



Letter From Minnesota

by Allan C. Carlson

American and British negotiators of the Treaty of Paris, attempting to set the northwestern boundary of the new United States, agreed on a line following Rainy River "to the Lake of the Woods, thence through said lake to the most northwestern part thereof." Another 60 years would pass before an accurate map, astronomical calculations, and political compromise would secure U.S. claim to a peninsula of roughly 100 square miles jutting out from Manitoba and above the 49th Parallel.

Separated from the remainder of Minnesota by a large body of water and surrounded on the other three sides by Canada, the Northwest Angle enjoys a kind of isolation that is rarely found in continental America today. Until a decade ago, it could only be reached by plane or boat. Today, a 40-mile drive through Manitoban forests and a new township dirt road link the Angle to civilization.

This relative isolation has kept the Angle in a kind of time warp. Indeed, its 60 year-round residents, mainly of Swedish and Norwegian descent, are today living out themes more attuned to the mid-19th century than to the age of computers and Purple Rain.

The frontier remains a reality here. Nature is not something to be protected. Rather, it is to be respected, feared, and used. Log cabins are being cut out of the forest, raised up by the hands of those who will live in them. Trees are felled along the peninsula's northern coast to make room for new settlers. Yet the great northern forest of birch and pine—beautiful, beckoning, primitive—seems barely to notice these activities of mere men.

New residents, especially those with children, are welcomed with enthusiasm. The Angle's one-room schoolhouse, the last to be found in Minne-

sota, needs children. A chill had spread over the community a half decade earlier when the building had been closed, the number of pupils having fallen below the minimum required by the state. Yet a new generation soon rose up, and the school's reopening, in a new structure built by the parents themselves, was a cause for rejoicing. The community and the public school are, at least here, still one.

The Angle has a church. Although called St. Luke's Lutheran, the congregation long ago cast off all ecclesiastical ties. Northern Minnesota is home to a number of Lutheran sects, small groups of congregations that have split off from the larger Lutheran entities over varied, yet deeply felt, theological disputes. St. Luke's fits the independent mold. Un beholden to bishops or bureaucracies, the little congregation has its own eclectic style of worship, one that would shock the professors at the Chicago Seminary. Part Friends Meeting, part evangelical testimony, part hymn sing, worship services show a refreshing vigor.

The lay preacher on a recent Sunday was Mike Rasmussen, who, with his wife and three small children, runs a small fishing camp. His text came from Ecclesiastes 9: "Let your garments be always white, and let your head not lack the oil of gladness. Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life which He has given you under the sun—all the days of futility; for that is your portion in this life and in your work at which you toil under the sun." Children were a great blessing and a greater challenge, he said; divorce and broken families, great curses. Women should dress to please their husbands. Men must respect their wives, call them by their first names, show them their love. Marriage and family were ordained by God.

Of course, sin coexists with holiness on the Angle. Yet here, it has almost a heroic dimension, taking on the quali-

ties of a morality play. Gossip this July still surrounded a man who went by the name of Nels. A fishing guide in the summer, he cut contract timber on Indian land during the off season. For a number of years, he had lived with an Indian woman, without benefit of wedlock, and had fathered a son by her. Yet she took to drink. Nels, meanwhile, had developed an acquaintance with the schoolteacher. She invited him and his woman to attend the church. The latter declined, but Nels began coming to Sunday services and, eventually, Wednesday evening Bible study. Within a few months, he had become a Christian. He left his Indian woman and soon thereafter married the teacher in a Christian ceremony.

Race relations on the Angle means contact between whites and Indians. Two-thirds of the land on the Angle is owned by the Red Lake (Ojibway) Indians, yet none of them live there. They merely lease out the land to enterprising white woodcutters. Instead, resident Indians are found across the Angle Inlet, in Canada. Frequently, though, they cross the unpatrolled border seeking gasoline, medical care, or drink. Quiet suspicion still governs most such contacts. "Drunken Indians" is a frequently heard epithet. With only one or two exceptions, one Angle resident added, the Indians had no ambition, weren't trying to improve themselves, lived only day to day. The clash of cultures was real.

Yet the economy on the Angle is not healthy. Most people live simply here, while tourism—the principle industry—is down. Fishing is still good on Lake of the Woods and catching one's daily limit of walleye a plausible task. The big-time fishermen, once the mainstay of the Angle, have moved north into the thousands of fly-in, virgin lakes of Manitoba and Ontario. Also damaging is a new Ontario law requiring persons staying in American camps but fishing in Canadian waters to buy a \$3 "user's permit" each day,

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in addition to the regular license. The human consequences are mounting. The Rasmussens, experiencing a lean summer and the prospect of little income after September, are considering moving down to mainland Minnesota for the winter. "We have to eat," they say.

