

The Klan in Saskatchewan by Lloyd Robertson

He came to Regina during the summer of 1986, an organizer paid by the Ku Klux Klan in Alberta. He and some local bigots leafleted mall parking lots in the north end of the city. Later they gathered at a local pub, the Jolly Roger, where they loudly discussed the "native problem". They were introduced to a different viewpoint by a group of visiting fastball players from Piapot's reserve who happened to be drinking at the next table. The police did not lay any charges. The Klan had fallen a long way from their "glory days" when they ran the province.

The Ku Klux Klan first established itself in Saskatchewan in 1926. Boston's Lewis Scott came north seeking greener pastures. The Grand Wizard of the Klan of Kanada (Toronto) agreed to let him keep all the green he collected west of the Ontario border. Scott invited his good friend, Indiana preacher Pat Emmons to help. Emmons had been unemployed in the Klan business since testifying against the Indiana Grand Imperial Wizard in order to save his own neck on a murder rap.

Scott set up shop in Regina and quickly built a local of the Klan numbering 1000. Emmons, in Moose Jaw, was even more successful building a disciplined force of 1200. They soon expanded throughout most of Saskatchewan.

They collected \$169,000 at \$13.00 per membership and left. But they had developed an operation that described itself as "a great Christian, benevolent, fraternal organization that is going to save Canada for Canadians".

Some Saskatchewanians moved in to fill the leadership void created by the departing Scott and Emmons. J.W. Rosborough, Orangeman and provincial Conservative Party kingmaker was the Klan's Imperial Wizard. The Regina Klan was led by Dr. W.D. Cowan, Regina Conservative MP from 1917 to 1921 and 1930 to 1935. Conservative Party leader, Dr. J.T.M. Anderson personally assisted Klan organizers in establishing locals in Saskatoon and Biggar. The secretary of the Klan was another noted Conservative, C.H. Ellis. Other Klan leaders included Presbyterian Synod Moderator, S.P. Rondeau and the Rev. T.J.Hind of the Moose Jaw Baptist Church.

The Klan initiated their 1928 campaign to "stop Asiatics from preying on white women" and "to stop the Roman Catholic conspiracy to conquer Canada" with the burning of an eighty foot cross in north Regina at a rally attended by five to ten thousand supporters.

Dr. Cowan wrote to the man who was to become prime minister of Canada, R.B. Bennett, describing the Klan as "the most complete political organization in western Canada". He said "We have 19 organizers in the field and every one is a Tory". He bragged that the Klan was undermining the political opposition in other organizations, "we shove the Grits out at the top and push Conservatives in at the bottom and then promote them." His advice to the national Conservative leader was "smile when you hear anything about this organization and keep silent".

The Klan successfully forged a coalition of Conservatives with the third party Progressives in the 1929 provincial election. According to leading Rosetown Conservative, W.L. Aseltine, the KKK

campaign was even effective in recruiting Liberals who were WASPs to join the Conservative Party at both the provincial and federal levels.

The Conservatives under Anderson won the 1929 provincial election. But the Klan, along with the Conservative party, was to disappear provincially under the onslaught of the great depression.

The Klan had a quick victory because large numbers of people were prepared, psychologically, to believe that people who were not like them in some ways were a threat. And a political party was prepared to use that bigotry to gain an electoral victory. It was the politics and psychology of fear. Today some political parties and other organizations are spreading fear about aboriginal rights, immigrants and homosexuals. Unless we are vigilant, our history could repeat itself.