohibitionist, as chief inspector in charge of policing the temperance legislation in the province. His changes in the enforcement bureaucracy led indirectly to the vacancy which brought Clifford Rose into the front lines of the war against demon rum.²⁴

Rose's autobiography and diary suggest an optimism and subsequent disillusionment which was not untypical of the period. A self-educated carpenter, Rose was drawn to an interest in social problems through a church brotherhood, itself a product of the social gospel. But he found the church's blueprints and tactics for achieving reform less plausible than those offered by the veteran labour leaders whom he met in the trade union councils. His progressive enthusiasm found expression in the labour movement which he served as president of the local carpenters' union, secretary of the Pictou County Trades and Labour Council and as an active campaigner in labour's foray into provincial politics in the election of 1920.²⁵ The collapse of this movement in defeat and recrimination brought bitter disillusionment. As Rose later wrote at the age of thirty-six, life had "passed its zenith leaving shattered illusions, shattered opinions and shattered idols".²⁶ The depression of the early 1920s forced Rose to consider his own urgent financial needs. Hoping to barter his services as a political campaigner for a government job, Rose worked for the Conservatives in the provincial election of 1925. But others had the same idea and the government could not begin to meet the claims of its supporters for jobs and patronage. Rose ultimately received the reward for his labours in municipal politics. With his party controlling the New Glasgow town council, Rose was appointed municipal temperance inspector when the

incumbent, Tom McKay, accepted an appointment as a provincial inspector.

The whole structure of prohibition enforcement was at this time a complicated network of overlapping jurisdictions. D.K. Grant presided over a corps of provincial inspectors, each of whom was responsible for a section of territory usually covering two or more counties. Towns and municipalities might employ one or more temperance inspectors or constables to enforce prohibition within their bailiwicks. The federal government employed a corps of preventive officers to combat smuggling and revenue officers to ferret out stills, and both groups were assisted after 1920 by a small force of Royal Canadian Mounted Police.²⁷ Working unofficially to keep all these on their toes were the prohibitionists themselves led by the redoubtable H.R. Grant. Those who supplied the booze had worked out a more efficient division of labour. Fishermen and ship-owners who had developed expertise in supplying thirsty Americans with rum from the West Indies and brandy and whiskey from St. Pierre and Miquelon — a practice tolerated by Canadian authorities — extended their operations to the illegal supply of the home market. They sold liquor “over the side” of their vessels to gangs of smugglers who carried it in motor cars to the bootleggers who passed it on, often in a well-watered condition, to the consumers.

Despite their number and variety the enforcement officers did not curtail the liquor traffic in the province. After less than a week in office Clifford Rose reported the rum dives in New Glasgow to be “thick as bees” and testified that not only was New Glasgow “rotten to the core” but his position as temperance inspector was “rotten” as well.²⁸ His job, Rose discovered, was far from a straightforward battle against the liquor trade. Members of his party aimed to wrest control of the illegal trade from the Liberals and secure it for themselves. Liberals were fair game for arrest; Conservatives were not only to be left alone, but even protected from “rival” officers. Another of his duties was to secure revenue for the town council — a matter of some importance in a community hard-hit by depression. In one year, for example, Rose could boast that he had brought \$10,000 in fines into municipal coffers. As an incentive, enforcement officers frequently received a percentage of the fines from convictions obtained. In New Glasgow the Council expressed appreciation for Rose’s efforts through frequent increases in salary. These rewards were intended to encourage zeal on the part of the police, but they were actually a deterrent since no one wished to kill the goose that laid the golden eggs. The officers and the municipalities could only expect maximum revenues while the trade was flourishing. Heavy jail sentences, property confiscations or excessive harrassment were bad business for all concerned. An

occasional raid, a moderate fine, a temporary shutdown usually served to placate the vigilant “drys” without seriously interrupting the lucrative flow of spirits.

Rose became increasingly cynical as he accommodated himself to his new job. A system in which money and political advantage were primary motivations left little room for any reform idealism which Rose still possessed. Indeed, when the government party ordered the inspector out of town for an election so that his presence would not inhibit the illegal activities of its workers, what moral basis was there for attacking rum-runners and bootleggers? Rose concluded that there was none. It was merely a game in which the rum-runners and enforcement officers operated on a common plane. Each had found a means of economic survival in a period of hard times. For Rose his new employment brought liberation from the economic bondage which condemned the working class to a cheerless existence. For the first time he had the opportunity to appreciate the rich life which his province afforded to those who had the time and money to enjoy it. There was a strong note of exhilaration in his description of his fishing trips, the first for him in many years, the beauties of local scenery of which rides in his new automobile made him suddenly conscious, and the enjoyment of summers with his family at his new cottage near Pictou Landing. These had been made possible by the demon rum to which Rose was duly grateful.

