

THE CANADIAN STATE  
AND  
NATIVE MIGRANT LABOUR  
IN  
SOUTHERN ALBERTA'S SUGAR BEET INDUSTRY

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## DEDICATION

To my mother, Alveda Laliberte who, through her wisdom and unwavering strength, has been a constant inspiration to me.

## ABSTRACT

Recent studies of labour have clearly established that the capitalist state is very involved in the recruitment, relocation and retention of migrant labour forces. Most of the literature tends to analyze migrant labour within the broader social, political and economic context of expanding capitalism. Consequently, studies tend to focus on how the use of migrant labour is profitable to capitalism because it is cheap and easy to exploit. Such studies, however, neglect the ways in which the state actually intervenes in the labour market in order to facilitate the flow of migrant workers to places of employment. Therefore, this thesis explores the relationship between the migration of labour, the state and the reserve army of labour through an analysis of the Native migrant work force in the sugar beet industry in southern Alberta.

Through the use of archival material, which includes various federal and provincial documents, annual reports of the Alberta Sugar Beet Growers' Association, newspapers and other materials, the circumstances underlying state intervention in the economy of the southern sugar beet industry became clear. While analyzing the structure of the sugar beet industry in southern Alberta, it was found that throughout much of the history of the sugar beet industry, farmers received low returns for their beet crops. Moreover, farmers also suffered financially from the high cost of machinery and, more recently, from the increased costs for

fertilizer and chemical weed controls.

An examination of government documents on the Federal-Provincial Agricultural Manpower Committee, whose mandate was to recruit workers and move them to areas of need in agricultural sectors throughout Canada, revealed that the federal part of the committee was represented by officials from the Department of Manpower and Immigration and, beginning in the early 1950s, officials from the Department of Indian Affairs, who represented Indians on reserves.

When the working conditions in sugar beet industry were examined, it was found that they were very poor for beet workers. In general, the weeding and hoeing of the sugar beets was difficult and the housing accommodations inadequate. Moreover, because of the low return on their beet crops and the high costs of machinery, fertilizer and weed control, the farmers had to keep the cost of labour as low as possible, which, meant paying low wages to beet workers. Moreover, it was found that throughout much the history of the sugar beet industry in southern Alberta, agricultural workers were unprotected by labour laws, which, was very conducive to reproducing conditions for cheap labour. Consequently, few wanted to work in the beet fields of southern Alberta if other employment could be found.

Prior to the 1950s the state recruited immigrant workers and even prisoners of war from internment camps to supply farmers with the needed labour for their beet crops. However, in the



early 1950s unskilled immigrant labour could no longer be procured for beet work. It was at this time that the sugar beet industry, through the Federal-Provincial Agricultural Manpower Committee, turned to recruiting Natives, particularly northern Alberta and northern Saskatchewan reserve Indians, to perform their labour requirements. In order to maintain this needed work force, the state helped organize Native migration to southern Alberta at the start of the beet season and also helped ensure that they stayed there for the duration of the needed period.

## Introduction

In recent years, many capitalist countries have experienced an increase in the use of migrant labour forces. Migrant labour is generally understood to refer to the movement of workers between regions or between nations in order to sell their labour power in the receiving areas. The notion of migrant labour is also understood to refer to temporary settlement in the host region or country for the purpose of material and social advancement in the home region upon return.(1)

A growing body of literature on the subject clearly establishes the fact that the state is very involved in the inducement and the regulation of migrant labour forces (eg: Castles and Kosack, 1973; Castells, 1975; Burawoy, 1976; and Portes, 1978). The classic example is the case of South Africa where state imposed policies and regulations forced indigenous workers to migrate between their reserves and surrounding gold mines. Most studies tend to analyze migrant labour within the broader social, political and economic context of expanding capitalism. Thus, they usually focus on how the use of migrant labour is profitable to capitalism because it is cheap and easy to exploit as a result of its weak political position in the host country.(2) Some studies also argue that the use of migrant labour serves to lower the cost of reproduction of labour because

once the receiving area is done with the labour force, it simply sends it home where it is maintained until capital requires it again.(3) So, in an abstract way these studies tend to explain "why" capital uses migrant labour and "how" state policies and regulations function to "induce" the flow of migrant workers. But, what they are not clear on is the ways in which the state may actually intervene in the process to facilitate the flow of workers from their home region to the host region.

The purpose of this research is to analyze a specific case of migrant labour within the Marxist framework and discuss the relationship between migration, the state and the reserve army of labour. The case that will be analyzed is the Native migrant labour force which was initially introduced to southern Alberta's sugar beet industry in the mid-1950s and still comprises the majority of the workforce today. The high point of this labour force was in 1966 when it had increased to over 3000 Indian workers who were recruited from reserves in northern Alberta and northern Saskatchewan.(4)

In Canada, the term "Native" refers to the Indian, Inuit and Metis. However, the focus of this study will be on status Indians from reserves as they formed the largest group of migrant workers in the southern Alberta sugar beet industry since the mid-1950s. Although the Metis have worked in the sugar beet industry as long as Indians, they comprised a much smaller part of the workforce and therefore are paid less attention. As for the Inuit, no

information has been found regarding their participation in the sugar beet industry of southern Alberta and thus they are not mentioned in this study.

The fundamental question this research will address is as follows: "What has been the role of the state concerning the migration of Native labour to southern Alberta's sugar beet industry?". Chapter one will discuss the Marxist concept of the reserve army of labour and the Marxist conception of the capitalist state. Also, the institutions of the state will be discussed to point out the unequal structure of representation in the capitalist state. Chapter two will discuss the state's policies in relation to status Indians in Canada. In doing so, it will be revealed how the state was in a position to create and reproduce a system of Indian migrant labour for southern Alberta's sugar beet industry. Chapter three will analyze the structure of the sugar beet industry in southern Alberta. It will focus on the prices farmers received for sugar beets and their problems of production during the period Natives formed the majority of the workforce. Chapter four will clarify how state intervention facilitated the recruitment, movement and retention of Native workers for the sugar beet industry in southern Alberta. In particular, because the Indian Affairs Branch (currently the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development) was responsible for Indians on reserves during the period under discussion, the role that it played in the

procurement of Indian workers for the sugar beet industry will be addressed. Chapter five discusses the working conditions of Natives in the sugar beet industry. It also discusses the racism that Natives experienced while employed in the sugar beet industry. The last chapter provides a summary of the findings of the study.

## Chapter One: The Reserve Army of Labour and the Capitalist State

In this chapter the link between migration, the reserve army of labour concept and the capitalist state are explored. As well, the unequal representation between the institutions that make up the state are discussed. In particular, the position of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development is discussed in relation to the institutions of the state that represent development interests.

### The Reserve Army of Labour

In order to understand the concept of the reserve army of labour, it is first necessary to understand Marx's labour theory of value. The labour theory of value postulates that the value of a commodity is determined by the amount of socially necessary labour time needed to produce the commodity. A central part of the labour theory of value is the difference between use value and exchange value of commodities. Use value is the utility that people derive from a commodity and exchange value is the selling value of a commodity. According to labour theory of value, labour power is also a commodity but it is unique among commodities because it has the capacity to create value. Under capitalism, the use value of labour is equivalent to the value of the commodities that the labour power produces whereas, the exchange

value of labour power is equal to the wage that is received.(5)  
Thus, exploitation is the difference between the use value of labour power and its exchange value. In discussing the labour theory of value, Satzewich states:

Under capitalism, labour power is also a commodity which possesses the same twofold value dimension as other commodities. The wage constitutes the exchange value of labour power. Capitalists purchase a certain length of time during which they maintain the right to the use of labour power. They can therefore organize the production process, or the specific combination of of variable and fixed capital, to ensure that the workers produce commodities with a value greater than what they receive as a wage. The utility of labour power to the capitalist, then, is not simply that it can be put to work to produce commodities, but that it has the special capacity to produce commodities which possess values greater than it itself has. That is, it can produce surplus value, or values created by the labourer after creating sufficient values to ensure the reproduction of his/her labour power. Because of the nature of the exchange process, the surplus value produced by the worker is the property of the owner of the means of production.(6)

The surplus value appropriated by the capitalist can only be realized if the commodities are sold in the market. However, capitalist production is competitive production as different production units attempt to sell more commodities than their direct competitors. One means of selling more commodities than a competitor is to reduce the selling price of the commodity. The reduction in the selling price of the commodity can be accomplished by lowering the cost of its production. This entails

lowering the cost of labour power. Satzewich states: "Because all value is derived from the application of labour power to the means of production, in order to lessen the cost of production of the commodity, the capitalist must try to cheapen the cost of labour power."(7)

One way capitalists lower the costs of labour power is by using the surplus value produced in prior production cycles to invest in machinery. The use of machines lessen the labour power needed to produce a specific amount of goods thereby increasing the capitalist's relative surplus value. That is, "an increase in relative surplus value is obtained by shortening that part of the working day during which the worker reproduces the equivalent of his/her wage."(8)

When machines are used to increase the relative surplus value, there results a reduction in the demand for labour because fewer workers are needed to produce a specific amount of commodities than was required previously.(9) In Marx's view, this process generates an "industrial reserve army of labour" or a "relative surplus population" of unemployed labour. He states:

...it is capitalist accumulation itself that constantly produces, and produces in the direct ratio of its own energy and extent, a relatively redundant population of labourers, i.e., a population of greater extent that suffices for the average needs of the self-expansion of capital, and therefore a surplus-population.(10)



It should be noted However, in some instances where the reinvestment of surplus value is sufficiently great and even if labour-saving technology is introduced, there can be an increased demand for labour. For example, reinvestment of surplus value may create a new plant and increase the demand for labour. As well, in cases where the introduction of new technology breaks down tasks formerly performed by skilled labour, unskilled or semi-skilled labour may be hired in greater numbers to take its place and at wage levels that do not require a greater output in wages.(11) Therefore, sometimes the process of capital accumulation increases the demand for labour.

Marx identified three components of the reserve army of labour: the floating, the latent, and the stagnant sectors.(12) The "floating" sector is located around centers of industry and employment and consists of workers who have been replaced by mechanization. These workers are hired and discarded by movements of capital and technology and thus suffer from sporadic unemployment or underdevelopment. The "latent" sector is found in the agricultural areas. Once human labour is replaced by machines in these areas, no counter movement develops which would employ the masses of displaced workers and thus they are forced to move to the cities to sell their labour power. Lastly, Marx identifies a "stagnant" sector of the reserve army of labour which consists of individuals whose employment is irregular, casual, and marginal. This sector furnishes capital with 'an inexhaustible

reservoir of disposal labour power', whose 'conditions of life sink below the average normal level of the working class'.(13)

Capitalism is characterized by uneven development within a national economy and between national economies. The various production units within a social formation undergo different forms of structural transformations, and thus they have different labour force requirements. In some sectors of a national economy structural transformations may lead to the expulsion of workers from production. Conversely, structural transformations in other sectors of the same national economy may result in the recruitment of new labour.(14) This demand for new labour may be filled by mobilization of workers from the reserve army of labour. Thus, migration occurs when workers from the reserve army of labour move to fill available job positions in areas of labour shortage. Satzewich states:

...migration tends to be defined as both a cause and consequence of the process of capital accumulation. Capital accumulation initially propels or forces certain groups of people to migrate because of the associated economic dislocations which accompany it. Capital accumulation is also the stimulus to migration to the extent that it constitutes the conditions which give rise to labour shortages and points of attraction for wage labour.(15)

In some instances, however, the reserve army of labour is threatened by an exhaustion of the indigenous labour supply or by the unwillingness of the workers to work for low wages.(16)

Labour shortage puts pressure on wages to rise and thus may make production unprofitable. In other words, higher wage rates increase labour costs for capitalists which decrease their rate of profit. As noted previously, one way to lower the high cost of labour is to invest in machinery. However, another way that capitalists have dealt with the rise in labour costs is to find a cheaper source of labour either domestically or through the importation of foreign workers. In fact, capitalist countries extract workers from foreign reserve armies of labour even during times when there is a surplus of unused domestic labour. The reason for this is explained by Bolaria and Li as follows: "Immigrant labour...does not merely increase the supply of labour but also replaces high cost labour, and weakens the organizational efforts and bargaining position of the domestic workforce. For this reason, immigrant and migrant workers have often been recruited even when a domestic labour surplus exists."(17) Immigrant labour is also advantageous to capitalist production because it is easily exploited. The tenuous political status of immigrant workers in the host country means they are vulnerable to threats and repression by their employers, the state and the indigenous workforce.(18)

Another way of reducing the cost of labour is through racism. Bolaria and Li argue that within capitalism, "maximal accumulation of profit ...depends on the dirty work at the production level being carried out at a low cost."(19) Given

that accumulation of wealth leads to increased economic activities and opportunities of mobility, the problem is how to confine a pool of workers to performing dirty work at low wage rates. Bolaria and Li argue that skin colour and physical attributes of the subordinate group have become a convenient solution to this problem. They state:

Skin colour, hitherto an irrational attribute, now provides the basis for assigning a group of socially-defined undersirables to undesirable jobs. There is a new rationality in skin colour because a definite economic value is associated with it. As the physical characteristics of a group are repeatedly paired with dirty work, the social standing of the group gets to be defined, in part by the work it does. Over time, the cultural and physical characteristics of a subordinate group become inseparable from its work role and its subservient position. Race, as superficially defined by skin colour, takes on a social meaning and significance.(20)

The dominant group has the power to defined racially subordinate groups on the basis of skin colour and other physical and social characteristics, which, serve as a justification for their exploitation and performance of dirty work. As well, the dominant group uses its position to assert an ideology that it is superior in comparison to other racially defined groups.(21) Thus, the utility of racism is rooted in the economic benefits that it helps secure for the dominant group in capitalist society. Immigrant and migrant workers are used by capitalist societies as a source of cheap labour and racism serves to lower

the cost of this labour even more.

Under capitalism, the movement of individuals out of the reserve army of labour and into available working positions usually occurs on the basis of market mechanisms. In some cases however, the state intervenes in order to facilitate and regulate the flow between the reserve army of labour and the labour market.

### The Capitalist State

Most advanced capitalist countries are characterized as being liberal-democratic in form. In this view, society is composed of a plurality of groups whose existence is the outcome of diverse economic, socio-cultural, and geographic characteristics of society. The state is seen as autonomous and neutral in relation to class conflict. In the Marxist perspective however, capitalist society is understood in terms of its mode of production which creates relations of domination and exploitation and thereby produces antagonistic social classes. The state is seen as functioning to maintain these relations. The liberal-democratic view of the state as a neutral arbitrator in class conflict is unable to comprehend the contradictory fact that its actions (policies) perpetuate social inequalities.(22)

Within the Marxist perspective, the nature, structure and role of the state is determined or constrained by the mode of

production.(23) Thus, within the capitalist mode of production a fundamental role of the state is to create the conditions for capitalist accumulation. This entails maintaining the relations of exploitation between the classes upon which accumulation is based. The basis of exploitation between the classes (the difference between the use value of labour and its exchange value) has been discussed previously in Marx's theory of labour and, although the state plays the role of mediator between the classes, it exercises its power to the benefit of the long-term interests of capital.(24)

In order for the state to function in the interests of capital however, it needs to be relatively autonomous from the capitalist class. Panitch states: "For the state to act only at the behest of particular segments of the bourgeoisie would be dysfunctional to it managing the common affairs of that class. For it to accomplish this task, it needs a degree of independence from that class; a 'relative autonomy'".(25) For instance, the state may intervene to save the bourgeoisie from itself as the individual capitalists in their relentless pursuit for profit threaten to destroy the very basis of bourgeois wealth and accumulation by the draining of labour power, which, creates class struggle and conflict. The state's role in class struggle is to resolve the issue without revolution and at the same time protect the common interest of the bourgeoisie. Panitch states:

...the capitalist state must try to fulfill two basic and often mutually contradictory functions---accumulation and legitimization....This means that the state must try to maintain or create the conditions in which profitable capital accumulation is possible. However, the state also must try to maintain or create conditions for social harmony. A capitalist state that openly uses its coercive forces to help one class accumulate capital at the expense of other classes loses its legitimacy and hence undermines the basis of its loyalty and support.(26)

Besides the state's two basic functions of formulating policies which will create capital accumulation and social harmony, it also performs a "coercive function". That is, the state has the legitimacy to use force to maintain or impose social order. However, the state usually does not need to use the coercion function to facilitate capital accumulation and legitimize social inequality.(27) This follows because social control is maintained through state welfare policies. The formulation of such policies serves to reproduce labour power and maintain the non-working population.(28) Thus social welfare programs are a means of reducing working-class conflict and therefore offer an effective means of social control.(29)

A Marxist understanding of the state also requires that the institutions which comprise the state be clearly defined. This follows because it is through the institutions of the state that class struggle is expressed and represented. However, the representative structure within the state is unequal. Once this unequal structure of representation which has evolved over time

in a given social formation is identified "it becomes possible to link a particular policy instance to the effective 'national policy' by tracing the relation of the forces involved to the broader structure of representation".(30) It is this unequal structure of representation which allows the state to function as the organizer of the hegemony of the bourgeoisie. Mahon states:

...the state is forced to organize the consent of the subordinate classes to bourgeoisie domination and, at the same time, to arrange a consensus uniting the bourgeoisie in order to facilitate capitalist accumulation and to permit the bourgeoisie as a whole to remain the dominant class. This increasingly involves the state in specific forms of economic intervention. In order to intervene effectively, the state has centralized authoritative decision-making in the hands of the executive ...who command a hierarchically ordered group of career civil servants recruited on the basis of their 'expertise'. Inscribed in this hierarchical arrangement is the unequal structure of representation which permits the state to organize hegemony.(31)

In Canada the state is a complex of institutions, including government and its bureaucracies, the military, the judiciary, representative assemblies and the sub-levels of government. The latter sub-levels include provincial executives, legislatures, and bureaucracies, as well as municipal governmental institutions.(32) The most prominent of these institutions, however, is the federal administrative apparatus because of its jurisdiction in the area of key policy formulation. Within this administrative apparatus, the various fractions of the dominant



class or "power bloc" are represented.(33)

In the case of Canada, it is the Department of Finance which constitutes the "seat of power" of the hegemonic fraction. Its dominance over the budgetary process permits it to strongly influence the programs elaborated by the other federal departments. Also, Finance's role in training those who later head other departments enables it to promote a particular perspective in relation to the "national interest". That is, through Finance's training function the dissemination of the concept of national interest creates "a level of ideological coherence in government policy ensuring that those who 'represent' non-hegemonic forces basically accept the development philosophy that serves the fundamental interest of the hegemonic fraction."(34)

The federal administration apparatus represents not only the dominant classes but also the subordinate classes. But the mode of representation differs significantly between the two groups. The representatives of all social forces have a dual role. One is to "represent" the specific interests of their respective groups in the negotiation process. Another is to act as "regulator" in the attempt to persuade and/or coerce their group into accepting the proposed compromise. This dual role of representation is a critical factor in the functioning of the state as organizer of the hegemonic fraction. That is, although the interests of the dominated classes must be taken into account, "their subordinate

position in civil society poses definite limits to their participation in general policy development through their representatives. The regulatory aspect of this relationship is, accordingly, more pronounced".(35)

The character of representation of the subordinate classes is limited in scope in comparison to the branches which represent the power bloc. Members of the latter are "authoritative decision-makers" in the sphere of production and this is reflected in the mandate of their representatives. In contrast, the working class, including the surplus population of the unemployed, occupies a subordinate position in the social relations of production and this is also reflected in the mandate of its representatives. However, the divisions in the subordinate class which are established at the level of production relations and reinforced at the level of consumption are also reflected in the differential role of their representatives.(36)

#### Understanding the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development

In Canada, the federal department which currently controls and represents Indians is the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND). Historically, however, responsibility for the administration of Indians fell under an array of departments. During the first half of the 19th century

the administration of Indian affairs shifted a number of times between military and civilian authority. Then, in 1860 responsibility over Indian affairs was transferred from imperial control to the Province of Canada. Following Confederation in 1867, responsibility for Indians was transferred to the federal government. In 1867, the Indian Act (which set out the guidelines for governance of Indians through the reserve system) was passed and four years later the Department of Indian Affairs was established. Although it was a separate department between 1880 and 1936, the Minister of the Interior resumed the position of Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs. In 1936, the department fell under the authority of the Department of Mines and Resources where it remained until 1949 when it was transferred to the Department of Citizenship and Immigration. In 1965, the Indian Affairs Branch was merged with the Department of Northern Affairs and Natural Resources until 1966 when a separate department was created and it took on the present title, the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. (37)

The department's relation to Indian people has been greatly influenced by two factors. First, the terms of the Indian Act have conditioned the relationship because it defines Indians as colonial people who are incapable of self-development and therefore dependent on the generosity of the colonial authority. By defining Indians as such, this has reinforced their integration to Canadian society as "marginals". The second

factor is the department's "province-like authority" over the north. Mahon has argued that the mandate of the Northern Development Branch is to encourage large corporations to engage in resource exploitation in northern regions and that this has been dominant over the interests of Indian Affairs.(38) Thus, the DIAND has the dual role of being responsible for the interests of Indians and resource development. In commenting on this dual nature of the DIAND, Satzewich and Wotherspoon state: "...there are two distinct target groups stemming from the present structure of DIAND: Indian people and large corporations interested in the exploitation of northern resources. Since the mid-1960s the department has forged relations of representation and social control with Indian people and large resource development multinationals."(39)

The dual nature of the representation and social control activities of the DIAND is reflected in the division of the departmental programs into four areas: the Indian and Inuit Affairs Program (IIAP); the Northern Affairs Program; the Canada Oil and Gas Lands Administration; and the Administration Program. In particular, the first three programs demonstrate the split between controlling and representing the interests of Indians and resource development multinationals. More specifically, they emphasize the contradictory nature between the DIAND's mandate to represent and control its two target groups.

