Dr. George Edwin Britnell

Born - Wimbledon England, 1903
1910 - Came to Canada with his family
1913 - The Britnell family moved to Macrorie, Saskatchewan
1929 - B.A. from University of Sask.
1929 - 30 Won I.O.D.E. Fellowship
1930 - 35 Instructor in Economic at University of Sask.
1934 - M.A. from the University of Toronto
1936 - Assistant Prof. of Economics University of Sask.
1938 - Ph.D. from University of Toronto
1938 - Transferred to Dept. of Political Science as Prof. and Head.
1941 - 44 On leave to work as Economic Adviser to the Wartime Prices and Trade Board.
1945 - 61 Prof. & Head of Economics & Political Science.

Died in 1961.
George Edwin Britnell was born at Wimbledon, England, on 9 June 1903. His family came to Canada in 1910 and subsequently took up a homestead near Macrorie, Saskatchewan in 1913. Britnell attended the University of Saskatchewan and graduated with a BA in 1929. He went on to the University of Toronto where he earned both an MA (1934) and PhD (1938). Britnell's first appointment at the University of Saskatchewan was in 1930, as lecturer in Economics. He became an assistant professor (1936); professor and head of Political Science (1938); and head of the joint department of Economics and Political Science in 1945. Britnell died in October 1961 after a lengthy illness.

This fonds contains extensive material relating to Britnell's work on various Royal Commissions, associations, national and international conferences, including reports, minutes, submissions, and notes. In addition, it contains his personal correspondence, notes from lectures (by Frank Underhill and Harold Laski), articles, and press clippings.

See also Faculty Biographies, Faculty Publications, and Alumni files.

Finding aid available.
1. Education.
(a) Public and High Schools, Saskatchewan; University of Saskatchewan; London School of Economics and Political Science; University of Toronto;
(b) B.A., University of Saskatchewan, 1929;
(c) M.A., University of Toronto, 1934;
(d) Ph.D., University of Toronto, 1938;

2. University Appointments.
(a) Instructor in Economics, University of Saskatchewan, 1930-35;
(b) Lecturer in Economics, University of Toronto, 1935-36;
(c) Assistant Professor of Economics, University of Saskatchewan, 1936-38;
(d) Professor & Head of the Department of Political Science, University of Sask., 1938-;
(e) Professor & Head of the Department of Economics and Political Science, University of Sask., 1945-;

3. Other Appointments.
(a) Economic Adviser to Government of Saskatchewan, Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations, 1937;
(b) Member of Economic Research Staff of Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations, 1938;
(c) Chairman, Dominion Government Royal Commission, Coal Mining Industry of Alberta & British Columbia, 1940-41;
(d) Chairman, Dominion Government Royal Commission, Coal Mining Industry of Saskatchewan, 1941;
(e) Economic Adviser, Wartime Prices & Trade Board, Ottawa, 1941-44;
(f) Chairman, Economic Advisory Committee, Government of Saskatchewan, October, 1944-June, 1945;
(g) Special Adviser, Government of Saskatchewan, July, 1945-;
(h) Chairman, Saskatchewan Freight Rates Committee, Government of Saskatchewan, October, 1946-;

4. Other Activities.
(a) Canadian Delegate to 5th Conference, Institute of Pacific Relations, Yosemite, California, 1936;
(b) Canadian Delegate to 2nd British Commonwealth Relations Conference, Sydney, Australia, 1938;
(c) Member of Canadian Delegation to International Conference on Food and Agriculture, Hot Springs, Virginia, 1943;
(d) Member, Executive Council, Social Science Research Council, 1943-;
(e) Member, Executive, Canadian Political Science Association, 1943-;

5. Publications.
See attached list.
I. BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS


II. ARTICLES


9. "Price Control, Price Supports and the Farmer," (Graduate Lectures of the Faculty of Agriculture, Sixth Series, Saskatoon, Univ. of Sask., 1945, pp. 22-32).


III. REPORTS, BRIEFS, ETC.

1. A Submission by the Government of Saskatchewan to the Royal Commission on Dominion Provincial Relations, with F.C. Cronkite, (Regina, King's Printer, 1937) pp. 17, 434.


8. Submission to the Trade and Tariff Committee by the Governments of Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, with W.J. Waines, et al. (Winnipeg, King's Printer, 1946) pp. 16.


12. Brief of Argument of the Province of Saskatchewan in Opposing the Application of the Railway Association of Canada before the Board of Transport Commissioners for Canada for a Thirty Per Cent Increase in Freight Rates, with F.C. Cronkite, et al. (Regina, King's Printer, 1947) pp. 107.


G.E.B.
December 7th, 1948.
Well Known Economist E. Britnell, 58, Dies; Active in Many Fields

An internationally known economist, George Edwin Britnell, head of the department of economics and political science at the University of Saskatchewan, died in hospital today. He had been ill for many months.

Raised on a Saskatchewan wheat farm near Macrorie, Dr. Britnell became an advisor to governments on economic matters. Holder of many important jobs, he was chosen by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development to head its first economic mission, going to Guatemala in 1950 and 1951 to make a survey of that country's economy for the bank.