Though willing to work toward the goals of his party and the municipality which employed him, Rose found his position a precarious one. As word of the proliferation of the rum dives in New Glasgow reached Halifax, Chief D.K. Grant and his inspectors swooped down on Rose's territory in a series of raids whose success could have exposed Rose's toleration of the forces of evil. Tipped off by a friend, however, Rose made a series of raids on suspected premises which he had been “saving” for just such an eventuality. He then upstaged the outsiders by securing convictions while they were unable to do so. But the prohibitionists became restive as the booze trade continued to flourish in their community. A local clergyman berated Rose from the pulpit, a newly elected Liberal alderman attacked him in the council and James A. Fraser, the ancient but peppery editor of the *Liberal Eastern Chronicle*, jeered at him in the press.²⁹ Nevertheless these problems were less serious than that which arose from a falling out of Conservative notables, Fred Milligan and Walter Weir, in a squabble over town lots. Since Rose was a Milligan supporter and Tom McKay, the provincial inspector for the district, was Weir's partner in real estate investment, they were drawn into the feud, aggravating personal relations already strained in a previous rivalry over fines. As McKay moved against Milligan's protégés in the trade, Rose arrested his own

friends to prevent McKay from receiving the credit. So intolerable had Rose's position become that in 1929, when prohibition was again tested in a provincial plebiscite, Rose rejoiced at its defeat. Prohibition was then replaced with so-called "government control", a government monopoly of the sale of liquor throughout the province and a substantial source of provincial revenue. With prohibition abolished and Tom McKay elevated to his immediate superior in a re-organized police force, Rose resigned.

The Rose manuscripts are valuable historical documents on the prohibition period in Canada. Since most of the readily accessible material on prohibition was provided by the more articulate prohibitionists, historical accounts have tended to emphasize their perspective. Although stories of the "cops and robbers" games of the period are plentiful, most are difficult to authenticate.³⁰ It is rare indeed to find a frank and systematic explanation of how prohibition operated written by someone directly involved in its enforcement. Rose's unusual candour was a product of his literary ambitions and the progressive muck-raking tradition to which this work obviously belongs. His approach was effective not only in revealing the inner workings of prohibition and local politics but in shedding light on other topics. In his portrayal of his daily activities as constable, Rose frequently reminds the reader of the grim destitution faced by so many Canadians before the beginning of the welfare state, and he provides useful information on the social gospel, the Maritime Rights Movement, labour organization, the Ku Klux Klan, the status of Blacks and women, and other topics of social significance. And these are woven together in an entertaining yarn of detective work and political intrigue.

It is difficult to date Rose's autobiography with precision. He began writing an account of prohibition while still temperance inspector, but he dated the completed manuscript 1947. One suspects the wisdom of hindsight in comments upon the impact of the war on the Maritime economy and the stock-market crash. Nevertheless, a perusal of his diary suggests that the autobiography is an authentic portrayal of his ideas of the 1920s. It can be considered a largely contemporary account of events to which the diary provides a confirmation and supplement.

For reasons of space and cost, the editors have deleted from the autobiography an account of Rose's visit to the United States (renumbering the chapters) and from the diary most comments about the weather, books which Rose was reading, and the activities of his immediate family. All deletions are indicated in the text. In a few instances the editors changed names to initials where they judged their inclusion might cause embarrassment to surviving members of a family. Otherwise the original texts have been reproduced as faithfully and completely as Rose's sometimes indecipherable handwriting would permit. Copies of the complete texts,

available at the libraries of Saint Francis Xavier University and the University of New Brunswick, are under the provenance of Mr. Garry Rose of Edmonton, Alberta. The editors would like to thank Mr. Garry Rose and his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln Rose, for making this publication possible.

NOTES

- 1 For an account of the prohibition movement in Nova Scotia see E.R. Forbes, "Prohibition and the Social Gospel in Nova Scotia", *Acadiensis*, I (Autumn 1971), pp. 11-36; and M.J. Strople (Campbell), "Prohibition and Movements of Social Reform in Nova Scotia, 1894-1920" (MA thesis, Dalhousie University, 1975). For general Canadian historical background on the period see R.C. Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed* (Toronto, 1974).
- 2 Robert Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York, 1967) is one of many useful analyses of progressivism in the United States. Interpretative surveys of the American literature on the topic are provided in D.W. Noble, *The Progressive Mind, 1890-1917* (Chicago, 1970) and O.L. Graham, ed., *Perspectives on 20th Century America* (New York and Toronto, 1973).
- 3 Ramsay Cook, "Henry George and the Poverty of Canadian Progress", *Canadian Historical Association Historical Papers*, 1977, pp. 143-56.
- 4 A.P. Reid, *Poverty Superseded: A New Political Economy* (Halifax, 1891).
- 5 *Year Book, Maritime Baptist Convention*, 1903, p. 22.
- 6 Richard Allen, *The Social Passion* (Toronto, 1971). See also E. Forbes' review article on *The Social Passion* in *Acadiensis*, II (Autumn 1972), pp. 94-9.
- 7 Early in the century most Roman Catholic social activity was justified in terms of the 1891 papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. For a later exposition of Social Catholicism see M.M. Coady, *Masters of Their Own Destiny* (New York, 1939).
- 8 A.A. MacKenzie, "The Rise and Fall of the Farmer-Labour Party in Nova Scotia" (MA thesis, Dalhousie University, 1969); David Frank and Nolan Reilly, "The Emergence of the Socialist Movement in the Maritimes, 1899-1916", *Labour: Journal of Canadian Labour Studies*, 4 (1979), pp. 85-113; J.K. Chapman, "Henry Harvey Stuart (1873-1952): New Brunswick Reformer", *Acadiensis*, V (Spring 1976), pp. 79-104.
- 9 V.J. Strong-Boag, *The Parliament of Women: The National Council of Women of Canada 1883-1929* (Ottawa, 1976); C.L. Cleverdon, *The Women Suffrage Movement in Canada* (Toronto, 1950). For