The mandate of the Indian and Inuit Affairs Program is to

"fulfill the government's obligations to Indians arising out of treaties, the Indian Act, and other relevant legislation; deliver basic services to status Indians and Inuit communities; assist in employment and business development of Indian and Inuit people; negotiate the transfer of decision making to the community level; and support constitutional discussions."(40)

The Canadian Oil and Gas Lands Administration and the Northern Affairs Program deal primarily with northern resource companies. The Northern Affairs program provides support for the development of political, social, and cultural institutions in the north and for the management and protection of the northern environment. Also, its mandate is to provide 'direct funding and coordination of economic initiatives by industry and other federal governments.'(41) The mandate of the Canadian Oil and Gas Lands is the 'regulation of oil and natural gas exploration and development of Canada's frontier lands.'(42)

Also, the administration program provides "financial, administrative, and management services to the department's programs, human resource services to its employees, and coordinates the communication of the department's activities to aboriginal peoples and the general public."(43)

Clearly, the DIAND's departmental programs indicate the contradictory nature of its mandate to represent and control its two target groups. As Satzewich and Wotherspoon argue, "there are two orders of contradictions within the contemporary structure of

the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. First, there is a contradiction between the representation and control of each of its client groups, and there is a contradiction between servicing the concerns of each of these groups."(44) Also, in reflecting on the history of administration of Indians, they state:

Historically, the Indian and Inuit Affairs Program, or what was once the Indian Affairs Branch, has been more interested in the control of Indian people rather than representation. Given that Indian people had no access to the federal or provincial franchise until after World War II, there was little need to be politically concerned about representing their interests. Since the acquisition of the franchise and the subsequent politicization of Indian people both nationally and locally in the 1960s, IIAP has become more concerned with the representation of Indian interests at the cabinet table. The dialectic of representation and social control is now more complicated than ever.(45)

## Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the link between migration, the reserve army of labour concept and the capitalist state. In order to understand the reserve army of labour concept, it was necessary to understand Marx's theory of labour. This entailed pointing out that exploitation is the difference between the use value of labour power and its exchange value. Because of the competition in the market to sell commodities, capitalists must lower their selling price to sell more commodities. In order to

lower the selling price of commodities, however, the cost of production must be lowered. One way of lowering the cost of production is by lowering the cost of labour. This is done by investing in machinery which increases the value produced by labour. With the increased use of machinery in production, there is a reduction in the demand for labour. The pool of unemployed workers that is created by the introduction of machines in production forms what Marx referred to as the reserve army of labour.

Because capitalism is uneven development within a national economy and between national economies, in some areas there is a decrease in the demand for labour while in other areas there is an increase in the demand for labour. Migration of labour out of the reserve army of labour occurs when workers move to areas where labour shortages exist. Immigrants and migrants from the reserve army of labour provide capital with an inexhaustible pool of labour to draw upon at low wage rates. Moreover, these workers are usually defined racially as inferior to the dominant group in society. This enables capitalists to exploit immigrant and migrant labour and thereby increase their rate of profit.

The capitalist state, as defined in the Marxist perspective, is determined by the mode of production. A fundamental role of the state is to create the conditions for capital accumulation. This means that the state must maintain the relations of exploitation between the working class and the capitalist class

upon which accumulation is based. Thus, the state exercises its power to the long-term benefit of the capitalist class.

It was also pointed out that there is unequal representation between the institutions that make up the state. In particular, it was noted that the Department of Finance constitutes the seat of power among the institutions of the state. It represents the interests of the dominant class in society and, because of its position it is able to promote their development interests more effectively than other institutions that represent the interests of the subordinate classes. In fact, this unequal structure of representation allows the state to organize the hegemony of the ruling class in capitalist society.

The chapter also discussed the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. A brief history of the department was provided which demonstrated that Indian Affairs fell under the authority of a number of other state departments until the late 1960s when it became a separate department. This demonstrated that Indians and Indian policy were considered marginal to other state policies and therefore reflected the relative powerlessness of Indian people. It has been argued that the DIAND mandate of control and representation of its two target groups, Indians and resource development multinationals, are contradictory. Moreover, the history of the Indian Affairs Branch has been overwhelmingly characterized by social control of Indians as opposed to representation of their interests.



The intention of this thesis is not to measure the actual rate of exploitation or the rate of capital accumulation in the industry under study. The point of discussing concepts like "exploitation" and "capital accumulation" is to clarify theoretically their link between the state, migration and the reserve army of labour.

The next chapter looks at how the Canadian state was in a position to create a Native migrant labour force for the sugar beet fields of southern Alberta. It provides a brief discussion on the role that the state has played in the creation of migrant labour forces in South Africa. Because there are many historical similarities between the experiences of the indigenous people of South Africa and that of Canadian Indians in regard to state policies, the case of South Africa provides insights into how the Canadian state positioned itself in order to induce and facilitate the flow of Indians from reserves to southern Alberta's sugar beet industry.

Chapter One: Endnotes

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## Chapter Two: Labour Migration and the State

To understand how the Canadian state was in a position to facilitate and regulate the flow of Native labour to the sugar beet industry in southern Alberta, it is useful to review other instances of migrant labour. In particular, it is useful to examine the role which the state has played in inducing the migration of labour in South Africa. That is, because of the historical parallels between the reserve system in South Africa and Canada and given that in South Africa the state has been widely recognized as having played a key role in inducing and regulating labour migration from its reserves, much can be understood by examining the case of South Africa and comparing it to that of Canada.

### The South African State and Labour Migration

Recent studies emphasize the role the state plays in creating and reproducing the conditions for systems of migrant labour.<sup>(1)</sup> Prior to recent changes, South Africa provided a good example of a system of migrant labour created by the state. In the past, a system of racial segregation, referred to as apartheid, was instituted by the state in order to provide a source of cheap labour for capitalist production.

In South Africa, the apartheid system originated within

settler colonialism and has its logic in the capitalist mode of production. With the discovery of diamonds in the mid-nineteenth century, and later gold, there was a great demand for a source of cheap labour. The Europeans of South Africa fulfilled this demand by subjugating the indigenous populations and transforming the African rural economy in order to stimulate migration.(2)

At the time when the mines were opened in South Africa in the late nineteenth century, the native traditional subsistence economy was self-sufficient. Thus, to promote labour migration to the mines, the state imposed constraints upon the native subsistence economy. First, in 1885, a protectorate was proclaimed for Bechuanaland. Then, in 1899 the state established for the first time a hut tax. Consequently, it became necessary for the native population to find a regular sum of money each year. These measures coincided with the labour shortage in the newly opened mines. Given the fact that the subsistence economy provided a very limited source of income, it became necessary to supplement it by seeking a paid occupation. Therefore, migration to the mines emerged as the only alternative.(3)

The imposition of new costs to the traditional subsistence economy through taxation was reinforced by the state's program of expropriation of tribal lands. Land expropriation reduced the ability of the subsistence economies to support their own populations while at the same time it increased the attractiveness of migration because by working in the mines the

Individual could not only support himself but also his family through periodic remittances. Moreover, the state intervened to ensure that the tribal economies did not deviate from increasing the available labour supply. For instance, those Africans who attempted to adapt to the new conditions through commercial farming were promptly priced out of the market by subsidies for the white farmers. Thus, it was arranged so that entering the wage labour market was more rewarding than remaining in the rural areas and accumulating surplus produce.(4)

Although labour migration was encouraged, tribal economies were not to be eliminated. If they had been it would have meant that the costs of social benefits and reproduction of the labour force would have been absorbed by the capitalist sector.(5) Thus, what emerged was the utilization of a precapitalist source of wage labour whereby migration was promoted on the one hand, and the autonomous capacity of the tribal economy to produce food was preserved on the other, which enabled them to absorb workers when they were no longer needed by the capitalist sector.

The system of racial segregation that evolved in South Africa was entrenched in laws dating back to the turn of the century. These laws were designed with two objects in mind: " to preserve the white monopoly on political power and to provide a reservoir of cheap and coercive labour for industry and agriculture."(6) To achieve these objectives, the country has been divided territorially. The Land Acts have designated about

13 percent of the country as "reserves" or "homelands" for the African majority. However, these densely populated and impoverished homelands were never intended to sustain the majority of the population. Only by working outside these reserves under a migrant labour system administered by labour bureaucrats which assign workers to specific industries or employers could Africans earn enough money to provide for themselves and their families.(7) Moreover, through the reserves the state excluded Africans from their political right to vote. This was accomplished by passing an Act in 1894 which stipulated that land allotment to individuals on reserves was to be held in communal tenure. Thus, blacks could not fulfill the propriety conditions for the franchise.(8) Lastly, through a system of temporary contracts in conjunction with a complex set of internal passes and passports the state regulated the flow of black labour while it also ensured the return of workers to their reserves.(9)

#### The Canadian State and Reserves as Reserve Armies of Labour

In the latter part of the 1800's the fur trade declined and Native people lost their importance in the staples economy. And, as the new Canadian state embarked upon the establishment of a national economy based on agriculture and urban industry, they were seen as obstacles in the path of capitalist development. In



addition, the buffalo which were the main source of subsistence for the Plains Indians of Western Canada, were almost depleted causing various groups in the area to starve.(10) It was against this background that the Canadian government forced the Indians to sign treaties. In effect, the treaties gave the Canadian state control of Indian lands while in return they were confined to small tracts of land referred to as reserves.(11)

Through segregation on reserves, the state (i.e. the administrative arm of the state currently referred to as the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development) argued it could protect Indians from the negative features of Euro-Canadian society while it taught them the ways of the whiteman so that eventually, they could enter into mainstream society and assume full citizenship rights and obligations. To achieve these objectives the state utilized the Indian Act of 1876, which, sought to regulate virtually every aspect of Indian life.(12) To ensure compliance to the Act, an Indian agent was placed on each reserve to act as a local manager and Justice of the Peace.

The reserve system attempted to transform the indigenous populations from their traditional lifestyle of hunting and trapping to that of agricultural production and wage labour. This was to be accomplished through various means. To undermine the communal lifestyle of Indians as well as to encourage the adoption of the European concept of private property, the state introduced the "location ticket". Essentially, the ticket gave an

individual control of forty acres of reserve land but, not ownership. The individual then entered into a three year probationary period during which he had to demonstrate that he would utilize the land in a Euro-Canadian manner. If he accomplished this, he was given the title to land and enfranchised.(13)

In many instances however, the allocation of poor farm land to Indian bands and the surrender of fertile reserve lands worked against development. Also, with the influx of agrarian settlers to Western Canada, Indian lands were in great demand. Thus, in some cases Indians were persuaded to move from prime land to less fertile reserves. In other cases where reserve agriculture was succeeding, pressure was exerted upon Indian farmers by the Indian Affairs Branch to sell farm land rather than expand. Moreover, because of financial restrictions within the Indian Act, loan money for economic development for Indians on reserves has always been difficult to obtain.(14) Finally, the stipulation that Indian farmers had to have written permission from the agent before they could buy or sell produce and cattle also restricted agricultural development.(15)

### Conclusion

The reserve system in Canada has many similarities to the apartheid system which existed in South Africa until very

recently. The system of racial segregation, taxation and expropriation of tribal lands forced indigenous people to migrate to areas of employment in order to subsist. A complex pass system was instituted to ensure that workers returned to their home lands upon completion of their work period.

In Canada, the reserve system, which is governed by the Indian Act, in effect segregated Indians from the modern capitalist economy and placed them in a position of marginality and dependency. In fact, the reserve system was contradictory to the extent that reserves were initially envisioned to be sites where Indian people were to be prepared for the incorporation into capitalist social relations, but instead they ended up isolating and marginalizing Indian people from capitalism.

The marginality of Indians was accomplished by placing them on reserves, many of which had poor farming potential; by surrender of fertile reserve land; and by the economic and political restrictions forced upon Indians through the Indian Act. In general, state policies transformed indigenous populations on reserves into a pool of cheap labour upon which capitalists can draw workers in times of need. In other words, they form part of the reserve army of labour from which capital can draw upon at low wage rates. And, because of the state's control over Indians through the reserve policy and the Indian Act it was in a position to facilitate and regulate the flow of

Indian workers from reserves to areas where there was a demand for labour.

The next chapter examines the structure of the sugar beet industry in southern Alberta. The focus is on the price farmers received for their sugar beets and their costs of production. It will also point out the response of farmers and the state in relation to these aspects of the sugar beet industry.

Chapter Two: Endnotes

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Chapter Three: The Structure of the Sugar Beet Industry in  
Southern Alberta

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the structure of southern Alberta's sugar beet industry. It looks at the prices that farmers received for their sugar beet crops from the early 1950s to recent times. Also, it discusses various aspects that impinged upon the cost of producing sugar beets. The response of farmers and the state to problems experienced by low beet returns and rising costs of production are also examined. This discussion on these aspects of the structure of the sugar beet industry indicate that farmers had to pursue every means possible to lower their costs of production in order to create enough profit to stay in business.

Sugar Beet Country in Southern Alberta

Southern Alberta is one of the most diversified agricultural regions in Canada. Sugar beet country extends from the town of Raymond, north to Picture Butte and Iron Springs, and east to the areas south of Bow Island and north of Vauxall. A reasonably accurate estimation of this area would be that it encompasses a circle in southern Alberta which is about 75 miles in diameter. Within this area sugar beet growers are concentrated around Taber, Vauxall, Bow Island, Picture Butte and Coaldale. Taber is

near the centre of sugar beet country and is 150 miles southeast of Calgary. On the southwestern perimeter of this region and next to the Blood Indian Reserve, there is the city of Lethbridge. It is a prosperous place and offers most of the advantages of city living and thus, it is the major shopping and entertainment centre for sugar beet country. Southern Alberta is noted for its long hot summer days and low annual levels of rainfall. It was through the introduction of irrigation in the early 1900s that it was possible to grow sugar beets as well as a variety of other specialty crops in this area.

Southern Alberta's sugar beet industry can be characterized as having three different classes. At the top there are the owners of the British Columbia Sugar Refining Company Limited, which, also owns the Alberta Sugar Company. B. C. Sugar holds a monopoly in sugar production in Western Canada and the Company controls the indispensable means of making and marketing the finished product. Below the Company owners there are the beet farmers or growers who sign contracts with B. C. Sugar to deliver a specified tonnage of beets at a price stipulated by the Company. At the bottom there are the beet workers who sign contracts with the growers to cultivate a specific acreage of beets.(1)

The Early History of the Sugar Beet Industry in Southern Alberta

The sugar beet industry in southern Alberta began in 1902 when a Latter Day Saint by the name of Jesse Knight from Provo, Utah built a factory for processing beets into sugar near Lethbridge. However, even with a twelve year tax exemption and subsidies from the federal and provincial governments, the Company was not a financial success.(2) As a result, in 1914 the factory was shut down and it moved to the United States. Although many reasons were cited for the closure of the factory, the main reason was the shortage of available labour for beet work.(3) A decade later, however, a group of farmers convinced the Utah-Idaho Sugar Company to start up the industry again and so in 1925 sugar beet operations commenced once more in southern Alberta.

In 1925, southern Alberta farmers also established the Alberta Cooperative Sugar Beet Growers' Association. Since the Association's inception, its " primary purpose...has been...to be the watchdog of the welfare of the Alberta sugar beet growers."(4) One of the primary concerns of the new organization was the lack of sufficient workers for the labour-intensive industry.(5) This concern for labour is evident throughout the annual reports of the organization particularly following the 1950s when immigrant labour could not be procured. The organization's name was changed in 1941 to the Alberta Sugar Beet Growers Association (ASBGA). During this period its policy was to increase sugar production in order to meet the emergency of threatened external supplies.(6) Also, it was at this time that



the industry used large numbers of interned Japanese and German prisoners of war as labourers.(7) In 1983, the organization took on its current name, the Alberta Sugar Beet Growers Marketing Board (ASBGMB).