Yet, in another turn of the frontier theme, the women of the Angle are working to change its image. The prevailing assumption appears to be that the days of exclusive attention to fishing, duck hunting, and timber cutting are over; the Angle must reposition itself as a family resort center. The women have organized a Chamber of Commerce and have published a new tabloid-size brochure extolling activities such as "wining and dining,"

"honeymooning," mushrooming, berry-picking, photographing wildflowers, and bird-watching. Civilization, ushered in by the feminine half of the species, is coming to the Angle.

Some of the men are grumbling. Jake, who operates one of the Angle's two bars and a decidedly unquaint fishing camp, refuses to join the Chamber or to advertise in the brochure. Nels, always restless, and his new bride have just taken off for Alaska, looking again for the frontier. cc

Allan Carlson is executive vice president of The Rockford Institute.

Letter From the Southwest

by Odie Faulk

Giving, helping, caring—these are words frequently mentioned in the writings and orations of most religious and social philosophers. Giving and helping and caring are concepts that touch something deep in the breast of civilized mankind and call forth the kind of responses that distinguish him from the baser animals: compassion, kindness, generosity, concern for the welfare of others. This is a thought echoed in *The Proverbs of John Heywood* (1546), "Better to give than to take."

Such is the wellspring that has led to uncountable acts of individual benevolence—the coin in the outstretched hand of a beggar, the feeding of the tramp at the door, the donation of clothing to warm the poor. At a more organized level, the desire to give and share has led to the founding of literally thousands of private charities which search for cures for diseases, fight famine in far-off places, and secure foster parents for needy children in foreign lands. These are the instincts that have led to an outpouring of private gifts in myriad forms for the victims of earthquake, flood, fire, drought, pestilence, and war.

In the United States, this individual generosity of spirit found its strongest expression on the frontier. Most pioneers were on the same economic level—poor—and they labored to help each other. They cooperated in

barn raisings and house buildings. They joined to plant and to harvest, and they took care of the destitute among them.

Americans are certainly not unique in feeling and acting upon such uplifting emotions. Charity has come from the individuals of many nations in time of crisis and need, yet Americans are noted throughout the world for their willingness to give. Most people would agree that individual charity is a positive force which ennobles the donor, uplifts society, and aids the less fortunate. Therefore, it should be encouraged.

Those who criticize the charity of individual Americans—both at home and abroad—have argued that it springs not from generosity or nobility of spirit, but rather from a selfish desire on the part of the donors to make themselves feel better, that the gifts are made to assuage guilty consciences for being so wealthy. Oliver Goldsmith echoed such a sentiment in *The Traveller* when he commented, "They give to get esteem."

However, the real corruption of this spirit of generosity came not because some gave in order "to get esteem," but rather when it was transformed from individual initiative to public policy. In the Populist era and again during the New Deal, the children and grandchildren of those who pioneered the frontier joined with Eastern liberals to translate what had been an individual act into government policy at the state and national levels. No longer would neighbors help raise a barn; there would be Federally subsidized farm loans. Nor was there need for a house raising; rather there would be FHA loans and low income housing. Plowing and harvesting would be Federally subsidized, and the county poor farm would be replaced by food stamps, aid to dependent children, rent subsidies, free health care, and numerous other programs.

But in the process of institutionalizing what had been a soaring of the individual spirit, philanthropy became a caricature of itself and was transformed into something negative. When philanthropy is demanded by law—in what amounts to a forced redistribution of the wealth—the result is neither of benefit to its recipients nor uplifting to those whose taxes

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Theology, Barabbas Style

So much attention has been focused on South Africa recently that there has scarcely been time to savor the new benefits of majority rule now being enjoyed by what used to go by the name of Rhodesia. These benefits were recently described by the former Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia, Garfield Todd (generally regarded as a tacit supporter of the current Marxist regime), as a "horrible and unnecessary situation where the country is faced on every side by a breakdown of discipline." Todd spoke of assaults upon innocent citizens and their property, of rape, maiming, and murder.

Kein angst! Zimbabwe officials are devoting unprecedented attention to the country's Anglican Church. First on the agenda, according to the *Rhodesia Christian Group Newsletter*, is the transformation of the Church into a "people's Church." This means both the legitimizing of "traditional African tribal worship" and the creation of "a new theology based on the Marxist analysis of the nature of man and society." A leader in this new effort, the Rev. Canaan Banana (we are not making this up), recently declared: "As for me I am not ashamed of the revolution, for it is the power of the people unto salvation."

It must be a sign of Anglican decadence that some 200,000 former Rhodesians have now chosen to risk damnation in exile in preference to "salvation" at home. cc