- women's activity in Nova Scotia see especially the Halifax Local Council of Women Scrapbook, Public Archives of Nova Scotia.
- 10 Ian MacPherson, "Patterns in the Maritime Co-operative Movement 1900-1945", *Acadiensis*, V (Autumn 1975), pp. 67-83; L.A. Wood, *A History of Farmers' Movements in Canada* (Toronto, 1924), pp. 301-7.
 - 11 The Nova Scotia Mining Society and the Halifax Board of Trade spearheaded the successful campaign for Nova Scotia's innovative programme of technical education. *Debates and Proceedings of the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia* [hereafter *Debates*], 1916, pp. 381-2.
 - 12 For a typical review of the case against the liquor traffic, see E.H. Armstrong's speech, *ibid.*, 1907, pp. 305-15.
 - 13 The Maritime Board of Trade took up the question in 1909. See *ibid.*, 1909, p. 342. See also MacLachlan's statement in the *Post* (Sydney), 19 October 1920. Labour was not united on the issue; see *Citizen* (Halifax), 15 August 1919.
 - 14 *United Farmers Guide* (Moncton), 16 June 1920. The list of "principles" of the United Farmers of Nova Scotia for the guidance of candidates included "banning of the manufacture, import and sale of intoxicating liquor as a beverage".
 - 15 *Report of the Royal Commission on Liquor Traffic*, 1895, pp. 76-87.
 - 16 *Minutes of the Maritime Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Canada*, 1908, p. 25 and 1909, pp. 28-9.
 - 17 J.K. Chapman, "The Mid-Nineteenth Century Temperance Movement in New Brunswick and Maine", *Canadian Historical Review*, XXXV (1954), pp. 43-60; P.B. Waite, "The Fall and Rise of the Smashers, 1856-1857: Some Private Letters of Manners-Sutton", *Acadiensis*, II (Autumn 1972), pp. 65-70.
 - 18 R.E. Spence, *Prohibition in Canada* (Toronto, 1919), pp. 250-2.
 - 19 *Debates*, 1914, pp. 725-8.
 - 20 See Bulletins of the Council for Social Service of the Church of England in Canada, No. 12 "Reconstruction I" and No. 13 "Reconstruction II".
 - 21 Nolan Reilly, "The General Strike in Amherst, Nova Scotia, 1919", *Acadiensis*, IX (Spring 1980), pp.56-77; Donald MacGillivray, "Industrial Unrest in Cape Breton, 1919-1925" (MA thesis, Univer-

sity of New Brunswick, 1971) and "Military aid to the Civil Power: The Cape Breton Experience in the 1920s", *Acadiensis*, III (Spring 1974), pp. 45-64; David Frank, "Class Conflict in the Coal Industry: Cape Breton 1922" in G.S. Kealey and Peter Warrian, eds., *Essays in Canadian Working Class History* (Toronto, 1976), pp. 161-84. See also Frank and MacGillivray's "Introduction" to Dawn Fraser, *Echoes from Labour's War: Industrial Cape Breton in the 1920s* (Toronto, 1976).

- 22 *Canadian Annual Review*, 1920, p. 681; Nova Scotia, *Journals of the House of Assembly* [hereafter *JHA*], p. 69.
- 23 E.R. Forbes, *The Maritime Rights Movement 1919-1927: A Study in Canadian Regionalism* (Montreal, 1979).
- 24 Report of Inspector-in-Chief for 1926, *JHA*, 1927.
- 25 *Workers' Weekly* (Stellarton), 26 December 1919.
- 26 See below, p. 63. Compare Rose's account with glimpses of the rum trade and system of enforcement in J.M. Cameron, *More About New Glasgow* (Kentville, 1974).
- 27 See Reports of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, especially for the years ending 30 September 1921, p. 6; 1923, p. 17; and 1927, p. 43 in Canada, *Sessional Papers*.
- 28 See below, p. 64.
- 29 *Eastern Chronicle* (New Glasgow), 2 March 1928 and 8 January 1929.
- 30 *Cape Breton's Magazine* (Wreck Cove, Cape Breton), No. 11 [1975] records several interviews with rumrunners and enforcement officers who were active in the 1920s.