In the early 1900s, the British Columbia Sugar Refining Company was named E. T. Rogers' B. C. Sugar and, the Alberta Sugar Company was known as the Canadian Sugar Factories Limited. During the depression in the 1930s, Rogers took control of Canadian Sugar Factories in Alberta which was a subsidiary of the Utah-Idaho Sugar Company. Initially, Rogers intention was to shut down the Alberta operation and thereby eliminate sugar beet competition. However, one of the conditions that Utah-Idaho insisted upon as part of the sale was that Rogers keep the factory operating for ten years so that southern Alberta farmers would have a place to sell their sugar beets. Since Rogers had a monopoly in sugar production and was determined to make a profit on its Alberta operation, it immediately reduced the price the Company would pay for sugar beets. Consequently, in the first year of production after the takeover in 1931, the Alberta operation made a 20% profit.(8) And, because the Company had lowered the price it paid for sugar beets, this forced the beet farmer to pass the reduction on to the workers. Thompson and Seager state:

Squeezed by Rogers Sugar the growers squeezed

the final link in the chain, the beet worker. Between 1931 and 1934 the contract rate for beet labour declined from \$21 an acre to \$17, despite the fact that the productivity of each worker, as measured by the number of tons of beets produced on each acre, increased. The worker's share of the farmer's return from the beet crop was reduced from an average of 38.6% in the 1925-30 period to 28.3% between 1931 and 1934....(9)

### Sugar Beet Prices and the World Sugar Market

In the early 1950s, southern Alberta farmers received low prices for their sugar beets. In 1956, ASBGA President, Lalovee Jensen states:

...in 1950 we received for beets a return of \$18.45 per ton. Since that time prices have fallen to disaster levels. A return of the \$18.00 beet would mean only that we had recovered the ground lost since 1950. When we consider the great improvement in the national economy since that time, it is quickly realized that our farm people are justly entitled to a price per ton of beets greatly in excess of \$20.00, if we are to regain a position of equality with the rest of the Canadian economy.(10)

In fact, throughout much of the history of southern Alberta's sugar beet industry, farmers have received low returns for their sugar beet crops. A main reason for the low returns was the fact that the price paid for sugar beets in Canada was linked to the price of sugar on the world market. That is, when there was a world surplus of sugar, it was dumped on the world market

by sugar producing countries at very low prices. Canada dealt on the international sugar market and thus its domestic price for sugar was based on the low price of this market. Consequently, Rogers had to sell sugar to Canada at this low price which meant it had to pay a low price for its sugar beets. In order to counter the depressing impact of the world sugar market on Canadian produced sugar prices, the ASBGA, in conjunction with the National body of Canadian Sugar Beet Growers, has repeatedly pressed the federal government for a National Sugar Policy which would protect the Canadian producers from the dumping of cheap foreign sugar and at the same time encourage the growth of the Canadian sugar beet industry.(11)

The ASBGA did gain some measure of success in its quest for an equitable National Sugar Policy as in 1959 "sugar beets [were] named as one of the commodities under the terms of the Agricultural Prices Stabilization Act."(12) This meant that sugar beet growers, but not processors, were guaranteed a specific price per ton at a particular percentage of beet sugar content. In other words, beet farmers were given a deficiency payment, or subsidy when their returns fell below the price level set by the federal government. For instance, in 1959 after the Sugar Policy was implemented, the Alberta beets grown in 1958 were supported at \$15.45 per ton on beets with a sugar content of 17%.(13) At the time, ASBGA President, Lalovee Jensen, remarked: "This totals \$1,470,000, or an average of \$950.00 per contract. In dollars and

cents this represents the greatest single benefit ever to be procured for you by any Alberta Sugar Beet Directorate in the entire thirty-five years of the organization's history."(14)

Following the implementation of the Sugar Policy, based on the Agricultural Prices Stabilization Act, the ASBGA did not see it as something to be relied upon as a permanent cure for its problems and thus it sought a more satisfactory and effective solution. Moreover, it was felt that what was given by the federal government could be easily taken away. In particular, the organization wanted the home market safeguarded from the impact of world sugar prices, which, would foster a fair profit for the growers' investment. At the annual convention of the ASBGA in 1960, President Lalovee Jensen stated:

You delegates have repeatedly instructed your board to press for a [N]ational [P]olicy that would bring stability to an industry beset by the dilemma of wildly fluctuating world sugar prices which set the levels of our own markets and over which we have no control. When it is realized that these world price levels are in themselves built upon the premise of cheap [N]ative labour and the dumping of a very minor part of the world's production of sugar into any market that will take it, it is readily seen that there is an urgent need for such a [N]ational [P]olicy. Canadian markets must be made healthy markets for Canadian Beet Sugar. The well being of these southern irrigated farms, the city of Lethbridge and the towns around it are predicated on a healthy sugar industry, and I mean by that a sugar industry in which both the grower and the processor can find a measure of profit sufficient to meet the needs of their efforts.(15)

In order to address the problems created by the world sugar market, the ASBGA has periodically negotiated International Sugar Policies. For example, in 1969 the ASBGA negotiated a new International Sugar Agreement with exporting and importing nations. Under the terms of the agreement target price levels were set up for a floor level of \$3.25 and a top level of \$5.25 per hundred for sugar at the point of export.(16) Various methods were set up to ensure that the price of sugar would fall between the two levels. In the view of the ASBGA, the advantages of the agreement were that prices would tend to be higher on the world market which, in turn, would create higher prices in Canada and thus sugar manufacturers in the home market would have larger margins to recover their costs and to show a profit. And, with a higher price for sugar manufacturers, the growers, in turn, would receive a higher price for sugar beets which meant smaller deficiency payments from the Stabilization Board.(17)

A year after the International Sugar Agreement was implemented, there was skepticism concerning its usefulness in terms of raising sugar prices. In 1969, while commenting on the Agreement, President of the ASBGA, Lalovee Jensen, stated:

This [A]greement has not proven to be a perfect vehicle on which to base our hope for a new level of world sugar prices that will be sufficient to support the sugar beet industry. In the short year that it has been in operation, it has not proven to be effective enough as yet to maintain the price level above the bottom target of \$3.25. Canadian sugar beet producers

will need to continue to have additional assistance by way of the Agricultural Prices Stabilization Act in order to maintain production and remain competitive.(18)

In the early 1970s, however, prices of sugar on the world market increased. In 1972, for instance, "world prices tended to be above the levels of control provided by the International Sugar Agreement."(19) As a result of the price increase of the world market, the price levels of Canadian sugar sales increased. Consequently, these abnormal world sugar prices caused growers to gain a higher return for their sugar beets and thus the deficiency payment program under the Stabilization Act was not needed.(20) In subsequent years, the trend of high returns for beet growers continued. In fact, in 1974, the ASBGA President, Lalovee Jensen, remarked: "The fiftieth year of sugar beet production has proven to be a great year for all of us. The return for last year's beets of \$47.10 per ton is the highest on record and it is fitting that it was achieved in our fiftieth year."(21)

In the early 1980s, sugar prices began to decrease. In 1982, it was reported that "Alberta sugar prices tumbled fifty percent within a two year period."(22) During this period, world sugar producing countries had good crops which created a surplus of production as compared to consumption.(23) To combat the drop in world sugar prices, the ASBGA again called for a National Sugar Policy and requested that an International Sugar Agreement be

implemented which would reduce surplus production. In 1983, John Vaselenak, the ASBGMB President, stated:

Sugar prices have dropped to half of our 1979 price. High sugar inventories and the use of other sweeteners indicate that sugar prices will remain low for some time. A workable International Sugar Agreement which would reduce sugar inventories fairly among exporting nations, appears to be the only solution. Sugar sold on the world market at prices below the cost of production in its country of origin, is of no benefit to the producing nation. We growers hope that a new International Sugar Agreement among exporting nations soon can be reached. One that will reduce surplus stocks and allow prices to increase to levels at which we can receive a just price for our sugar from the market place. In Canada, until we have success in persuading our politicians and consumers that a Sugar Policy is advantageous, we must use the price protection we have under the National Agricultural Products Stabilization Act.(24)

In 1985, the problems of sugar beet farmers mounted as it was "the first time in 60 years of consecutive sugar beet production in southern Alberta that the sugar beet farmer did not produce sugar beets for processing."(25) The lack of production stemmed from the Board's inability to negotiate a contract with B.C. Sugar. Negotiations for a contract in 1985 broke down because B.C. Sugar demanded "a greater share of the pie from the grower" or else "beet refining operations on the prairies would be closed."(26) The problem for B.C. Sugar was that it too felt the effects of low market prices and therefore it had to squeeze the grower for more profit. From the view point of B.C. Sugar, a

reduced price for sugar beets simply meant that farmers would receive a higher deficiency payment. In the view of the ASBGMB, however, this was a misuse of the intent of the Stabilization Act and what needed to be implemented was a National Sugar Policy. Paul Thibodeau, Vice-President of the ASBGMB, summarized the problem as follows:

The Agricultural Stabilization Act is designed to support the grower but not the refiner.

This is causing serious problems to the growers. As the refiner's profit margin narrows, increased pressure by the refiner is put on growers to change the contract. The argument they use is that any money not received from the sale of our product will be made up by increased government payment.

The stabilization plan was never intended to be used in that manner. Since 1958, 15 years out of 24 a deficiency payment has been paid to the growers. The fact that growers have had to be supported by the government in so many years should indicate to us that our industry has had some serious problems. The obvious conclusion then is that raw sugar prices in Canada have been much too low in those 15 years. The beet refiner is also claiming to be running at a very low profit margin in those years and there is no reason for us to doubt that statement. There is another method that would allow growers and refiners to move ahead in a positive and assured manner. This method is to have a floor price on raw sugar entering Canada - what is called a sugar policy and what growers have been asking for years now. (27)

In the spring of 1986, news headlines in sugar beet country read: "THE BEETS ARE BACK". (28) At this time, the uncertainty and anxiety that beet farmers were experiencing in not knowing if there would be a beet crop for Alberta was put to rest when the



federal government came to the rescue and established a domestic sugar beet policy designed to maintain the Canadian sugar beet industry. Central to the policy was a cost-sharing stabilization program for sugar beets. For the 1986 crop year, the federal government and growers were to negotiate and share the cost of the stabilization program. In the following years however, the stabilization program was to be negotiated and the cost shared by the beet growers, the provincial governments of Alberta, Manitoba and Quebec, and the federal government.(29) These voluntary cost-sharing programs were guaranteed payments to sugar beet growers at a support level set over a longer period of time than previous stabilization programs. To go along with the stabilization plan, the federal government committed itself to seeking an International Sugar Agreement which would promote fair competition and a stable world market. Also, to encourage growers to seed a crop in 1986, the federal government provided a "planting incentive" to be paid to growers based on individual 1982, 1983, 1984, and 1986, production levels. This payment amounted to approximately \$5.6 million for Alberta growers.(30) Lastly, the government's policy gave beet growers more direct access to the U. S. sugar import quotas. Beginning in 1987, the quotas were given to the Canadian Sugar Beet Growers. Returns from the export sugar went to the Canadian Sugar Producers' Association, which, then paid the beet growers on the basis of the total number of beets delivered for export.(31) With the

backing of the federal government's sugar policy, the ASBGMB negotiated a three year agreement with Alberta Sugar Company. This was the first time in the history of Alberta's sugar beet industry that an agreement was signed for more than one year.(32)

On April 16, 1987, the ASBGMB and government officials signed the National Tripartite Stabilization Program for Sugar Beets (NTSP). In commenting on the policy ASBGMB President, Walter Boras, stated: "The tripartite solution for sugar beet production was not our way of solving the problems of marketing, but we take it with satisfaction that it will and can sustain us for the immediate years ahead."(33)

In the years following the implementation of the National Tripartite Stabilization Program, it was plagued with problems. In 1986 when the federal government announced its position in relation to the sugar beet industry, it related to three points. These included: 1. that a tripartite stabilization plan would be implemented beginning with the 1987 crop; 2. that Canada would seek an International Sugar Agreement to promote fair competition and a stable world market; and, 3. to compliment the stabilization program, beet growers would be given direct access to the exports of refined sugar to United States. These three points were to form the basis of "Canada's Sugar Policy" and the survival of the beet industry was contingent on success in all three areas. In relation to the third point, however, problems arose due to interdepartmental confusion within the federal

government with their approach taken for disbursements of the earnings from the U. S. Sugar Import Quota. Consequently, this program became a net cost to the NTSP instead of the compliment that it was suppose to produce. In relation to the second point, Canada had done some work on an International Sugar Agreement but for the most part it seemed to lack serious commitment to this task. Lastly, in relation to the first point, a ten year NTSP was implemented for the 1987 production year to stabilize the price of sugar beets in order to assist the industry to realize fair returns for its labour and investment. The NTSP for sugar beets was designed to be actuarially sound over time. However, it was an accepted fact that unless success was achieved on the second and third points, then the NTSP could not absorb the liability of world sugar trade fluctuations. These fluctuations resulted when exporting countries dumped sugar on the world market during periods of low prices. And, because Canada purchased sugar on the world market during these periods, this in turn lowered the domestic price paid for sugar.(34) As a result of the problems, "[a]fter just two years of operation the NTSP had an accumulated deficit in excess of \$13.5 million".(35)

In the early 1990s, the problems of the NTSP continued to be a major issue facing the sugar beet industry. In 1992, ASBGMB President, Brian Anderson, summarized the situation as follows:

Canada is a trading nation. The Canadian economy is extremely dependant on trade. What the

beet industry needs is fair trade rules. Through a technicality in the definition of standing within Canada's trade legislation, dumped and subsidized sugar is allowed to enter this country with the producer's hands tied. This places our industry in a unique position as compared to other commodities, therefore we need unique considerations in the development of our future direction. We must continue to pursue both long and short term solutions to our problems. We must be careful that the short term solutions do not interfere with the long term viability of the industry. As the current NTSP has failed to meet the measure of its creation we must now develop a new program that is equitable, cost effective, and financially responsive; a program that would encourage a high degree of participation of all producers and reduce the need for ad hoc programs. (36)

Clearly, throughout the history of the sugar beet industry the prices set by the world sugar market have adversely affected the prices that southern Alberta's sugar beet farmers received for their crops. To the present the ASBGMB is still attempting to negotiate a "Canadian Sugar Policy" that will promote a healthy sugar beet industry in southern Alberta and provide both the grower and the processor with a fair measure of profit sufficient to cover the needs of their efforts.

#### Costs of Production in Alberta's Sugar Beet Industry

Another factor that affected the rate of profit for sugar beet farmers were the costs of production. Beginning in the late 1950s, sugar beet growers as well as the general agricultural community in Alberta began to feel the pressure of low market

prices for farm products and a loss of profit from high production costs. ASBGA President, Lalovee Jensen, stated:

The general farm picture continues to be clouded by uncertainties as to commodities prices and the production difficulties which follow. In 1959 price levels of many farm products were very close to depression year levels....Not since 1947 have sugar prices been so depressed.... There are two primary reasons for these unfortunate conditions facing our basic industry. First: The cash returns to agricultural producers for their products are in general quite definitely too low. Many of them near depression levels. Second: The goods and services supplied by urban people and required in farm production are at an all-time record high.....Thus we find that in spite of having made the greatest gains in efficiency of any major industry, with a fifty per cent increase in production per man hour, over the last ten years, most of our farm operators are in financial difficulty.(37)

In 1961, Jensen pointed out that production costs were increasing because the "cost of taxes, land, machinery, labour and supplies are at an all time high."(38) The increase of machinery costs prompted the ASBGA in 1967 to support the Alberta Federation of Agriculture's efforts to have the Alberta government deal with this matter. ASBGA Vice-President, Burns Wood, stated: "A letter of concern over rising machinery costs was forwarded to the Alberta government. Our support was given to the A. F. A.'s submission to the commission that was set up to investigate this crippling aspect of our industry." (39)

In the relatively few years when farmers did receive high

prices for their beet crops, the rate of profit was reduced as a result of costs of production. For instance, in 1975 when the return for sugar beets was high ASBGA Vice-President, Burns Wood, stated "that the so-called high return on sugar beets per ton does not always reflect a corresponding high net income for the grower. Costs of input, especially labour, fertilizer, herbicides, machinery and machinery parts are negating to a great extent the hopes for higher net income."(40) In 1976, Wood pointed out that it was the lack of control in the two vital areas of costs of production and price return on sugar beets which directly effected the beet farmer's margin of profit. He stated:

As farmers, we have little or no control over the cost of vital and basic inputs. We have no power over holding the cost of production down. We are victims of ever increasing costs of fuel, labour, machinery, parts, services, taxes, herbicides, fertilizer and endless other inputs. For most of our products and especially sugar we have equally little or no control over the prices we receive. Because of these facts, farmers always take the initial brunt of inflation. Because of inflated land values and production inputs, the farming industry has been forced to build in a higher cost base into production. Without high enough returns to cover this cost base, many farmers will go out of business, and indeed, many farms now are in financial trouble.(41)

As the decade of the 1970s ended, the forecast for any relief from the escalating costs of production for beet farmers in the 1980s was not positive. Wood stated:

It is difficult to look into the 1980's with optimism. Fertilizer prices up thirteen percent in 1980, pesticides up eleven percent, new farm machinery up ten to fifteen percent, farm wages up seven percent, energy costs will rise higher than the seven percent increase in 1979, farm credit will surely go up, to name a few of our inputs. It will be in 1980 that many farmers will feel the full force of inflation.(42)

As predicted by Wood, the early 1980s were not profitable for Alberta's sugar beet farmers. In 1982 it was reported that Alberta sugar prices dropped by fifty per cent within a two year period while production costs increased by thirty per cent during the same span.(43) At this time the ASBGA in cooperation with the Provincial Agricultural Economics Branch began monitoring the production costs of beets. These costs were then used to calculate the support level provided to beet farmers under the Federal Agricultural Stabilization Act.(44) At the closing of the 1980s ASBGMB President, Paul Thibodeau summed up the decade as follows:

The 80's started well. Because of the high world sugar prices Alberta sugar beet growers recorded the second highest payment for their crop in 1980. Although we did not know it then, those prices would be short lived. The price of dumped world sugar declined very quickly and this meant declining income for growers. Along with this came high prices, high interests rates, no stabilization payments, farm foreclosures, bankruptcies, extremely difficult harvests, one year no sugar beet production, a drastic change in grower contract and the gloomy forecast presented by Auditor General Mr. Kenneth Dye for the future of the sugar beet industry. The list of bad memories seems to go on and on. Along with all of that,

Free Trade, G.A.T.T. negotiations, safety nets, and the G.S.T. are all subjects that have been piled on us.(45)

Another factor that was beyond the control of sugar beet farmers which increased the costs of production and reduced the margin of profit was the weather. For instance, in 1957 ASBGA President Lalovee Jensen stated:

It is history now that there then ensued the most difficult conditions ever experienced by our growers. With over four-fifths of the crop yet to be taken from the ground, wet and cold, mud and snow, brought about conditions that made it seem to many, a virtual certainty that Alberta's sugar beet crop would never be harvested. Some of our friends from Manitoba said to us, "Why not leave them in the ground for the cost of harvest will never be met by the returns from the beets?"(46)

Also, during some years the summer was so hot and dry that the crops needed extensive irrigation. In 1970, for example, the sugar beet fields had to be irrigated as many as six and seven times. In early October of the same year, heavy frosts caused extensive damage to the sugar beet crops.(47) So pervasive was the threat of early frost that it was referred to as "The Plight of the Sugar Beet Growers".(48) Lastly, hail frequently caused damage which forced the grower to increase crop damage insurance. Eventually, the consistent threat of weather caused growers in 1984 to request an "all-risk insurance plan" for sugar beets. Consequently, the ASBGMB invited a member of the Alberta Hail and



Crop Insurance Corporation to its annual meeting to explain its plan and answer questions.(49) Thereafter, all risk crop insurance was made available to Alberta beet growers.

#### The Increase of Production in the Sugar Beet Industry

Two of the ways in which beet farmers were able to survive the negative effects of low returns for sugar beets and rising costs of production were to increase the yield per acre of sugar beets and the beet sugar content . In 1961 ASBGA Board Director, Murray Holt, stated:

It might be of interest to know what has been achieved in beet production, as a result of technological research the past 15 years. With an increase of only 17% in harvested acres, a yield increase of 52% in total tons of beets has been produced.

The yield of tons per acre increased 30%. Sugar production increased even more than beet production. An increase of 58% total sugar took place from an increase of only 17% in number of acres harvested. In 1946 an acre yielded 1.92 tons of sugar, while in 1960 the average acre yielded 2.58 tons of sugar, an increase of 34% in 15 years. These are the results of combined efforts in agriculture, chemistry and factory operations making the best use of technological research.(50)

In 1970, ASBGA Chairman, John Vaselenak, pointed out that two decades of changes in beet production had resulted in the increase of the sugar content in the beet. That is, beet growing

areas were expanded and a greater variation of soils were employed; greater amounts of a combination of nitrogen and phosphates fertilizers were used; the beet population per acre was changed with mechanical thinners from 10 to 12 inches in row stands to 4 to 6 inches which effected the size of beet produced; and, sprinkler irrigation systems were introduced which made it possible to irrigate almost up to the day of harvest.(51)

As a result of the innovations in beet production, the trend of increasing the tons per acre of sugar beets and the beet sugar content continued. For instance, ASBGA Chairman, John Vaselenak, reported that in "1971 new high beet producing records were established in Southern Alberta. Growers harvested 684,293 tons of beets from 42,045 acres, for an average of 16.27 tons per acre. This is 2.25 tons above the 10 year average."(52)

And, in 1987 ASBGMB Chairman, Brian Anderson, reported:

The beet growers certainly did their part this year toward improving total output, thus leading to greater efficiency. We delivered 564,814 tonnes of beets from 29,169 acres with a yield of 19.36 tonnes/acre. Another plus to this senerio is that beet quality is very high, and for the first time since 1977, we are anticipating an extraction of sugar well above what is required to make a standard tonne (125kg/tonne).(53)

The Increase of Mechanization and Weed Control in the Sugar Beet Industry and Its Effects

Two other ways that beet farmers were able to reduce their costs of production were to increase mechanization and introduce chemical weed control. In particular, these two changes in the sugar beet industry reduced the amount of labour required to produce sugar beets which, in turn, lowered the farmer's costs of production.

In 1946 ASBGA Field Superintendent, Ernest Bennion, pointed out that sugar beet "authorities ...maintain 'we can raise our sugar beet crops mechanically with less than one-half the labour and one-half the cost.'"(54) Thus, it is during this period that the industry moved towards reducing hand labour and increasing mechanization. The three part plan aimed at full mechanization included: the increased use of single germ seed or monogerm seed; the development of mechanical thinning of beets; and, the harvesting of sugar beets with machinery.(55) In regards to the latter point, mechanical harvesters such as the Marbeet, John Deere, International and Kiest, were being steadily introduced to southern Alberta beet farmers in the mid-1940s. For instance, Bennion pointed out that in 1946, a "John Deere owned by H. A. Jones, Picture Butte, and operated by Albert Posterski, harvested 30 acres in 62 hours, 3 acres of which was after the storm, harvesting as high as 70 tons in one day."(56)

By the end of 1963, mechanical harvesters had almost taken over the harvesting of sugar beets.(57) Then, in 1965 ASBGA Chairman, John Vaselenak, stated:

Your Agriculture Committee have adopted as their motto for the next few years, "Sugar Beet Survival Through Mechanization." Our foremost aim will be to promote and encourage chemical weed control and mechanical thinning. We feel that it is most essential for all sugar beet growers to change to monogerm seed, herbicide weed control and mechanized thinning if they are to make a success in growing sugar beets....We firmly believe that with ... control of weeds, and through the use of mechanical thinners that we should be able to reduce our labour requirements and enable what labour we do have to do more acreage.(58)

As a result of the efforts of the Agriculture Committee, a few years later Vaselenak reported the following:

1967 should be marked by this generation and future generations as the year when monogerm seed was accepted almost 100 per cent. The breeding of monogerm seed, no doubt, is the most significant change that has ever taken place in the beet industry. It is very unlikely that any greater change than this will occur in beet production in our life time. Without monogerm seed, mechanical thinning would be impractical and herbicide weed control only partially successful. Monogerm seed is the key to low labour cost beet production.(59)

Vaselenak reported that in 1970 "growers incorporated with herbicide 21,008 acres of the 38,075 acres planted."(60) Also, during this year 8 thinners were used on 1,222 acres or 3.3% of the total 36,733 acres thinned.(61) By the end of 1972, growers had used a herbicide on 30,165 acres of the 44,969 acres planted.(62) And, in the same year 27 thinners were used on 4,306 acres or 10% of the total acres thinned.(63) The most popular

herbicides used at this time were the pre-plant chemicals such as Roneet, Avadex, Tillam Herbicide 283 as well as combinations of these chemicals.

During the 1970s beet growers became more dependent each year on herbicide weed control and mechanization which in turn lowered the costs of production. For example, in 1974 Vaselenak stated:

The two trends of reducing labour costs in beet production that are gaining recognition among farmers are (a) seedings two to three inches apart followed by electronic thinner and (b) planting to stand at 5 to 6 inch spacing. Both methods to be successful must be accompanied by good seed bed preparation, herbicide weed control and adequate supply of moisture. Last year we had some 32 electronic thinners thin 4,300 acres or 12% of the crop. Some 1,400 acres were planted to stand. In both operations labour costs are reduced by 50% or more. Both of these trends are expected to increase in the future.(64)

Indicative of the accumulative effect of mechanization, herbicides and space planting in sugar beet production was the decrease in the size of the labour force. For instance, in 1982 ASBGA Labour Committee Chairman, Jim Csabay, stated:

The work load of your Labour Committee continues to decline year after year. The reason being, the increased usage of herbicides and space planting, as pointed out in the agriculture report. These practices decrease the number of people required in our industry; yearly less and less labour is being used on our farms.(65)

## Conclusion

In summary, it is clear that during much of the history of the southern Alberta's sugar beet industry beet farmers were forced to accept the low prices they were offered for their crops. In fact, they were price takers because the domestic price of sugar was based on the low price of sugar on the world market. It is evident throughout the annual reports that the ASBGA has consistently sought to pressure the federal government to implement a National Sugar Policy aimed at producing a fair return for sugar beets while at the same time encouraging growth in the industry. Today, the ASBGMB is still actively pursuing such a policy.

Besides receiving low returns for their beets, farmers were also plagued by spiralling increases in the costs of production. In particular, the cost of machinery, fertilizer and herbicides increased dramatically which adversely effected the profit margin of farmers. Similar to the price received for sugar beets, farmers had no control over the increasing costs of production. In response, farmers turned to technological research to increase the yield per acre of sugar beets and the beet sugar content, thereby increasing their profit. As well, they increased mechanization and chemical weed control in order to reduce the amount of hand labour needed. The only area where farmers had a great deal of control was in the area of hired contract labour.

As will be pointed out in chapter five, labour in the sugar beet industry was very vulnerable to exploitation and thus this was a means through which farmers could lower their costs of production and in turn, increase the margin of profit.

The next chapter will discuss the role that the state has played in the recruitment, movement and retention of Natives for southern Alberta's sugar beet industry. This will include a discussion of the role that the Department of Indian Affairs played in relation to the recruitment and retention of Native migrant workers for southern Alberta's sugar beet fields. The chapter will begin by discussing the background that set the stage for the advent of the Native migrant labour force in the sugar beet industry. In doing so, the way in which the state intervened in the economy of southern Alberta's sugar beet industry becomes evident.

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Chapter Four: The State and Native Migrant Labour in Southern Alberta's Sugar Beet Industry

The question of how Indian and Metis people of northern Alberta and Saskatchewan got started in sugar beet work in southern Alberta is an interesting one given the fact that over the years the sugar beet industry had actively sought a variety of other ethnic groups to perform its labour. In analyzing how Natives came to be in this position, one is struck by the numerous ways in which the Canadian state intervened in the economy of the sugar beet industry in order to recruit, relocate and retain the Native work force. The purpose of this chapter is to analyze how a group of Native people, who in some cases lived over 1,000 kilometers away from the sugar beet fields of southern Alberta, and who historically had been excluded from various forms of wage labour, came to be involved in a migrant labour system.

The History of the Native Work Force in the Southern Alberta Sugar Beet Industry

In the early 1900s most of the hand labour in the sugar beet fields was done by immigrants from Central Europe. This supply of immigrant labour lasted up until the Second World War. At this time a serious shortage of labour occurred. However, the lack of

available labour was offset by acquiring Japanese workers from internment camps and German prisoners of war to hoe, weed and harvest the crops.(1)

In late 1946 the first group of Polish veterans came to the sugar beet industry. And, in 1947 another contingent of Polish veterans arrived numbering just over 500 and thus they augmented the labour force. In general, following the Second World War immigrant labour of all European nationalities supplied the labour necessary for beet cultivation.(2)

By 1953 the movement of unskilled immigrants to Canada dwindled and as a result sugar beet farmers experienced a labour shortage. It was at this time that the industry turned to employing a Native migrant labour force to do the work formerly done by immigrant labour. In 1964, the annual report of the Alberta Sugar Beet Growers' Association (ASBGA) recounted the early history of Indian involvement in southern Alberta's sugar beet industry. The report stated:

...by 1953 the movement of immigrants into Canada had dwindled to such an extent that it was questionable that sufficient labour would be available to carry out the work required on sugar beets.

It was at this time during discussions with the Beet Growers' Association and the Canadian Sugar factories, that Mr. James Lynn, Manager of the National Employment Service, suggested we go to the Indian reservations and find the necessary workers. ...Before the regular recruiting team commenced... Mr. L. R. Jensen, President of the Alberta Sugar Beet Growers' Association, and Mr. James Lynn, ...visited and

spoke to the chiefs of the council at both the Blood Reservation at Cardston and the Peigan Reserve at Brocket. However, little result was obtained from their visit.

The results of the recruiting team's efforts, that consisted of Keith Pilling, Agricultural Superintendent at Picture Butte, and James Lynn, ...was that approximately 120 Indian workers were brought in. Some difficulty was experienced in getting them placed, but eventually all of them found employment.(3)

In the following year, Keith Pilling, Agricultural Superintendent at Picture Butte, and James Lynn, Manager of the National Employment Service, widened their recruitment sphere. They visited "all reservations between Lethbridge and Edmonton, Edmonton to Lac La Biche and across country to High Prairie. From there they returned to Edmonton and thence to North Battleford and Meadow Lake Agencies in Saskatchewan."(4) After the success of these initial trips, various recruitment teams consisting of the Agricultural Superintendent of Taber, the Employment supervisor at Lethbridge, members of the ASBGA and individuals from the Prairie Regional Office of the National Employment Service (N.E.S.), canvassed all reservations in Alberta and Saskatchewan and were successful in procuring enough Indian labour to meet the needs of the sugar beet industry. The recruitment teams were used up until 1958 when they were discontinued and the N.E.S. took over the recruitment of labour. In 1958 ASBGA Director, Leith Johnson, stated:

Indian labour accounted for the thinning, hoeing and weeding on about 6400 acres---17 per cent of the 1958 crop. Quality of Indian work and grower acceptance of this labour is improving each year, as the following figures will show. In 1954 Indians cared for 654 acres. In 1955, 1243 acres. In 1956, 2658 acres. In 1957, 3359 acres. In 1958 6400 acres, nearly ten times the 1954 output. About 1000 workers were brought forward in the sponsored movement and an estimated 300 workers came on their own initiative or by private arrangements with growers.(5)

At this time Johnson also pointed out that it was "generally conceded that there will be no pool of labour to draw from, other than the Indians."(6)

The sugar beet industry had little choice but to tap the pools of labour being unused on reserves in Alberta and Saskatchewan because it was difficult to acquire both local and immigrant labour. The latter fact was made clear to Alberta beet growers in 1956 when ASBGA Director, W. B. Grunewald, was sent to Europe to investigate the reasons why immigrants were not moving to Canada to seek employment. Grunewald summarized the situation in Europe at the time as follows:

Why all this dirth of agricultural workers?  
Why all this lack of interest on the part of Europe's potential sugar beet workers? We used to get lots of labourers from Europe. Oh yes, but that was in the immediate post-war years, displaced persons coming from refugee camps, people who had fled a war-torn Europe. People who had lost their homes, their relatives and friends in many cases. They were people who had nothing more to lose and all to gain. They eagerly

responded when offered new homes and jobs in our beet fields and they, so long as they lasted, filled our needs. But those days are over.

In Europe I found economic conditions so greatly improved that it was hard to believe. I found factories humming on every hand, their managements, especially in Holland, Belgium and Germany, crying to the government for more workers. Employers of Dutch and German labourers were berating their governments for even allowing, let alone encouraging a program of emigration.(7)

With the increased importance in the movement of Natives to the sugar beet fields of southern Alberta, it was decided in 1959 that the various local offices of the N. E. S. closest to the reserves would handle the recruitment of Indian workers.(8) Consequently, recruitment of Indian labour from reserves increased. For instance, ASBGA Director, Leith Johnson stated: "During the 1962 beet season, 551 growers used 2100 Indian workers, who accounted for 40% of the thinning on a total of 16,103 acres....This shows our growing dependence upon Indian labour. They earned an estimated \$400,000.00 in beets...."(9)

The pool of workers recruited from northern Alberta and Saskatchewan by the N. E. S. was referred to as the "sponsored movement" because it was the Federal-Provincial Farm Labour Committee that supplied the funds for the recruitment program.(10) However, once workers gained experience in the beet fields many returned annually on their own. Workers that returned by their own means were not registered with the N. E. S. and therefore this group was referred to as "freelance" workers or

"freelancers". In 1964 the number of sponsored workers totalled 2,077 and it was estimated that 450-500 freelance workers were also used to do the necessary beet work.(11)

It was reported that at the peak of the 1965 sugar beet season "over three thousand Indians were employed---a figure considerably over any previous year."(12) And, in 1969 ASBGA Chairman, Walter Strom, reported that "[t]he number of workers who come on their own is increasing year by year. In 1969 we had about 2000 Indian workers, and of these half came on their own."(13)

By 1969 the majority of Native migrant labourers coming to the sugar beet fields of Southern Alberta were from northern Saskatchewan. A study done in 1969 revealed:

The area from which the heaviest concentration of seasonal workers come appears to be northern Saskatchewan--particularly Witchekan Lake Reserve, Pelican Lake Reserve and Big River Reserve. There seems to be a good number also from One Arrow's, The Montreal Lake Reserve, La Ronge, Stanley Mission, Sandy Bay, Pelican Narrows, Thunderchild Reserve, Loon Lake, The Raymore-Punnichy-area, Wadena, Kamsack, and the Battleford Agency.

Mr. Arnold Ahenakew of the Canada Manpower Centre in Prince Albert estimates the following percentages of these various populations become part of the seasonal labour movement: Witchekan Lake Reserve 95% ... Pelican Lake Reserve 90% ... Big River Reserve 65% ... Montreal Lake Reserve 25% ... One Arrow Reserve 25% ... There are smaller numbers from other reserves.(14)

The study goes on to point out:



There are many Treaty Indians from northern Alberta (with quite a number from the St. Paul area) who come as workers. There are Metis from Saskatchewan and Alberta and some "white" families also.(15)

During this period Native labour was so prevalent in the sugar beet industry that in 1971 the ASBGA Chairman, Walter Strom, remarked: "After nearly twenty years of using large numbers of [N]ative workers from northern Alberta and northern Saskatchewan, we are still the largest users of [N]ative workers in Canada."(16) Strom also pointed out that in 1971 the number of Native workers in the sugar beet fields totalled 2000. Of this total 800 came with the sponsored movement and the other 1200 were freelance workers.(17) Most of these freelance workers were originally part of the organized movement. Moreover, the numbers of freelance workers increased in coming years. For instance, in the annual ASBGA report in 1974 Chairman, Walter Strom, reported that of the 2450 Native workers in the sugar beet fields that year, 2200 were freelance workers as opposed to a total of 250 Native workers that were sponsored.(18)

In the late 1970s the size of the labour force in the sugar beet industry begins to decline due to various changes in beet growing methods. For example, in 1979 ASBGA Chairman, Walter Strom, stated:

The work of your labour committee continues

to decline year by year. The reasons are seen in the agricultural report, where nearly half of the beets were space planted. This has decreased the number of people required for hand labour in our beet fields. We estimate that 1,000 to 1,200 workers came this year.(19)

Not only was the size of the work force declining but so was the need for labour recruitment. In 1981 the ASBGA Labour Committee reported that "sufficient labour was available to meet all our requirements. Labour recruitment is not necessary now as [it] was in previous years. All [N]ative workers that came to our area were freelance...."(20)

In 1988 the Canada Farm Labor Pool, which handled the placement of sugar beet workers with farmers who needed labour, changed its name to the Agricultural Employment Service (A. E. S.) In this year the A. E. S. placed 953 Native sugar beet workers with growers.(21) In 1989, Richard Butler and Ron Sutka of the ASBGMB Labour Committee pointed out that the role of the A. E. S. in the area of Native job placement in the sugar beet fields had declined over the years. They stated the following:

During the last five years the placement of beet workers through the A. E. S. has consistantly shown a decline. When assessing the cause of the decline in placements, it is not difficult to identify at least some of the reasons why. Firstly, the workers have become better acquainted with the beet growing area. They also have advanced in self mobility aiding them to locate employment on their own, resulting in less inquiry through A. E. S. by both farmer and workers as to available labour and

jobs. On farm management of weed control through chemical control has played a part in reducing the need for beet workers.(22)

In the same report Butler and Sutka pointed out that the labour demanded by farmers was for more skilled workers. They state: "Indications from the current situation surrounding the demand for labour would indicate that the demand is beginning to take on a different profile than in the past; namely, the knowledge to carry out safe and precise chemical application, high quality truck drivers and machine operators."(23)

In 1989/90 a Canadian Sugar Beet Producers' Association advisory group conducted a study on Native labour in southern Alberta's sugar beet industry. At this time Lethbridge Agriculture Employment Services Manager, Frances McArthur, estimated that 3,000 short-term workers were employed in sugar beet work.(24) He concluded that 85% of the work force was made up of Native families.(25) The average crew size was 10 with the most successful being family groups consisting of mother, father, children and extended members. Also, it was found that the majority of the workers still came from northern Alberta and northern Saskatchewan. At Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, Agriculture Employment Service Manager, Howard Smith, pointed out that the main reserves in northern Saskatchewan that beet workers came from were Sandy Lake, Sturgeon Lake, Beardy's Reserve at Duck Lake, Shaganess Nut Lake Reserve and Montreal Lake.(26)

The biggest demand for this labour was for hoeing, cultivating and in those areas where herbicides were not affective, weeding. Many of these beet workers had returned year after year and some came from families of the 3rd or 4th generation of beet workers.(27)

In the early 1990s, the use of Native labour declined while at the same time labour demand called for more skilled workers.(28) In 1992 the ASBGMB Labour Representative, Bernard Lyczewski, stated: "The labour needs for agriculture in the future seem to be going to a more skilled type. Manual labour will probably always be needed, but as technology becomes better, these needs will be less."(29) Even with the recent decline in the number of workers, it is still Natives that supply the majority of the necessary labour power in southern Alberta's sugar beet industry.

#### The Role of the State in the Annual Migration of Natives to Alberta's Sugar Beet Fields

A number of non-academic studies have been done on various aspects of the annual migration of Natives to the sugar beet industry in southern Alberta. A study done in 1969 stated that Natives migrated annually because "it was a fast way to make a few 'bucks'"(30) Moreover, the author of the study stated: "It would also appear to be a social event for some: a time for

renewing and making acquaintances, for romancing and arranging marriages, and, it seems, for a few, a time of orgies!"(31) In another study done in 1971, the author pointed out that various government officials involved in the sugar beet industry in southern Alberta stated that "the annual movement is something of a 'holiday' for the Indian....Indians come to the sugar beet fields to meet old friends, meet new people, and generally to 'have a good time'."(32) Such explanations for the annual migration of Natives to the sugar beet fields are largely impressionistic and in many cases are of questionable validity. It may be that over a period of time the annual movement of Natives to the sugar beet fields became a social event. However, what needs to be explained is exactly how it came to be that a Native migrant labour force to the sugar beet fields developed given the fact that the work was so difficult and that the area of employment was so distant from their home region. In order to understand how a Native migrant labour force developed in southern Alberta's sugar beet industry, it is necessary to examine the role of the state.

The recruitment of Natives for employment in southern Alberta's sugar beet fields was initiated and accomplished through a cooperative effort by industry and numerous branches of government. In 1964 an ASBGA report stated:

While the N. E. S. has been a key figure in

this movement of workers, it is only fulfilling the task that it was actually formed to do by being an active employment service and foreseeing the needs of industry in its area. Although it has been the key figure, it has been by no means alone. The tremendous cooperation which has been noticeable in this work has brought together many branches of government and industry. Working in conjunction with the employment service has been the Canadian Sugar Factories and the Alberta Sugar Beet Growers, together with the Department of Indian Affairs and the Department of Agriculture of the Province of Alberta, working through the Federal Provincial Farm Labour Committee.(33)

Initially, the Federal Provincial Farm Labour Committee or as it was called in the mid-1960s, the Federal-Provincial Agricultural Manpower Committee (FPAMC), was established as a result of the Federal-Provincial Agricultural Agreements. The origin of these Agreements date back to 1942 when the Federal-Provincial Farm Labour Program was initiated.

The Federal-Provincial Farm Labour Program was initiated under National Selective Service in 1942 to provide for co-operative action among local, provincial and federal agencies in the solution of wartime farm labour problems. The Program, based on annual agreements signed between the federal Minister of Labour and the provincial Minister of Agriculture, involved a close working arrangement between provincial Agricultural Extension and National Employment Service officers. Full utilization of local supplies of labour and farm equipment recruited through community programs, organized interprovincial movements of urgently needed farm workers, and interprovincial movement of workers and equipment between Canada and the United States were prominent features.(34)

In the early post-war period farm labour shortages continued and thus it was decided that the Federal-Provincial Farm Labour Program be maintained as an important supplement to the work of the National Employment Service. Since World War II many employers in Canada came to regard the federal government as having the responsibility to provide for manpower supply and the recruitment and movement of workers throughout Canada.(35)

As in the past, the Federal-Provincial Agricultural Agreements were part of the Agricultural Manpower Program which was specifically designed to provide special services to the agricultural market.(36) In 1969 an Agricultural Manpower Program Directive pointed out the purpose of the Federal-Provincial Agricultural Agreements as follows:

Parliament appropriates monies for the Department of Manpower and Immigration to assist the provinces in carrying out the provisions of the Agricultural Manpower Agreements, including agricultural manpower recruitment and movement, research, promotion of improvements in working and living conditions and other matters relating to the development and utilization of agricultural manpower.(37)

The Agreements provided for the establishment of Federal and Provincial Agricultural Manpower Committees. The Committees were to provide guidance and advice to the Minister of Manpower and to parties to the Agreement concerning manpower in the farming industry. As well, the Committees were to "take cognizance of

trends in agricultural manpower supply and demand, working conditions in agriculture, the need for training and/or retraining of agricultural manpower and methods of improving the mobility of manpower within the farming industry."(38)

The federal part of the joint Committee was composed of the Chairmen of the Provincial Agricultural Manpower Committees, officers of the Department of Manpower and Immigration, as well as representatives from other interested federal departments and farm organizations. The Chairman of the Committee was the Assistant Deputy Minister of Manpower who was appointed by the Minister of Manpower.

The provincial part of the Committee consisted of Committees from the provinces. Each Committee was composed of a senior officer of the Provincial Department of Agriculture who acted as Chairman, representatives of the Department of Manpower and Immigration, and other members that the Minister of Agriculture for the province may appoint. The Provincial Committee assessed the labour circumstances of the farming industry in the province and then advised the Department of Manpower and Immigration of agricultural manpower needs. It also recommended suitable programs to meet labour requirements. Lastly, the Committee established guidelines for wages and working and living conditions which were to be met by employers of workers recruited and moved under this Agreement.(39)

The recruitment of workers was carried out by the Canada



Manpower Centres (CMC) of the Department of Manpower and Immigration in conjunction with provincial agencies. Also, the referral and necessary movement of farm workers was undertaken by the Canada Manpower Centres and the provinces agreed to cooperate and provide all possible assistance to the Centres.(40)

The Agreement provided for an equal (50-50) sharing of all costs incurred by either party. Cost sharing under Schedule "A" Part I of the Agreement however, required prior approval of the expenditures by the Minister of Manpower and Immigration. The expenditures that needed the approval of the Minister included the following:

Advertising, publicity and related promotional expenditures undertaken by the Province for the recruitment of agricultural manpower outside the Province.

Expenditures for research and development involved in surveys of recruitment, movement and promotion of improvement in working and living conditions and other matters relating to agricultural manpower.

Expenditures made in connection with housing for seasonal workers under the Agreement for construction of new housing and renovation of existing buildings.

Expenditures in connection with the operation of camps for workers including:...rental of camps...including maintenance and repair...rental or purchase price of necessary camp equipment...necessary premiums to cover insurance on camps and camp equipment owned jointly by the parties to this Agreement, and premiums for accident insurance and workmen's compensation covering the officials and employees connected with the operating of camps...staff salaries and necessary

travelling expenses of camp supervisors and other necessary related expenses.

The purchase price of office equipment necessary for carrying out activities under this Agreement.(41)

Costs that were incurred under Schedule "A" Part II of the Agreements did not require prior approval of the Minister of Manpower and Immigration. These are summarized as follows:

The salary and travelling expenses of staff appointed or assigned by the Province to assist the Canada Manpower Division of the Department of Manpower and Immigration of Canada in recruitment and referral of workers when engaged in these activities.

Advertising, publicity and promotional expenditures undertaken by the Province for the recruitment of agricultural manpower within the Province.

Rentals for office and other space accommodation where space is not available from the Province or Canada.

Rentals of office equipment and maintenance of this equipment; necessary telephone, telegraph and postage charges.

Expenses incidental to the operation of the Provincial Agricultural Manpower Committee and of Local Committees established under the program, including honoraria to designated members of these committees of other specifically named part-time representatives.

Transportation expenses of workers and their families and effects moved under this Agreement, including emergency subsistence of meals and lodgings. Where workers are moved to more than one Province during the period of an organized movement each Province's share will be based on the estimated length of time in the aggregate the workers are employed in the Province.

Emergency hospital, medical treatment and other necessary expenses in respect of personal injuries by accidents or illnesses suffered by...workers recruited under this agreement and their dependents, during the course of their employment....workers recruited under this agreement and their dependents in the course of transit to or from the workers place of employment.... staff members in the course of their employment in approved camps.

Hospital, medical and other accident or illness expenses will only be paid under this agreement provided that the workers, dependents and camp staff members are not covered by workmen's compensation or a provincial hospital or medical plan.(42)

Following 1969 accounts for expenditures under Part II, Schedule A, were submitted by the provinces on a quarterly basis. The accounts were processed by the provincial Department of Finance and passed to the Financial and Management Services of the Department of Manpower and Immigration. The Assistant Deputy Minister of Manpower then certified the accounts for payment.(43)

The Chairman of the Federal Agricultural Manpower Committee (Assistant Deputy Minister of Manpower) was responsible for preparing the new Agricultural Manpower Agreements each year. The Chairman was also in charge of assembling an annual meeting to review manpower activities and programs carried out by the Provincial Committees for the previous year. At the annual meeting manpower needs for the agricultural industry were estimated for the coming year and programs were designed to meet the demands. The Provincial Committees were required to complete an annual report for the Federal Committee to be used as a basis

for review. Each region of the Department of Manpower and Immigration was responsible for submitting an annual report to the Assistant Deputy Minister of Manpower describing activities throughout the previous year that related to Federal-Provincial Agricultural Manpower requirements.(44)

The provisions of the Agreements were reviewed annually in order to bring them up-to-date and consistent with existing agricultural conditions. Consequently, the activities under the Agreements changed over the years in conjunction with the changes and development in Canada's agricultural sector and economy.

The Federal-Provincial Agricultural Manpower Committee was responsible throughout Canada for the administration of the agricultural manpower requirements. The Provincial Committees assessed the labour requirements for the coming year and informed the Department of Manpower and Immigration. The information was then passed on to the Canada Manpower Centres of the Department of Manpower and Immigration and they carried out the recruitment, referral and movement of workers in conjunction with the provincial agencies.

In Alberta, the Provincial Committee was very involved with recruiting labour for the sugar beet industry. Moreover, throughout most of the FPAMC's existence the Provincial Committee of Alberta largely represented sugar beet interests. In 1969 Prairie Regional Director of Manpower, J. W. Edmonds, stated:

In Alberta the Provincial Agricultural Manpower Committee is concerned mainly with recruitment, movement and referral of sugar beet workers. The committee in Alberta is heavily represented by the sugar beet and vegetable industry. The expenditures incurred by the Alberta Committee are mostly on behalf of the sugar beet industry....(45)

He goes on to point out the following:

In contrast to the other provinces the activities by the Alberta Committee almost exclusively depend on the Indian and Metis people living in Alberta and Saskatchewan for their labour supply. While some sugar beet thinning and hoeing in Southern Alberta is done by other workers such as family labour, high school children and farm workers of other ethnic origin the largest acreage of sugar beets are worked by the transient workers consisting of native Indian and Metis. The proportion of the acreage worked by the Indian and Metis is increasing each year. For example, in 1964 less than 50% of the acreage was done by these workers, whereas in 1967, 63% of the sugar beets were worked by them.(46)

#### The Department of Indian Affairs and Native Migrant Labour

Besides the Department of Manpower and Immigration, the other branch of the federal government that was highly active in labour recruitment for southern Alberta's sugar beet industry was Indian Affairs (currently the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development). During the early 1950s when the supply of immigrant labour to the sugar beet fields declined Indian Affairs was instrumental in initiating the use of Indian labour. In reference to this period, Prairie Regional Director of Manpower, J. W. Edmonds stated: "During these years the Indian

Affairs Branch of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration was looking for employment opportunities for Indians and while most of this potential labour force had little experience working on farms the idea of using them in the sugar beet fields was conceived."(47)

By the mid-1950s Indian labour from reserves was brought into Southern Alberta on a major scale with the full cooperation of Indian Affairs. In 1956 ASBGA Labour Committee Chairman, Leith Johnson, stated:

On January 30 and 31 a labour delegation attended a convention of Indian Agents from Alberta and the Northwest Territories in Edmonton. We were well pleased with the favorable reports the Indians have taken back with them of the money earned and treatment received from the farmers. The agents reported that it was very likely a greater number of Indians would be coming to the beet fields in 1957. Mr. Jones, supervisor of Indian Affairs in Saskatchewan has given us his assurance of full co-operation of all his agents.(48)

In the 1960s the Indian Branch of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration was heavily involved in promoting the movement of Indians to the sugar beet fields of southern Alberta. For instance, in the spring of 1966 the outlook for obtaining the necessary seasonal agricultural workers in the prairie region was in doubt. However, with the assistance of Indian Affairs the necessary labour force was procured. At the annual meeting of the Federal-Provincial Agricultural Manpower

Conference in November of 1966, the Assistant Deputy Minister and Director General of Manpower, G. G. Duclos, stated:

It was obvious that the labour required was not going to be forthcoming unless every effort was made to involve as much as possible those groups of the population which were in the best position to contribute to this kind of effort. One such group consists of our Indian citizens. Starting at Ottawa with discussions between ourselves and the Indian Affairs Branch, and continuing in the regions and at the local level between the local officers of the Manpower Division, the local office of the Indian Affairs Branch and the growers, discussions paved the way for the greater use of Indians....(49)

Not only was the Indian Affairs heavily involved in recruitment of Indians, it also thankful of the sugar beet industry for hiring Indians. In the minutes of the 1966 annual Federal-Provincial Agricultural Manpower Conference in Ottawa, it is stated:

Mr. R. F. Battle, Assistant Deputy Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, said that the Indian Affairs Branch was pleased with the increase in the movement of Indians....of the 3,000 engaged in the southern Alberta sugar beet and vegetable harvest, 1,727 had come from Saskatchewan, 883 from Alberta....He also expressed appreciation to the sugar beet and food processing industry for providing employment opportunities for Indians, and to the officials of the Department of Manpower and Immigration and the Department of Agriculture for their co-operation in assisting the movement of Indians to farm work.(50)

Also, the Department of Manpower and Immigration was pleased that Indian Affairs was active in recruitment from reserves because of the benefits for the Indians. At the end of the 1966 agricultural season Assistant Deputy Minister of Manpower, G. G. Duclos, stated:

The labour problem of the sugar beet industry was largely met by a much more intensive use of Indian labour from the Northern Reserves. Over 3,000 such workers were recruited for the industry, a substantial increase over previous years, and probably a record for this kind of recruitment. I cannot forebear remarking here that one of the more gratifying aspects of the agriculture situation this year to us in Ottawa has been the much more intensive, and much more successful use of Indian labour, and the consequent provision to the Indians of a much better income level, than they have known for a long time.(51)

By the early 1970s the pattern of recruitment of Natives was well established. The FPAMC got requests for workers from the local beet farmers in southern Alberta. It forwarded the requests to the office of the Canada Manpower Centre in Lethbridge. Then the CMC, in liaison with the Indian Affairs, circulated the requests among its offices near reserves and Metis communities. As the beet season began, the regional offices sent letters and application forms to the chiefs and the band councils on the reserves. The applications were for summer jobs hoeing sugar beets. The Indians filled out the applications and returned them to the CMC offices. As the need for labour in the sugar fields commenced, chartered buses transported the successful applicants



from their homes to the Reception Centre in Lethbridge. Once the workers left the bus in Lethbridge, Manpower withdrew from the process and FPAMC officials took over.(52)

The reception, registration and allocation of the workers was in the hands of the FPAMC officials. Usually the officials tried to schedule the arrival of the buses in the morning or early in the afternoon to allow for the registration, allocation and transportation of workers to farms all in one day. If workers were not allocated on the day of arrival, they were provided with meals and sleeping accommodations at the Reception Centre.(53)

In the early 1970s Indian Affairs was actively doing its part to meet the labour needs of beet farmers. For instance, in 1970 ASBGA Labour Committee Chairman, Walter Strom, informed farmers of the following: "Indian Affairs now have a training program for their people which some of you may want to use. Basically, they will pay half the wages of an Indian trainee, engaged in farm labour, for a three-month period."(54)

By the mid-1970s most Natives were coming to the sugar beet fields outside of the sponsored movement. Consequently, in 1975 the FPAMC eliminated the policy of providing transportation for Native workers to the sugar beet fields.(55) From this period and onward, freelance workers that came to the sugar beet fields would go to the Lethbridge Farm Labour Pool Office for placement on farms.(56) Thereafter, it was the Lethbridge Farm Labour Pool Office that recorded the number of Native workers placed in the

sugar beet fields. However, this record was largely non-representative of the number of Natives working in the fields because many returned to the same farmer year after year without informing the Labour Pool Office. Eventually, in 1981 ASBGA Labour Committee Chairman, Norman Hall, reported that all the Native workers that came to the sugar beet fields were freelance and therefore labour recruitment was not necessary.(57)

#### The State and the Recruitment of Native Labour

The federal and provincial governments along with sugar beet growers and processors used an array of paternalistic mechanisms or levers that were designed to compel or induce Natives to migrate to the sugar beet fields. Moreover, once they were in the fields mechanisms were used to pressure them into staying in the employment of the industry.

One way of inducing Natives to migrate to the sugar beet fields and encouraging them to stay was through involvement in community social events. For example, in the latter part of the 1950s Native workers were guests of the beet growers, B. C. Sugar and the National Employment Service at the annual summer stampede at Raymond. In referring to Native beet workers in 1956, ASBGA Labour Chairman, Leith Johnson, stated: "These people were entertained as guests on July 2 at the Raymond Stampede by the Beet Growers, Sugar Company and the National Employment Service.

It is hoped that this gesture will result in these people returning to the beet fields in 1957."(58) And, in 1959 Johnson also stated: "The Stampede celebration at Raymond July 1st, where an estimated 1200 Indians including children, were guests of the Growers, Sugar Company and National Employment service, was again a success. Cost of this outing was just over \$2000 and was shared 50-50 by Growers and Sugar Company."(59)

Another way that the government induced Natives to migrate from Saskatchewan and Alberta was by chartering buses and paying part of their transportation costs to the the sugar beet fields. As early as 1955 the federal and provincial governments policy was to ask Native workers to pay for one-third of their transportation cost to the sugar beet fields and they would pay the remainder.(60) However, as the Native labour force increased in size in following years the government felt that the sugar beet industry should cover some of the expense. In 1960 the ASBGA Labour Committee Chairman, Leith Johnson, stated:

At a labour meeting held January 4, 1961, Mr. Gramham stated that the Government was of the opinion that this labour movement to the beet areas was becoming too expensive as it had increased annually and was likely to continue to increase, and were now proposing that the industry absorb a part of the expense. The average one-way incoming fare in 1960 from Alberta and Saskatchewan was \$13.25. The Indian pays \$5.00 and the Government absorbs the difference or \$8.25 per person. Someone has got to continue to pay this difference, either the Government, the Indian, the farmer that receives the labour, or the industry as a whole.(61)

Although the government asked the industry to cover some of the increasing cost for transportation, nothing changed except for an increase in the Native's share of the transportation cost which was raised to \$7.50 per worker from the \$5.00 charged previously.(62) For the return journey the Canada Manpower Centre at Lethbridge issued tickets at a charge of \$7.50 per worker.

The government continued to cover the bulk of the transportation cost for the Native workers until the mid-1970s when most of the workers were freelance and thus outside of the sponsored movement. At this time the ASBGA Labour Committee Chairman, Walter Strom, stated: "For over twenty years our main source of hand labour has come from the Indian reserves of northern Alberta and northern Saskatchewan. All through these years charter buses have featured prominently in the transportation of these workers. At least this statement was true until 1975. Last summer, no charter buses were used, and only 25 workers were brought in by bus on individual travel warrants."(63)

Sugar beet farmers also provided workers with housing and utilities while in their employment as a means of attracting and retaining labour. This fact was made clear in 1957 when ASBGA Labour Committee Chairman, Leith Johnson, stated: "I would like to again stress the importance of suitable housing as an important factor in attracting beet labour to our farms, and then keeping them over from year to year."(64)

In 1965 the ASBGA was aware that some changes had to be made, particularly in regards to labour force housing, if it wanted to keep the flow of Native workers coming to the sugar beet fields. ASBGA Labour Committee Chairman, Leith Johnson, pointed out that "indications are that we will have to raise the labour scale per acre, if we hope to come close to attracting enough workers to fill our needs. Suggestions have been made that we try a few hostels in different parts of the beet area. The Department of Health and Welfare seem to favor this type of housing as this would be one means of providing modern facilities for more people, such as gas heat, electricity, hot and cold water, etc."(65) In the following year ASBGA Labour Committee Chairman, Walter Strom, reported:

This past summer six farmers in the Iron Springs area joined forces to start the first Agricultural Manpower Hostel in this area, using Indian workers. Thirty-five workers were housed in individual cottages but fed in a central dining room, which also served as a recreation center. The success of this venture can be attributed to the fact that these farmers went beyond what could ordinarily be expected of them, in caring for the needs of their workers, and in providing supervision in the field. The workers were transported in a school bus, purchased by the farmers, and the farmer whose field was being hoed was driver and field supervisor.(66)

In 1966 the ASBGA was also active in pursuing the construction of more hostels for migrant workers. It asked "that the provincial and federal government give a grant of forty

percent of the cost of a hostel and finance the balance as a long-term loan."(67) In the ASBGA's view the financing was necessary to upgrade the housing for migrant workers as this would attract more workers and alleviate some of the labour shortage which was evident in the fields the previous year.(68) In the following year Strom stated :

The Labour Hostels at Iron Springs and Raymond once again proved their worth in better care of crews and better quality of work done by them. Our request for a 40% grant toward construction cost of hostels was agreed to by the provincial and federal governments. Four farmers east of Picture Butte have organized "Coyote Flats Labour Hostel." They are planning to erect two buildings consisting of a dormitory and a kitchen-dining room and washing unit. There is keen interest in some other areas, and we hope farmers will proceed so that the money set aside last year will be used before the end of the fiscal year March 31 as after that date whatever portion that is not used will be cancelled.(69)

As a result of encouragement of the ASBGA, in 1968 Strom was able to report that five hostel units had qualified for the government grant of 40% of the cost of construction, additions or improvements. Moreover, this grant included the "cost of the vehicles used to transport the workers to the fields."(70)

By the end of the 1960s the federal and Alberta provincial governments had provided grants for several years for beet labour hostels. However, in some years the grant money was not used. As a result, in 1969 when there were no more new applications for hostels, the grant was reduced by more than 50%.(71)

In 1969 when the grant money for hostels was reduced the ASBGA took a new approach to housing assistance. That is, it requested "the housing program be extended to individual farms on the same basis as to hostels under the Federal-Provincial agreement."(72) Consequently, in 1970 ASBGA Labour Committee Chairman, Walter Strom, reported: "Last year we requested, and were granted, a change in labour housing assistance. Grants are now available to individual farmers for seasonal labour housing at a maximum of \$150.00 per worker or \$2,000 per farmer, whichever is less. The grant is also limited to 40% of total cost."(73)

Throughout the 1970s the federal and provincial governments provided beet farmers with grants to improve seasonal labour housing. For instance, in 1971 housing grants were provided, but the assistance formula was changed. The assistance was still \$150.00 per worker, with a maximum of \$2,000.00 per farmer, based on 10 acres per worker. However, the two levels of government were now willing to pay up to 50% of the cost instead of the 40% paid previously.(74) These new rules applied to new housing or to the upgrading of existing housing. Then, in 1972 the ASBGA announced that the government assistance for seasonal labour housing had increased to \$300.00 per worker, with a maximum of \$2,000 per farmer and the farmer's input of labour would also count toward his half of the project.(75) In the following year, the assistance for upgrading labour housing came under two

programs. One was still the grant of \$300.00 per worker with a maximum of \$2,000.00. The other, however, was the government sponsored Priority Employment Program. In this program a carpenter repair crew did the housing repairs and the federal and provincial governments paid for the labour as long as the farmer provided the materials.(76) Again in 1974 the housing programs were expanded. The grant was increased to \$500.00 per worker up to a \$4000.00 maximum per farmer. And, under the Priority Employment Program a second carpentry repair crew was added.(77) In 1977 the government grant for labour housing repair was cancelled.(78) However, the Priority Employment Program was continued and lasted until the end of 1983.(79) Although the ASBGMB attempted to get the housing program reinstated in subsequent years, government officials informed it that "in 1983 the housing program was terminated due to the fact that demand for it had become almost non-existent and because government was committed to reducing expenditures."(80)

During the 1960s the Department of Indian Affairs put forth a number of recommendations and initiated various programs ultimately aimed at inducing and retaining Indians as a workforce for Alberta's sugar beet industry. In most cases it worked together with other government agencies and the sugar beet industry to implement these recommendations and programs.

At a National Agricultural Manpower meeting in Ottawa in 1966 the federal representative of Indian Affairs, D. Jackson,



stated: "Considering that the physical and financial efforts expended to deliver a worker who stays on the job for one day is the same as that for one man who remains all season, our report is a resume of observations, conclusions and recommendations indicating steps which might be taken to help the Indian worker remain on the job"(81) The recommendations that Jackson made to the Committee were as follows:

Recruitment of Indian Labour

It is recommended that consideration be given to the following:

Using Indians experienced in agriculture employment to assist in recruiting workers.

Showing of the film on harvest operations as an aid to recruitment.

Involving representatives of Grower's Associations in recruitment.

Extending recruitment to communities beyond present limits in view of good performances of northern Indians this past summer.

Keeping Workers on the Job

The most critical factor is the extent to which the employer co-operates with respect to the following:

Establishes and maintains personal contact and interest in the worker.

Provides properly equipped accommodation of an acceptable standard.

Provides facilities for the Indians to board themselves according to their individual tastes in food.

Affords the worker an opportunity to rest after an arduous 3-4 day trip south.

Promotes orientation to new work setting and community.

Instructs Indians adequately in preferred harvesting techniques.

Defines conditions of employment and rates of pay, preferably in writing.

Recognizes dependence of Indians on native leadership.

Exempts employees from harvesting operations when field or weather conditions unsuitable.

Recommended Aids to Keep Workers on the Job

Consultation with leaders elected by Indian workers in matters affecting or involving them.

Provision of transportation facilities for shopping, recreation and sightseeing.

Waiving of charges for accommodations when workers unemployed due to factors such as weather conditions or others beyond their control.

As a further aid, Indian Affairs Branch is prepared to:

Make field staff available for consultation with Indian workers and employees.

Maintain liaison between workers and their home settlements.

Provide films and other materials to farm labour committees which would enable them to better understand the Indian people. (82)

In the years following the recommendations made by the Department of Indian Affairs many of the suggestions were acted upon. For example, in 1973 the ASBGA, Manpower and Indian Affairs began sending letters to former beet workers asking them to

return for the next sugar beet season. Also, the ASBGA and the Sugar Company sent representatives directly to the reserves in order to encourage Natives to migrate to the beet fields. At the time the ASBGA Labour Committee Chairman, Walter Strom stated:

The Central Board, in co-operation with Manpower and Indian Affairs, instituted a campaign of contacting as many former sugar beet workers as possible by letter, inviting them to return to the beet fields, and also asking them to invite friends to come with them. Later on in the season, three men from the Central Board and one from the Sugar Company went out to the reserves and made personal contact with the [N]ative people urging them to come to Southern Alberta for the beet thinning.(83)

In the following year the same inducement tactic was used. In commenting on its success the ASBGA Labour Committee Chairman, Walter Strom, stated:

In 1974 we followed the same labour recruiting procedure as in 1973, with letters to both growers and former beet workers, followed by public relations teams travelling to the various C.M.C. offices, Indian Affairs offices and Indian Reserves in Alberta and Saskatchewan. This program, which was very successful in 1973, proved to be equally successful in 1974. In carrying out our labour program, we appreciate very much the co-operation of the Canada Manpower Centers and Indian Affairs Branches of Alberta and Saskatchewan, the Canadian Sugar Factories field staff, and the staff of the Federal-Provincial Agricultural Manpower Centre in Lethbridge, as well as the grower employers, whose combined efforts contributed to a minimum of labour problems.(84)

The campaign of contacting Natives by letter and travelling

to the various reserves to induce workers to migrate to the sugar beet fields was continued with a great deal of success until 1980.(85) Thereafter, the recruitment of labour was not necessary because all the Natives that went to the Alberta's sugar beet fields were freelance and came on their own.

#### Native Migrant Labour and the Termination of Welfare Benefits

One of the most effective means of inducing Natives to migrate to Alberta's sugar beet industry and moreover, of pressuring them to stay in the sugar beet fields until the beet season ended, was to cut off their welfare payments in their home region.

In 1970 John Schmidt of The Calgary Herald stated: "Of the Indians recruited since 1953, over 90% were on welfare at the time of recruitment."(86) He substantiated the information by saying: "My opinion is based on 12 years of observation and a brief by L. R. Jensen of Magrath, [President of the Alberta Sugar Beet Growers Association....]"(87) In the same year in the ASBGA annual report President, Lalovee Jensen, pointed out in reference to Natives that "many had been on welfare" but employment in the sugar beet industry had taken them "off welfare rolls".(88)

Cutting off welfare payments for Natives, particularly for Treaty Indians on reserves, was a strong motivating force for

seeking employment in the sugar beet fields of southern Alberta. A study done in 1969 that involved interviews with Treaty Indians from Saskatchewan that worked in the sugar beet fields stated: "Some families stated that they only came because they felt obliged to - Welfare Payments were cut - but that they really didn't want to do this type of work."(89) The same study pointed out that some of the Indian workers had received letters stating that welfare payments would be cut off. For instance, Thomas Lachance of the Big River Reserve who worked in the beet fields of Taber, Alberta stated that he had been "living on Welfare payments but received a letter saying that the payments were to be cut off."(90) In July of 1969 Henry Tomaschuk, a Canadian Labour Congress representative, did a three-week investigative report on Native migrant workers from Saskatchewan. He stated: "In talking to a large number of Indians and Metis people, I get the story that these people are told by the government either they go out to the sugar beet fields or their welfare is cut off."(91) Also, in 1969 John Ferguson, a Saskatchewan university lecturer, and Barry Lipton, a reporter of the Prairie Fire in Regina, travelled to the beet fields of southern Alberta to investigate the treatment of Native workers. In their report they stated the following:

One of the most unsavory aspects of the situation the beet workers find themselves in is that they are recruited for work in the fields under conditions of

compulsion or forced labour. At least two federal government agencies and the welfare departments of two provincial governments (Alberta and Saskatchewan) are complicit in this process.

Canada Manpower working in co-operation with the Federal Department of Indian Affairs recruits the Indians for work in the fields from as far away as Northern Saskatchewan.

And "co-operate" the Indian Affairs Branch does. The Indian Affairs Branch has the policy of stopping welfare payments during the summer, for all reserve members but those on permanent welfare. The result is that reserve members must leave the reserve during the summer months to find work.(92)

Ferguson and Lipton also pointed out in their report that of the number of reserve members that they interviewed who worked in the sugar beet fields of southern Alberta eighty-five per cent of them stated that they had tried to find work near their reserve but none was available. Thus, they found that the majority of the reserve members who had been cut off welfare had no alternative but to travel to the sugar beet fields to find employment.(93)

In regards to non-treaty Indian and Metis people, Ferguson and Lipton found that the government also cut off their welfare payments in order to pressure them to migrate to the sugar beet fields of Alberta. They stated:

The Alberta and Saskatchewan government welfare agencies do their share by cutting off payments to non-treaty Indian and Metis.

Then the buses cruise the Indian communities, waiting to take them to work in the Alberta beet fields for little pay and poor working and living conditions.(94)

## Conclusion

Clearly, the Canadian state was heavily involved in the recruitment, movement and retention of Native workers in southern Alberta's sugar beet industry. One of the primary ways in which the state became involved in the sugar beet industry was through the Federal-Provincial Agricultural Manpower Committee (FPAMC). The Federal-Provincial Agricultural Manpower Committee, initially called the Federal Provincial Farm labour Committee until the mid-1960s, was established as a result of the Federal-Provincial Agricultural Agreements. These Agreements were signed annually between the federal Minister of Manpower and the provincial Minister of Agriculture. The two most prominent features of these Agreements between the federal and provincial governments were recruitment and movement of labour to areas of need in agricultural sectors throughout Canada. This involved a close working relationship between provincial agricultural agencies and the Department of Manpower and Immigration.

The federal part of the FPAMC consisted of the Chairman of the Provincial Agricultural Manpower Committees, officers of the Department of Manpower and Immigration and representatives from other interested federal departments and farm organizations. The Chairman of the Committee was the Assistant Deputy Minister of Manpower. The provincial part of the FPAMC consisted of Provincial Committees composed of a senior officer of the provincial Department of Agriculture, representatives of the

Department of Manpower and Immigration and other members that the Minister of Agriculture for the province may have appointed. The Provincial Committee assessed the labour circumstances and then advised the Department of Manpower and Immigration of agricultural manpower needs. It also recommended programs to meet labour requirements. Lastly, the Provincial Committee established guidelines for wages and working and living conditions which were to be met by employers of workers recruited and moved under the Agreement.

The recruitment of workers was carried out by the Canada Manpower Centres of the Department of Manpower and Immigration in conjunction with provincial agencies. The Canada Manpower Centres were also responsible for the referral and movement of farm workers and the provinces agreed to cooperate and provide any necessary assistance to the centres.

The costs involved in carrying out the provisions of the Federal-Provincial Agricultural Manpower Agreements were shared equally by the Department of Manpower and Immigration and the Provinces. These costs involved such things as advertising, research, housing for workers, insurance, salary and travel expenses of staff involved in recruitment, rental of office equipment, and transportation and medical costs of workers.

The Provincial Committee in Alberta was mainly involved in recruitment and movement of workers for the sugar beet industry. Consequently, most of the expenditures of Alberta's Committee was



on behalf of the sugar beet industry. Moreover, many of the representatives of the Provincial Committee were involved in Alberta's sugar beet industry.

The other primary way in which the Canadian state became involved in the sugar beet industry of southern Alberta was through the Indian Affairs Branch. In the early 1950s when immigrant labour to the sugar beet fields dwindled it was Indian Affairs that conceived the idea of using Indian workers to fill the job positions in the industry formerly done by immigrants. In the years that followed the Indian Affairs Branch assisted the FPAMC in the recruitment of Indians from northern Alberta and northern Saskatchewan.

By the 1970s the way that Native labour was recruited and moved to work in the sugar beet fields was well established. The FPAMC received requests for workers from sugar beet farmers in southern Alberta. The requests were forwarded to the Canada Manpower Centres (CMC) in Lethbridge. Then the CMC, with the assistance of Indian Affairs, circulated the requests among its offices near reserves and Metis communities. When the need for beet labourers commenced, the CMC regional offices sent application forms to the chiefs and band councils on the reserves. Successful applicants were then transported to the sugar beet fields by chartered buses. Once the workers arrived in southern Alberta, Manpower handed over responsibility to FPAMC officials who registered and allocated the workers to the

farmers.

Throughout the process of procuring Native labour for southern Alberta's sugar beet industry, the state utilized a variety of mechanisms which were ultimately aimed at inducing Natives to migrate from their home region and once in the sugar beet fields, pressuring them to stay for the length of the beet season. Usually the state accomplished the process with the aid of provincial agencies and the sugar beet industry.

In order to induce and retain Native workers the federal government, in conjunction with the provincial government and the sugar beet industry, invited Native workers as guests and paid for their admission to annual summer stampedes in beet regions; chartered buses and paid for the greater part of the cost of their transportation to the sugar beet fields; provided the farmers with funding to build worker hostels and lastly, the state provided funding to individual farmers to repair worker housing.

The Indian Affairs Branch also played a large role in the inducement and retention of Indians for employment in the sugar beet fields. Because of its close relationship with Indian people on reserves, it was able to make numerous recommendations to other federal and provincial departments as well as to sugar beet industry representatives which helped in the inducement and retention of Indians for the sugar beet industry. Many of these recommendations were eventually put into practise by the Indian

Affairs Branch with the assistance of the ASBGA and Canada Manpower Centres. These included sending letters to former Native employees asking them to return to the fields in the following beet season and sending representatives from the ASBGA and the Sugar Company directly to the various reserves to encourage Indians to migrate to the beet fields. Lastly, the most effective way that the Indian Affairs Branch induced Indians to migrate to the sugar beet fields of southern Alberta and moreover, it pressured them to remain there until the end of the beet season was to cut off their welfare payments at their home reserve. In regards to non-treaty and Metis individuals, they too had their welfare payments cut off in their home regions by the provincial government which effectively encouraged them to migrate to the sugar beet fields in search of employment.

The next chapter will discuss the working conditions of Natives in southern Alberta's sugar beet industry. In doing so, it will highlight some of the criticisms of the sugar beet industry in terms of its treatment of Native workers. It was pointed out in chapter three that, in general, farmers received low prices for their sugar beet crops. It was also pointed out that farmers suffered from increasing costs of machinery, fertilizers and weed control chemicals. Farmers had no control over these aspects in the sugar beet industry. Thus in order to off set these aspects that had a negative effect on their profit, they maximized the exploitation of labour.

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Chapter Five: Native Working Conditions in Southern Alberta's  
Sugar Beet Industry

Prior to the introduction of mechanization and chemical weed control in the sugar beet industry, sugar beet cultivation was "labour intensive" in nature. It was tedious, back-aching stoop labour and a worker had to sweat long hours under the hot summer sun for every acre of beets produced.(1) Before the early 1960s sugar beets were grown from a multigerm seed which produced a bunch rather than a single beet plant. Once germination occurred, the bunch had to be weeded until only one plant remained. To accomplish this task workers had to crawl along the rows on their knees. Then, the tiny seedling had to be weeded as many as three times during the growing season. When the plants reached maturity in the fall they were harvested by hand. This entailed knocking the plants together to remove excess dirt and then they were "topped" by cutting off their leaves and crown which made the beets ready for shipment to the sugar processing factory. By comparison, it took approximately 115 hours of hand labour to produce one acre of beets which is more than ten times the amount of labour required to produce one acre of grain.(2) As a result, in the 1920s and 30s most farmers that tried producing beets gave up after one or two seasons. Moreover, beet farmers soon found that farm hands would do almost any other type of work before they would accept the job of hoeing and harvesting beets.(3)

Seasonal work in the beet fields began around mid-May and sometimes a week later depending on the annual growing conditions. This was the period when the plants needed thinning, weeding and hoeing. Thus, it was also during this period that there was a heavy demand for labour. This demand lasted until mid-July and thereafter the majority of the workers returned to their homes.

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, since the early 1950s when Natives from northern Alberta and Saskatchewan began migrating each spring to the sugar beet fields of southern Alberta, the state had been heavily involved in the recruitment, relocation and retention of Native workers. This involvement lasted up until the early 1980s. During this period, state intervention in the economy of the sugar beet industry helped farmers overcome many problems, particularly that of acquiring sufficient labour to cultivate their crops. However, while state intervention may have helped sugar beet farmers overcome many of their problems, Native working conditions suffered.

#### **Native Labour and the Sugar Beet Contract**

The hoeing and weeding of beets were done on a contract basis. That is, beet work was done on the basis of agreements made between the grower and the labourer. In a study done in 1969, Herman French described the pattern of the workers who signed the

contracts as follows:

The work is done by the contract piece. This means that the worker can set his own hours of work. He may also recruit as many helpers as he desires. Sometimes a single family will be working one piece; other times two or more families will unite to complete a single job. The time element seems also to be an important factor: the worker can work early in the morning or late in the evening as the inclination (and need for cash) prompts him. This means that several workers may be seen in town in the late afternoons and particularly Saturday afternoons and evenings. When one contract is completed, the workers are free to go elsewhere to contract other jobs. The workers, then, not only set their own times of work but their own mealtime pattern and, to an extent, their own place of work.(4)

The "Alberta Cash Labour Contract- Sugar Beets" outlined the conditions of employment and rates of pay. In the 1960s, the Federal-Provincial Agricultural Manpower Committee (FPAMC) was responsible for the recruitment of agricultural labour. Once workers arrived in the sugar beet fields, the FPAMC provided them with an information sheet that stated "all labour shall be contracted labour and shall sign the Alberta Cash Labour Contract for Sugar Beet workers".(5)

The contract called for a fixed fee for each stage of cultivation. For instance, in a "Letter of Instruction and Information, Sugar Beet and Vegetable Industry Workers, Season 1968-69" put out by Canada Manpower, it was stipulated that the grower had to pay the contractor a specific rate per acre upon

satisfactory completion of the contract. An acre was defined as 23,760 lineal feet of row. The contract included performing Operation A or Operation B, but not both. The work performed and rates of pay were as follows:

Operation A: Trimming

Removing weeds and excess beets. Total plant removal not to exceed 50 plants, beets and weeds combined, per 100 feet of cultivated row.....\$9.00  
Plus per measured acre upon satisfactory completion of contract.....\$3.00  
Total for Trimming.....\$12.00  
Hoeing.....\$9.00  
Total for Operation A.....\$21.00

Operation B: Thinning

Removing weeds and excess beets. Total plant removal exceeding 50 plants, weeds and beets combined per 100 feet of cultivated beet row.....\$14.00  
Plus per measured acre upon satisfactory completion of contract.....\$3.00  
Total for thinning.....\$17.00  
Hoeing.....\$9.00  
Total for Operation B.....\$26.00

Operation C:

If, through cultural practices, the beet field warrants a once-over job only, the price will be \$12.00 per acre unless otherwise agreed between the grower and the worker.(6)

In 1969, the average worker could do an acre per day.(7) Therefore, this meant that the worker could earn as much as \$17.00 per day or more in some cases. However, a worker was not always able to work everyday of the beet season. In most weeks, wind or rain or some other factor made it impossible to get in

six days of work. As well, although beet farmers staggered growth across the districts, there was usually a waiting period of several jobless days or even weeks between the first and second hoeings.(8) In a study done by Elizabeth Steele and Calvin Zacharias, entitled The Sugar Beet Fields of Southern Alberta, May - September, 1971, it was estimated at this time that the entire migrant labour force, which numbered 2,000, earned a total of \$600,000 from hoeing sugar beets. This translated into an average of \$300.00 per worker for the beet season.(9)

In 1969 John Ferguson, a school teacher and former employee of Indian Affairs, and Barry Lipton, a reporter for Prairie Fire, published a report in The Native People entitled, "Exploitation and Discrimination in the Alberta Beet Fields", on the working conditions of Natives in southern Alberta's sugar beet industry. The report sparked a controversy over Native working conditions that lasted for two years and its effects were felt for many years thereafter. The authors cited numerous instances where beet farmers exploited Native workers. In regard to wages, for example, they stated:

We talked to a group of Indian field workers and asked them if they had been short-changed in their pay-cheques or knew of people who had been. David Courtoreille answered first.

"Yes, I've seen a lot of cheatin'," And a lotta poor Indians got that too--they don't know the difference. A lotta these farmers, you know, they think the Indians are dumb...."(10)

In another interview with a beet worker named Clarence Miller, Ferguson and Lipton were informed:

"There's a lot of Indians that can't read or write down here. All they talk is Cree and Chipewyan and a lot of them don't even read or write--they can't even spell their name or nothin'."

"They pay them out in cash and Lord knows what happens then. They don't give a written statement. I know myself I got beat, even on the labour. I still didn't get my payment from spring..."(11)

Ferguson and Lipton also found that Native workers had been exploited by the farmers through lengthening of the beet rows.

In the interview with beet worker Clarence Miller, Ferguson and Lipton were told: 'The biggest problem with the beets...is that one year they measure out a field, then if the same person works on it next year, like they expect it to be the same length and then they, the farmers, they do about four or five rows more, you know, and do more beets along side, a little bit, you know, lengthen the rows. Then they expect the Indians to accept the same amount of payment.'(12)

Also, in 1969, the working conditions of Natives in southern Alberta's sugar beet industry gained Canada wide attention when the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) aired a film on national television in which it was alleged that Native migrant workers were subjected to a number of indignities.(13) During this same period a number of spokespersons for various provincial

and national groups voiced their concerns on the Native working conditions in southern Alberta's sugar beet industry. For instance, Henry Tomaschuk, Canadian Labour Congress Representative, Roy Jamha, Alberta Federation of Labour President, and Grant Notley, Alberta New Democratic Party Leader, were highly critical of the conditions of the migrant workers.(14)

As a result of all the criticism of the working conditions in southern Alberta's sugar beet industry, in 1970 a group of representatives from a number of organizations concerned about the allegations that were made, established an Independent Committee to investigate the matter. The organizations represented on the Committee included the following: Alberta Federation of Labour, Indian Association of Alberta, United Alliance for the Advancement of Native People, Canadian Labour Congress, Metis Association of Alberta, and the Alberta Human Rights Association.(15) In regards to pay rates the report stated: "Jobs are contracted on an amount per acre, one acre equalling an average of 4 1/2 row miles. When this is understood, the amount paid per acre is seen to be by no means generous. Increases in contract rates do not appear to have kept pace with increases in the cost of living and wage increases obtained in other sections of the economy."(16) Thus, one of the recommendations the Committee made to the sugar beet industry stated: "Minimum contract rate for hand operations in the sugar beet fields should be set by the FPAMC, and should reflect more

immediately increases in the cost of living and wage increases in other sectors of the economy."(17)

In the period following the controversy that erupted over the working conditions of Natives in 1969-70, the concern over wages paid to Native workers did not subside. As recently as 1981 the ASBGA Labour Committee Chairman, Norman J. Hall reported that the industry had received requests from Native leaders to increase the wage rate paid to contract workers. At the time Hall stated: " In April, your Labour Committee along with Mr. Gil Evans of the Local Agricultural Manpower Board met with a delegation from Saskatchewan. Chief John George, Chief Fred Thomas and Indian Affairs representative Arnold Ahenakew requested a rate increase in the labour contract."(18) At the time, however, the Native leaders were satisfied once it was pointed out to them that the 1981 labour contract included a 12% increase in wages.(19)

Once the contract was signed workers had to remain with the farmer regardless of the working conditions. For example, if workers found that the beet fields were a lot more weedy than expected, they would still have to do the work because the contract was binding.(20) Consequently, rather than sign a contract many of the workers would survey the field and then bargain with the farmer until they came to a verbal agreement. However, in many cases where a contract was never signed farmers tended to enforce the terms of a contract anyway. In particular,



they resorted to the three-dollar per acre hold-back clause until the work was done to their satisfaction.(21)

As well, disputes inevitably arose between the farmer and the worker over the definition of "satisfactory completion" as stated in the contract. The contracts covered arbitration procedures in the case of such disputes. Differences of opinion between farmer and contractor were arbitrated by field men of the Canadian Sugar Factories Ltd. The study done by Steele and Zacharias in 1971 commented on the appropriateness of this dispute procedure. They stated:

The field men are closely associated with the industry, they have a good close relationship to the Alberta Sugar Beet Growers Association. The workers cannot believe they are likely to favour Indians or Metis over growers. They suspect that , in the arbitration procedures, a conspiracy of white interest groups may be exploiting them.(22)

Similarly, the study entitled, Report of an Independent Committee of Inquiry Established to Examine the Conditions of Migrant Workers in the Sugar Beet Industry in Alberta, stated the following:

Arbitration procedures in the case of disputes are covered in the contract. Differences of opinion between farmer and contractor are arbitrated by field men of the Canadian Sugar Factories Ltd. While not impugning the impartiality of these officials it would

be desirable to have independent arbitration or at least a representative from one of the [N]ative peoples' association to assist in the arbitration of disputes. It has been alleged that some growers attempt to defraud the workers and one FPAMC field man admitted this to be true, though only of a few farmers.(23)

The sugar beet contract also included a section on transportation for workers. For instance, the Canada Manpower Centre "Letter of Instruction and Information, Sugar Beet and Vegetable Workers, Season 1968-69", stated: "Transportation will be supplied by the Federal-Provincial Agricultural Manpower Committee to those recruited, to Lethbridge only...."(24) The information letter when on to state: "For the return journey the cost will be \$7.50 per person over 12, and \$3.75 for each one over 6 and under 12. Return tickets will be issued from the Canada Manpower Centre at Lethbridge."(25) Although workers were charged for their return transportation, the FPAMC was empowered to cover all costs incurred by workers and their families. For example, the 1969 Federal-Provincial Agricultural Agreements, Schedule "A" Part II, stated that the federal and provincial governments agreed to share equally the "[t]ransportation expenses of workers and their families and effects moved under this Agreement...."(26)

Sugar beet contracts also stipulated that a habitable house be provided to the worker. For instance, the Canada Manpower Centre "Letter of Instruction and Information, Sugar Beet and Vegetable Industry Workers, Season 1968-69", promised: "Houses

are supplied free and vary in size from 2 to 6 rooms, depending usually on the acres of sugar beets and the number of workers required to handle the contract."(27) Houses were equipped with stove, beds and mattresses. The workers had to provide their own food, fuel, blankets, cooking utensils, dishes and working tools. Once the workers signed a contract they could obtain an advance from their employer to pay for groceries and other needed essentials.(28)

By the mid-1960s beet farmers were building hostels as another form of worker housing. The hostels were capable of accommodating up to 50 workers at one time. In general, the hostels were clean and in good repair. They had hot and cold running water, showers, washing machines, dining rooms, recreation rooms and television. The problem, however, was that they were overly regimented. The hostel operators set the rules of conduct for residents and many workers resented these rules. Consequently, many workers preferred the independence of life in the separate dwellings. In fact, Steele and Zacharias in their study argue that the resentment of rules may have contributed to the difficulty of filling the hostels as well as eventually bringing the hostel building program to a halt in the late 1960s.(29) So, since Natives began migrating to the sugar beet fields of southern Alberta separate dwellings accounted for most of the housing provided to them.

In the controversy that developed in 1969-70 over the working conditions of Natives in southern Alberta's sugar beet industry, housing was a major criticism. In reference to housing conditions for Natives, the report by Ferguson and Lipton in 1969 stated:

Living conditions for most beet workers are very poor. Almost all of the buildings provided by the farmers for them to live in are shacks, converted granaries and chicken coops. Many of them have only dirt floors and none have plumbing facilities or easy access to water.

None have refrigerators or storage areas for fresh produce. As a result the beet workers' families live on canned goods for the two to three months they work the fields.(30)

In 1970, Henry Tomaschuk, a Canadian Labour Congress representative, did a three week investigation of working and living conditions in the sugar beet industry. In the report entitled, "Indian Sugar-Beet Cutters", and published in Canadian Labour, he stated: "The housing is very poor, often you will find people living in granaries or just plain rundown shacks. Most farmers have better barns and pigpens for their livestock."(31) Steele and Zacharias' 1971 study also contained similar comments in reference to Native housing conditions. They stated:

...our own first-hand observations convinced us that many migrant labourers are, in fact, living out their summers in housing that most people

would recognize as unacceptably substandard. In some cases, they're in chicken coops or converted granaries. In one instance, the farmer moved the chickens out just before the workers arrived and, later, the chickens tried to return home for the night.(32)

During the housing controversy in southern Alberta's sugar beet industry in 1969-70, it was the responsibility of the FPAMC to inspect the housing that growers provided for workers recruited under the sponsored movement. FPAMC officials usually did their first inspection of housing in March prior to the beginning of the beet season. However, what was problematic was that there were no basic criteria for defining what constituted an acceptable dwelling and one that should be rejected.(33) In 1969, for instance, the FPAMC "Inspection Report on Agricultural Labour Housing" had categories for "conditions of walls", "of ceiling", "of roof" and "Is the house suitable? If answer to last question is NO, state what you feel is required to bring this house up to the required standard."(34) Nowhere on the Inspection Report did it state what the "required standard" might have been. As a result, judgments as to what was acceptable housing was arbitrary and subjective. In other words, it was left up to the FPAMC inspector to decide whether or not a dwelling was suitable for migrant workers to occupy. Moreover, many of the inspectors were themselves either farmers or ex-farmers and thus many Native workers questioned whether or not they were able to make an objective judgment.(35) In Steele and Zacharias' study they

conclude that the "absence of criteria for housing standards...and the lack of adequate controls together give the whole inspection program an air of meaninglessness and superficiality.(36)

Although the FPAMC inspected housing provided for workers in the sponsored movement, there was some controversy over the inspection of grower housing for freelance workers. That is, in the late 1960s approximately half of the migrant labour in the beet fields was freelance and thus outside of the sponsored movement.(37) And, although the FPAMC inspectors could refuse to provide Manpower recruited labour to beet farmers who did not maintain an adequate housing standard, " it had no control over those farmers who simply hired freelance labour and housed them in the very conditions the inspectors had rejected."(38)

In 1969 when the housing conditions for migrant workers in the sugar beet industry was a hotly debated topic in the media, the ASBGA Labour Report Chairman, Walter Strom, responded to the issue in the Association's annual report by stating: "Housing inspection was again carried out by the Federal-Provincial Committee. The comments made at our meeting indicates that our labour housing has been improved year by year....In 1970 our housing inspection will include all housing used for beet labour. This is something we have done before and we are merely returning to a former practice."(39) However, the Report of an Independent Committee of Inquiry Established to Examine the Conditions of

Migrant Workers in the Sugar Beet Industry in Alberta of 1970 stated: "Despite the statement by Mr. W. Strom, Chairman of the Labour Committee of the Alberta Beet Growers, in his 1969 report to the Association, 'that all housing used by the migrant force would be inspected in 1970', this proved not to be the case. Housing for use by freelance workers is presently not inspected."(40) The report went on to state: "With regard to the non-inspected housing used by freelance workers, it is our observation that it is frequently substandard."(41) The report ended its discussion on migrant labour housing conditions as follows:

As long as the Growers' Association tolerates this kind of attitude on the part of some of its members, then the charge of exploitation will continue to be heard. The answer to the problem is to require that all housing be inspected and farmers offering unsatisfactory accommodation forfeit access to the labour force.

By way of excusing very poor accommodation the investigators frequently were told that the properties are at times very badly abused by the temporary occupants. This is not a mitigating factor. Wilful damage to property can be dealt with through the standard procedures available in our society. If persons abusing property are not proceeded against, it implies that the owner is indifferent to the property and cares not what condition it is in. A grower with concern for his property and concerned about providing good accommodation would be expected to seek normal recompense from those damaging his property.(42)

In the years immediately following the criticism of migrant labour housing, the ASBGA requested that assistance through the

Federal-Provincial agreement be provided to individual farmers to improve worker housing.(43) The request was granted in 1970 and funding was provided for up to 40% of the total cost of improvements.(44) Funding for upgrading of worker housing was provided to farmers in various forms until 1983 when it was cancelled by the government.(45)

#### Sugar Beet Workers and the Labour Laws

Added to relatively poor working conditions of the migrant labour force in southern Alberta's sugar beet fields was the fact that the workers were offered basically no protection through labour laws. Numerous federal and provincial labour laws explicitly excluded the agricultural worker. In 1966, Gil Schonning, an official of the federal Department of Labour, summarized the federal and provincial laws that excluded farm workers as follows:

(1) Statutory school-leaving age

In all of the provinces there is a compulsory school attendance law but in many of the provinces exemptions are permitted for employment in agriculture.

(2) Minimum age for employment

No minimum age has been established for employment in agriculture.

(3) Minimum wage legislation



Farm labour is everywhere excluded from minimum wage regulations.

(4) Equal pay

While most of the provinces have an equal pay law, as a general rule this law does not apply to employment in agriculture.

(5) Hours of work

Five provinces have laws which regulate working hours but none of these laws apply to employment in agriculture.

(6) Weekly rest day

All provinces except Prince Edward Island provide for a weekly rest day for all or nearly all employed persons except farm workers.

(7) Annual vacations with pay

Annual vacations are provided for by law in eight of the provinces. Farm workers are excluded in all provinces.

(8) Public holidays

Provincial laws dealing with public holidays generally do not apply to farm workers.

(9) Fair employment practices

Farm workers are not included in provincial laws which prohibit discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, religion, and national origin.

(10) Notice of termination of employment

Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Quebec and Nova Scotia have legislation requiring an employer or employee to give notice of termination of employment. These laws do not apply to farm workers.

(11) Workmen's Compensation

Agricultural workers were excluded from compulsory coverage in all provinces until 1965 when the provision of the Ontario law stating that the Act did not apply to the industry of farming was deleted. New regulations will be issued extending the protection of the Act to farm workers. It is proposed to bring these workers under the Act from January 1, 1966.

(12) Unemployment Insurance

Employment in agriculture is one of the main categories of employment exempted from provisions of the Unemployment Insurance Act.

(13) Labour Relations

The Labour Relations Acts of Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia exclude agriculture. Agriculture is not excluded in the Acts of Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Under the Quebec Act farm workers are not excluded but the legislation applies only to farms which have three or more employees.(46)

Throughout most of the history of the sugar beet industry, agricultural workers were excluded from federal and provincial labour laws. Moreover, even where there was no specific exclusion and the labour laws were broad enough to include employment in agriculture, they may not have been applied to farm workers.(47) The fact that agricultural workers were exempted from most provincial and federal labour laws reflected the relative political power of the farmers as opposed to the relative powerlessness of farm workers.

Two areas of farm worker exclusion from labour laws that created a great deal of controversy were the lack of unemployment

insurance benefits and Workmen's Compensation. In fact, the lack of unemployment insurance benefits was one of the reasons for the unwillingness of workers to seek employment in the sugar beet fields. For instance, in 1962 the ASBGA Labour Report Director, Leith Johnson, stated: "It seems likely that there will continue to be a loss in our European labour force, as more of these people seek jobs where unemployment insurance is available. Unemployment insurance for farm workers seems just as remote as ever before."(48)

In 1967 unemployment insurance benefits were made mandatory for agricultural workers that worked sufficient time at "non-contract" work to qualify.(49) However, this excluded beet workers because in signing a contract with growers to do the hand work on a specified number of acres they were judged to be self-employed.(50) Moreover, beet workers that signed contracts and were thus deemed self-employed, could hire workers to fulfill the obligations of the contract but, if they hired relatives they too became exempt from coverage whether they were paid wages or not.(51)

Although the labour laws excluded compulsory Workmen's Compensation for agricultural workers, it was possible for farmers to choose to come under the Act but few did so because farm coverage was expensive.(52) For instance, in 1977 Walter Strom of the ASBGA Labour Committee stated:

Last year we reported to you that our branch of agriculture was being placed under the Workers Compensation Board, with all our labour, including contract labour, subject to Workers Compensation Board coverage. We have not objected to protection for farm workers, in fact we take a very positive stand on that; farm workers should be protected with accident insurance. We objected to the very high cost of premiums, at a time when farm income was falling....Following representations made by all our groups, the announcement was made, that the legislation has been withdrawn. Workers compensation is still available to us, but on a voluntary basis.(53)

In 1980 a Select Committee to the Legislative Assembly on Workers' Compensation for farmers and farm workers was formed. It recommended that a position paper be prepared on Workers' Compensation for farmers and farm workers by the Workers' Compensation Board, the Division of Occupational Health and Safety and Alberta Agriculture. The position paper was released in November, 1980 and it stated, "Farmers and Farm Workers in Alberta should be covered by the Workers Compensation Act".(54) In the following year, however, farmers went against providing compulsory coverage because of the high cost and because as free enterprisers they wanted to retain the right to choose between Workmen's Compensation and several private plans that were available.(55) As recently as 1991 the issue of Workers' Compensation was discussed by the ASBGMB's Labour Committee. It stated the following:

...All farmers should have Workers' Compensation or at least an insurance policy for the protection of the worker. This would help to bring us in line with many other industries. At present the premium for Workers' Compensation \$7.25/\$100.00 is relatively high but if all farm organizations would lobby the province to implement a program similar to the average of other provinces in Canada a premium level of \$3.00/\$100.00 would perhaps then be more acceptable for farm workers. Perhaps then, if farmers could provide the same benefits as a job in the city, more people would be willing to work on the farm.(56)

The most criticized aspect of the working conditions in the sugar beet industry was the use of child labour. Moreover, the federal and provincial labour laws required no minimum age for employment in agriculture. In many cases, when workers migrated from their home region they would take along their families. And, because the workers signed a contract to work a specified acreage of beets, they could hire their own labour crew. Thus, the workers inevitably ended up hiring their own families, including children, to perform beet labour. On the one hand, the sugar beet industry blamed the situation on the parents of the children while on the other hand, the critics blamed the the low wages paid to workers by the industry which forced them to resort to using their own families in order to maximize their earnings. During the period of 1969-70 when the sugar beet industry came under heavy criticism for its working conditions, Ferguson and Lipton stated:

Child labour is another feature of sugar beet work. Most of the Indian families have small children who work side-by-side with their parents in the beet fields. Most of the Indians don't like the idea of their children working in the beet fields, especially the younger ones of six or seven, but feel they have no choice if the family is going to feed and clothe itself. The beet growers cynically exploit the situation as a device to obtain cheap labour.(57)

In response to the charges of child labour exploitation, in 1969 the ASBGA Labour Committee Chairman, Walter Strom, stated: "In regard to the charge of recruiting child labour, I make the following statement. We as beet growers do not employ children. We employ labour contractors, Indian and otherwise, who provide their own crews, in many cases their own families. Many of these people would not come to our fields if we limited employment to the father only."(58) While acknowledging the fact that children were coming to the beet fields, Strom went on to state: "It is interesting to note that the number of children coming on the organized movement has been considerably less each year. This past year there were 72 who came half-fare."(59) That the industry and government were well aware that children were going to the sugar beet fields over the years is evident in the "Letter of Instruction and Information, Sugar Beet and Vegetable Industry Workers" for the 1968-69 season put out by the Canada Manpower Centre in Lethbridge. While referring to the workers share of the transportation costs it states: "Workers will be required to repay \$10.00 from their first pay, and children between the ages

of 6 and 12 accompanying workers will be required to pay \$3.75."(60) In 1970, when critics blamed the provincial government for not requiring a minimum age for employment in agriculture in the labour laws, the Premier of Alberta, Harry Strom, stated: "Child labour in Alberta's sugar beet fields is the fault of the parents, not the government...."(61) In response to Premier Strom's position, the leader of the New Democratic Party in Alberta, Grant Notley, stated:

"When the premier says the problem of child labour is the fault of the parents, he's side-stepping the responsibility of the provincial government in this issue."

The premier is technically correct in stating that the workers are independent contractors, and therefore unprotected from labour laws, "but that still doesn't make the plight which results any more palatable."

Provincial laws should be amended to include migrant workers, he said....(62)

As a result of the criticism of the use of child labour in the sugar beet fields, the industry moved to stem the flow of children migrating with the sponsored movement. For the 1970 and subsequent seasons, this was to be accomplished by denying recruited workers access to the chartered buses if accompanied by school age children.(63) However, the study done in late 1970 entitled, Report of an Independent Committee of Inquiry Established to Examine the Conditions of Migrant Workers in the Sugar Beet Industry in Alberta, stated:

Despite assurances that school age children of recruited workers were not allowed to accompany their parents to the beet fields, a number of youthful looking persons were seen at the reception center. When FPAMC personnel were questioned about this, the committee's field worker was shown a registration book revealing that with one exception all persons entered that day in that book claimed to be sixteen years of age or older. The exception was a youth of 14 years. He was officially registered as part of the work force and claimed to have had the Chief's permission to absent himself from school. The acceptance of this youth by FPAMC officials and his prior acceptance on the bus by Canada Manpower appears contrary to stated policy. With or without permission from the Chief of the band or anyone else for that matter, 14 year old children should not be included in the labour force....It is suspected that persons of 14 or 15 may not infrequently provide erroneous information with regard to their age.(64)

The Ferguson and Lipton report in 1969 concerning the conditions of migrant workers, suggested that in order for migrant workers to change their circumstances in the beet fields they had to form a workers' union. They stated:

The only way things will change for the beet workers will be when they organize and form a powerful union.

By organizing they can speak with one voice and be heard.

A powerful organization like the Beet Growers Association must be confronted by an equally powerful union in order to balance out the scale.

The union should push for, better working conditions, higher pay, improved housing and government benefits such as unemployment insurance and workmens' compensation.(65)

However, organizing beet workers into a labour union was



problematic. In 1970 an article in Canadian Labour entitled: "Alberta's Sugar-Beet Workers" stated:

As Roy Jamha, president of the Alberta Federation of Labour explains it, the situation cannot, at this time, be met by normal union organizing methods. One essential fact is that this is a short-term operation-- normally mid-May to the latter part of July. This in itself makes union organization of the workers, who are scattered across an area of well over a hundred square miles, difficult. An even more serious handicap is the fact that they are regarded as agricultural workers and so are excluded from the provisions of the province's labour act-- a circumstance which CLC [Canadian Labour Congress] organizations in Alberta and other provinces have long tried to have remedied.(66)

During the late 1960s, the Alberta Labour Act had been revised to make provision for the recognition of groups of workers proved to be a commercial enterprise. In effect, this would make some groups, such as beet workers, eligible for union representation. But, to accomplish the recognition it entailed a prolonged legal battle. The problem with beet workers was that "[b]y the time they were organized, certification dealt with and probable legal appeals followed, their term of employment would have long ended."(67)

#### Native Labour and Racism in the Sugar Beet Industry

Another aspect of the sugar beet industry was that many people, both within the industry and in the surrounding

community, held racial stereotypes of Natives and characterized them as "unreliable" labour.

Initially, many beet farmers had problems accepting Native workers. But, by 1961 the ASBGA Labour Report Director, Leith Johnson, was able to assert: "We have good reason to believe that the grower acceptance of these people is getting better each year, and the goodwill and business relations between the two groups are slowly but steadily improving."(68) Yet, the annual reports of the ASBGA indicate that it had continuously sought to find another source of beet workers other than Natives. In 1965 the ASBGA Labour Report Director, Leith Johnson, stressed the need for another source of labour and pointed out the reasons for this as follows:

Our Labour Committee has had talks with the Department of Immigration officials, both in Lethbridge and Ottawa, about bringing in Mexican labour or new immigrants from Europe, and have been informed that there will be no new source of labour supply opened up for us on a mass movement scale as long as there are unemployed Indians available to us. We stressed the desperate need of a new source of workers other than Indians, for the following reasons: (1) The growing wide-spread dissatisfaction of growers with Indian workers. (2) Too many farmers discontinuing growing beets for the lack of satisfactory workers. This is hurting the industry as a whole, which in turn depresses the growth and expansion of our economy.(69)

Indian Affairs and the FPAMC had been aware for a long time that beet farmers characterized Indians as unreliable labour.

Moreover, it was also aware that working conditions had an effect on the reliability of Indian workers. At the annual Federal-Provincial Agricultural Manpower Conference held in 1966, the minutes of the meeting point out that Mr. R.F. Battle, Assistant Deputy Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, mentioned that "during the early years of Indian participation in Alberta harvest operations there had been complaints about Indians not being reliable workers, but that the Alberta Farm Labour Committee had found that the problems were mainly caused by inadequate conditions in housing, education facilities, health and recreation opportunities."(70)

Another burden that Natives had to endure in the beet fields was racism. In 1969, Ferguson and Lipton's report published in The Native People, accused beet farmers of racism in determining pay rates for workers. In reference to the wages paid to Natives for completing either "Operation A" or "Operation B" as outlined in the contract, they stated:

We found the range in pay, the differences between the top and bottom rate for any of the operations, is due to two factors--the dirtiness (weediness) of the fields and the color of the workers' skin. Indians are paid less than whites.

We talked to David Courtoreille, an Indian beet worker, and asked him if he thought racism affected the wages he was paid. To answer he spoke of a recent experience of his with a beet farmer.

"Well, he had 12 Hungarian workers there. Now he paid them \$32 an acre. Then I was supposed to do second hoeing and I got only \$3 an acre. The second hoeing is normally worth \$9 an acre. Supposing if we did the

first hoeing on his piece, we'd only get \$12 an acre, we Indians," he said.(71)

Ferguson and Lipton went on to state:

In a different setting we talked to Steve Rostic, a white field worker.

"We (white field workers) get \$25 an acre on the first hoeing and \$10 or \$11 for the second hoeing," he told us.

According to these figures white workers get \$7 more per acre for the first hoeing than do Indian workers and one or \$2 more per acre for the second hoeing.(72)

In 1971, Steele and Zacharias' study on the sugar beet industry "tried to gauge the attitudes of the resident community towards the migrants, and to determine what community leaders and farmers and official contacts felt were the big problems that accompanied the arrival each year of the Indian and Metis."(73) The responses they received were largely stereotyped opinions. They stated:

We were frequently told that Indians were lazy and unable to hold their liquor. Many people felt it had been a mistake to open the bars to Indians three years earlier. Alcohol, they felt, was a major contributor to the social and labour problems that the migrant labour force had created. People agreed that there were many "good" Indian beet workers but they often suggested too that, as a rule, Indians were unreliable and incapable. Others told us Indians did not know the value of money and tended foolishly to blow their summer's earnings. Some farmers thought that the appropriate government agencies should be responsible for whatever social problems result from the presence in the area of migrant labour; and others, who had tried to talk with

Indians, complained that it was difficult to communicate with them in a meaningful way.(74)

Steele and Zacharias also found that Indians experienced a great deal of discrimination, particularly when they were in a city in sugar beet country. In relation to discrimination against Indians, they stated: "It will surprise no one to hear that Indians say there's quite a bit of it. They often find it difficult to get into hotels. If they do get in and then trouble breaks out they know that, no matter who started the trouble, the odds are the Indians will be the first ones arrested."(75)

#### The Economic Importance of Native Labour in the Sugar Beet Industry

A commonly held perception is that Natives have contributed little to the commercial and industrial development of Canada following the decline of the fur trade.(76) However, in the case of southern Alberta's sugar beet industry, without Native labour the industry could not have survived. In spite of this Native workers had their characters assassinated, were racially stereotyped and were referred to as unreliable labour.

The sugar beet industry was vital to the economic well being of southern Alberta. For instance, in the 1969 annual report of the ASBGA, President, Lalovee Jensen, stated: "Sugar beets have again proven to be the great stablizer and income equalizer on

our irrigated farms. Without this crop there would be real hardship and economic difficulty in our farming area. If there is a bright spot in the agricultural economy of this province it is to be found on the Alberta farms where sugar beets are grown."(77) In Steele and Zacharias' study of the sugar beet industry in 1971, they pointed out that southern Alberta farmers grew a variety of crops such as barley, alfalfa, potatoes, oats, flax and rye but, sugar beets were the most profitable. Moreover, 45% of the farmers they interviewed told them that "without the beets, they simply could not continue farming."(78)

If sugar beets were essential to the farming economy of southern Alberta, then so were the Natives who supplied the necessary labour for beet cultivation. In 1970 John Schmidt of The Calgary Herald, acknowledged the contribution that Natives made to the survival of the sugar beet industry in southern Alberta by stating: "Had Indian beet workers not undertaken to come in from northern reserves about 10 years ago this industry would have been finished because no white labour union would undertake to supply it with men."(79)

In 1971, Steele and Zacharias' study summed up the plight of the Native beet worker in southern Alberta's beet fields at that time. However, their comments are applicable to all the Natives who laboured in the beet fields throughout the entire period that the state was involved in their recruitment and movement for employment in southern Alberta. They stated:

The position of the migrant Indian worker or Metis worker in the sugar beet fields of southern Alberta is not enviable. They are the only people left who are willing to do the work that's absolutely essential to the health of one of the West's most important cash crops. They alone are prepared to do the sweaty work that, quite literally, keeps many farmers from giving up farming. They do hard, hot demanding work at a rate of pay that, over the term of their employment, can only be called poor. The government recruits them and then offers them little protection, and almost no useful information.(79)

### Conclusion

Throughout most of the period that the state recruited and moved Natives to southern Alberta's sugar beet industry many laboured under deplorable working conditions. They suffered through various kinds of exploitation and discrimination. In some instances, farmers would short-change workers in their earnings. To add insult to injury, the wages workers did receive for beet work were low in comparison to other sectors of the economy. Also beet farmers were able to exploit Native workers once they signed a beet contract. Workers were forced to fulfill the terms of the contract because it was legally binding. As a result, some farmers were able to exploit workers by forcing them to perform excess labour. In particular, they enforced the three-dollar per acre hold-back clause until they felt that the work had been done to their satisfaction. The housing that farmers provided to workers was clearly inadequate. Again, farmers were able to exploit workers by not upgrading housing standards and thereby

lowering their costs for worker housing maintenance. Moreover, although it was the FPAMC's job to inspect beet housing, the lack of clearly defined guidelines for accepting or rejecting housing meant that the inspector's opinion was largely subjective. The end result was that much of the housing that passed inspection was substandard. However, probably the most detestable aspect of the exploitation in the beet industry was the use of child labour. For years the FPAMC was aware of the use of child labour in the beet fields. In fact, the worker contract stipulated that children were to be charged for part of their transportation costs to the beet fields. Although the industry blamed the beet worker for hiring children to labour in the beet fields, it has been pointed out that the wages paid to contract workers were so low, this forced them to put their children to work in order to maximize earnings.

Natives also had to endure discrimination and racist attitudes while employed in the sugar beet industry. Initially, many beet farmers had difficulty accepting Native workers. Moreover, because of racist attitudes, some farmers paid Native workers less than white workers for completing the same job. Natives were stereotyped as being lazy and as drunks. When Native workers went to the cities in the sugar beet growing area, many were discriminated against in hotels and by the police. In general, Natives in the sugar beet industry were characterized as unreliable labour.



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Chapter Six: Conclusion

The aim of this research has been twofold. Empirically, it sought to examine the social process whereby a group of Native people who lived on reserves in northern Alberta and Saskatchewan came to migrate hundreds of kilometers to work in the sugar beet industry in southern Alberta. Within that context the main theoretical aim of this research was to explore the conceptual links between the state, migration, and the reserve army of labour. Using the case of the sugar beet industry in southern Alberta, the question this research set out to answer was, "what has been the role of the Canadian state concerning the migration of Native labour to southern Alberta's sugar beet industry"? Through an analysis of archival material, which included various federal and provincial government documents, annual reports of the Alberta Sugar Beet Growers' Association, newspapers and other material, this thesis demonstrated that the state, indeed, played a key role in the recruitment, movement and retention of Native workers for the sugar beet industry.

Arguably, much of the Native population of Canada can be categorized as belonging to the reserve army of labour. In fact, out of the three sectors of the reserve army of labour that Marx identifies, the floating, the latent, and the stagnant, many Natives fit into the latter category because of their irregular, casual, and marginal employment. Seen as obstacles in the way of

capitalist development and agricultural settlement during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Indians signed treaties and were placed on reserves. Within the context of the Indian Act of 1876 which was administered by Indian Affairs, Indians on reserves were to be taught the ways of Euro-Canadians and then moved into mainstream society. Until this was accomplished Indians on reserves possessed a restricted range of citizenship rights. However, the reserve system was contradictory because instead of preparing Indians for incorporation into agricultural and wage labour activities, it ended up isolating and marginalizing Indian people from the wider society. In effect, reserves became islands of relatively unskilled labour which employers could draw workers from when necessary and pay them at comparatively low wage rates. Historical evidence suggests for example, that following the fur trade, Native workers played important roles in many industries across the country which required casual and low cost labour.(1)

In chapter one, it was suggested that within the Marxist perspective, capitalist society must be understood in terms of its mode of production which creates relations of domination and exploitation between social classes. In other words, the capitalist class exploits the working class. The state is seen as functioning to help maintain these relations. Thus, one of the fundamental roles of the state is to create the conditions for capital accumulation. It accomplishes this by using its power to

the benefit of the capitalist class. The state must also create the conditions for social harmony between classes. Thus, the state's role is complex in that it has to help create and sustain the conditions for capitalist exploitation and at the same time help engineer social harmony. Although it can use physical force to maintain social order, it rarely does as social harmony between the classes is accomplished by other policies and methods.

In chapter two, the case of migrant labour in South Africa was briefly examined as it provides some useful insights into understanding the relationship between the state, migration and the reserve army of labour. In South Africa the state was actively involved in assisting employers recruit and retain African workers who were resident in nominally independent homelands on a migrant labour basis. While the initial intentions behind the formation of the reserve system in Canada may not have been the same as in South Africa, one of the consequences of its formation here was that Native people in some cases came to form part of the reserve army of labour.

Chapter three of this thesis was an analysis of the structure of the sugar beet industry in southern Alberta. It was suggested that farmers generally received very low prices from B.C. Sugar for their beet crops. The low price paid for sugar beets in Canada was linked to the price of sugar on the world market. Whenever there was a world surplus of sugar it was dumped

on the world market by sugar producing countries at very low prices. Canada dealt on the world sugar market and therefore its domestic price for sugar was set on the low price of this market. This meant that B.C. Sugar had to sell sugar in Canada at this low price which, in turn, meant that it had to buy its sugar beets from farmers at a very low price in order to make a profit. In many years farmers were provided with a government subsidy whenever their returns fell below a specific price level. Also, it was found that farmers suffered from increasing costs of production. In particular, the costs of machinery, fertilizer and herbicides increased dramatically which lowered their profit margin.

Chapter four was an examination of the role that various federal and provincial departments played in linking Indian people in northern Alberta and Saskatchewan with the southern Alberta sugar beet industry. Throughout most of the history of the sugar beet industry, farmers found it very difficult to acquire sufficient workers to fill their labour requirements. Although beet farmers had little control over the price they received for their beet crops and little control over the increasing costs of machinery, fertilizer and herbicides, they could exercise some control over the conditions of work. Control over the conditions of work was facilitated by the lack of labour law protection for the workers. Moreover, the fact that agricultural workers were excluded from most of the labour laws



in Alberta suggests that farmers possessed relatively more power than workers. Because of relatively low pay compared to other forms of work, and the difficulty of the work, few individuals wanted to work in the beet fields; not immigrants nor Euro-Canadian workers. For immigrants who were recruited during the early history of the sugar beet industry, wage work in the industry was usually a temporary stepping stone to better opportunities in the Canadian economy. This is part of the reason why the state had to search for sources of labour from within Canada to work in the sugar beet industry. In the early 1950s when the sugar beet industry could no longer acquire immigrant workers for beet work, the state intervened through the Federal-Provincial Agricultural Manpower Committee (FPAMC) and Indian Affairs to recruit northern reserve Indians. In other words, the state moved to recruit workers from the reserve army of labour existing on northern reserves in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

The federal part of the FPAMC was represented by officials of the Department of Manpower and Immigration. They were part of the federal administrative apparatus that, in part, represented the interests of Canadian employers who required assistance in acquiring workers. The Department of Indian Affairs, in part, represents Indians and administers to them through the Indian Act and the reserve system. This relationship has defined Indians as colonial people and marginalized their participation in Canadian society. In general, Natives in Canada form part of the reserve

army of labour and, in cases where they are incorporated into certain industries, part of the working class. Consequently, the representation of Indians through Indian Affairs is not equal to the representation of dominant classes because of their subordinate position in the social relations of production. Thus, it follows that at the federal administrative level, the development interests of employers tend to take precedence over the interests of Indians. In short, FPAMC officials were part of the "power bloc" within the federal government that possessed decision-making powers in terms of agricultural production.

The mandate of the FPAMC was to recruit workers and move them to areas of need in the agricultural sectors throughout Canada. In the early 1950s when the state intervened through the FPAMC and Indian Affairs to recruit Native workers from northern Alberta and Saskatchewan to work in southern Alberta's beet fields, it helped supply farmers with the needed labour to ensure the production of their sugar beet crops.

Soon after the sugar beet industry started using Native labour, the recruitment pattern of the state was well established. Within the FPAMC, the provincial part of the Committee assessed the labour requirements of farmers for the upcoming beet season. This information was then passed on to Committee officials of the Department of Manpower and Immigration. The recruitment of the workers was carried out by Canada Manpower Centres with the assistance of Indian Affairs.

Once the beet season commenced, regional offices of Canada Manpower sent application forms to the chiefs and band council on the reserves. The successful Native applicants were transported to southern Alberta by chartered buses. Once the workers arrived in southern Alberta FPAMC officials allocated the workers to the farmers. Many of the costs associated with the recruitment and movement of Native migrant workers were shared equally between the Alberta provincial government and the Department of Manpower and Immigration.

Because workers were reluctant to perform beet work, the state initiated a variety of mechanisms designed to encourage Native workers to remain in the employment of beet farmers. In regard to Native workers in the sponsored movement, the state provided incentives such as chartered buses and paid for most of their transportation costs to the beet fields. It also provided farmers with funding to build hostels, and provided funds to upgrade worker housing. While likely motivated partly by goodwill but also partly by self-interest, the state and the sugar beet industry shared the cost of admission for Natives to attend the annual stampedes in sugar beet regions. The state also appears to have used economic pressure to help recruit workers. As noted in chapter four, the main mechanism appears to have been the use of threats of termination of welfare benefits. It is unclear from this research whether or not benefits were actually terminated for those who were able-bodied and who refused to work in the

beet fields. This is a question which requires further historical and ethnographic research to fully answer. However, by using these measures to help recruit and retain Native workers for the sugar beet industry, the state provided farmers with the needed labour in order to complete the process of sugar beet production.

The recruitment of Native workers by the state for employment in the sugar beet industry likely served the interests of both Native workers and beet farmers. Beet work did provide Native workers with a source of income that might have otherwise not been available. Arguably, it could also have provided Natives with the "experience" which many employers require for more regular employment.

In relation to farmers, there does appear to have been a net economic gain associated with the employment of Native workers in this industry. While this thesis did not provide actual data on the rate of exploitation of Native workers as defined in this thesis, it did indicate that there was economic value obtained from using Native workers. However, the thesis did show that the value of Native workers was noted several times by industry representatives and individual farmers themselves.

Further evidence which indicates that farmers benefitted economically from the use of Native labour is provided by a study of the industry undertaken by the federal Department of Agriculture for the period between 1966 and 1968. During this period Native participation in the sugar beet industry averaged

around 2,000 workers per season.(2) The study, entitled The Economics of Sugar Beet Production in Alberta, found the breakdown of the sugar beet grower's dollar was as follows:

Return for profit and management.....	33.7c
Machine costs.....	27.6c
Labour costs.....	21.5c
Seed, herbicides, fertilizer.....	8.9c
Land costs.....	8.3c(3)

What this data indicates is that for each dollar that a sugar beet farmer earned from the sale of beets, the total costs of production came to 66.3 cents. Of those costs of production, labour came to 21.5 cents, machinery 27.6 cents, seed, herbicides and fertilizer 8.9 cents, and land costs 8.3 cents. This left a return for "profit and managment" of 33.7 cents. During this period, the study further indicated that the profit per acre associated with sugar beet production was \$88.97 per acre or \$5.95 per ton.(4)

Furthermore, a study conducted by Steele and Zacharias, and which was published by Information Canada in 1971 states that sugar beets:

...are the most profitable of all these crops.[i.e. barley, alfalfa, potatoes, mustard, oats, flax, rye, canning crops and seed peas] Eighty-five percent of the farmers we interviewed defined sugar beets as their

best cash crop. Moreover, more than half indicated they'd prefer to have larger sugar beet contracts than the ones they had; and 45% said that, without the beets, they simply could not continue farming.(5)

While it is difficult to determine whether the apparent profitability of the sugar beet farmers was solely due to the use of Native migrant workers, this thesis does suggest that there was some economic gain associated with the state's assistance in making Native workers available.

Clearly, more research is needed in order to understand the full dynamics of the relationship between the state, migration and the reserve army of labour in the southern Alberta sugar beet industry. As already noted, further research is necessary specifically on the question of whether welfare benefits were actually terminated for Native people who refused to participate in this migratory flow. Also, given the size of the movement, more research is required on Natives peoples', and farmers' experiences in the industry. This would be useful in order to explore more fully the dynamics of racism, which as this thesis indicated in a preliminary fashion, seemed to play a role in determining rates of pay and housing conditions. Finally, more research is required on the comparative economic value associated with the use of different social categories of workers, as well as the roles and intentions of various branches of the state in this industry.

Chapter Six: Endnotes

1. For a discussion on wage labour activities of Indians in Canada see the following authors: Rolf Knight (1978), Fred Wien (1986), and Peter Elias (1988).
2. The Economics of Sugar Beet Production in Alberta, 1966-1968, cited in Report of an Independent Committee of Inquiry Established to Examine the Conditions of Migrant Workers in the Sugar Beet Industry in Alberta, (1970), Alberta Sugar Beet Growers' Association Fonds, 1916-1977, Glenbow Archives, Calgary, Alberta, p. 4.
3. Ibid., p. 3.
4. Ibid.
5. Steele and Zacharias, p. 3.

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