In 1956 he served as the Commonwealth member of a royal commission set up to review the allocation of revenues for the then newly set up Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

More recently he served on the Board of the Royal Commission on External Trade and he was responsible for the final summation and argument of the province of Saskatchewan to the Royal Commission on Transportation. Since 1945 he had been an economic advisor to the Saskatchewan government.

Born in London, England, June 9, 1903, he moved to a Macrorie district farm at an early age with his family. He graduated in arts from the University of Saskatchewan in 1929 and in economics and political science in 1932.

In 1937 Dr. Britnell was advisor to the Saskatchewan government in its submission to the Royal Commission on External Trade. In 1940 and 1941 he was chairman of a federal royal commission on the industrial development of British Columbia.

In the latter year he also headed a similar commission probing the Industry in Saskatchewan.

Dr. Britnell was vice-president of the Saskatchewan Archives Board and a member of the Saskatoon Library Board from 1951-54. He was president of the Canadian Political Science Association in 1950-51 and chairman of the Canadian Social Science Research Council from 1955-56. He was a member of the Colonial Economic Relations Conference in Australia and the International Conference on Food and Agriculture in Canada, 1939-1950.

He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 1946. In 1954-55 he was chosen as the first Harold Innes Visiting Research Professor of Political Economy at the University of Toronto.

Dr. Britnell was an authority on transportation problems of the prairie provinces and for more than 10 years was intimately connected with Saskatchewan presentations to national boards and commissions dealing with transportation.

At present, one of Dr. Britnell's work is in the press. It is "Food and Agriculture in Canada, 1939 to 1950", prepared in collaboration with Prof. V. C. Fowke. This was his fourth book, "Wheat Economy", was of particular significance in the west. Reports and briefs prepared in connection with the various boards and commissions on which he served totalled 25. His articles have appeared in such publications as the Canadian Historical Review and the Canadian Forum. Two of his articles, "Canada. The Economy" and "Guatemala. The Economy" will appear in a forthcoming issue of the Encyclopedia Britannica. In all, he has written 27 major research papers and monographs and journal articles.

Dr. J. W. T. Spinks, university president, this morning expressed his 'deep regret' at the loss of a personal friend and valued colleague at the university. Prof. Britnell's connection with the university was both long and distinguished. As an expert in the economics of the Prairie provinces, he was a valued member of advisory boards and committees where his great capacity for hard work and sound judgment made him invaluable.

Surviving Dr. Britnell are his wife, the former Melvina May Paulson; two daughters, Elia, attending school in Regina, and Margaret, attending Queen's University; a brother, Frank Britnell of Outlook; and a sister, Mrs. H. A. Fletcher, Victoria, B.C.

Funeral arrangements had not been completed Saturday morning.

Senior colleagues of the department of economics today paid tribute to Dr. Britnell, remarking that his death 'has deprivd the university of one of its most outstanding teachers and scholars and the people of the province and country of a devoted servant.'

His colleagues said Dr. Britnell 'took a close interest in his students and his better students were recognized everywhere as graduates of the highest quality. He was active in many areas of university work and always displayed leadership of a high order. As a university professor he took particular pride in his profession and worked actively in developing its status and its standards.

"His scholarship and his valuable services to the academic community in Canada were recognized by his appointment to the presidency of several national academic organizations."

"Prof. Britnell achieved an international reputation as a scholar in the field of political economy. Many of his books, articles and reports examined the development of the provinces and the prospects for the Prairies, particularly of Saskatchewan and the wheat economy."

"He made a notable and lasting contribution to the understanding of the development of this region and worked in many capacities to promote this development."

G. E. BRITNELL
emanating from the various commissions and committees—provincial, national, and international—on which he served. But his services were not limited to these. From 1945 he was Vice-Chairman of the Saskatchewan Archives Board and active in the identification and collection of records respecting the province’s history. A full shelf of Masters’ theses at the University of Saskatchewan, prepared under his direction and that of Professor V. C. Fowke, and dealing with various phases of the economic and political history of the province, have been based on these reports and on the experience of still living persons. A number of these are very valuable documents, prepared by persons of quality and likely to be highly useful in the future when the full history of the province comes to be written.

His participation in organizations was not limited to governmental or government-sponsored organizations. With the exception of two years he was a member of the Social Science Research Council of Canada from 1947 to 1960, its Chairman from 1956 to 1958 during the important years when its relationship to the Canada Council was being worked out, and continuously a member of its various committees from 1954 until his death. He was President of the Canadian Political Science Association in 1956–57 and Canadian Member of the Council of the International Economic Association from 1958. Of the many conferences he attended in various parts of the world connected with these and other organizations or associations nothing can be said here.

In view of all the above, the quality and quantity of his scholarly output are amazing. In addition to the government documents mentioned and a list of nearly thirty research papers, monographs, and journal articles, there are four books of which he was author or co-author. His first, The Wheat Economy, published by the University of Toronto Press in 1939, has been a book of wide influence on other scholars and is a classic in its field. Following the completion of the IBRD Mission to Guatemala, he was co-author of two books on the economy of that country. His last book (with Professor V. C. Fowke), Canadian Agriculture in War and Peace, 1935–50, was issued by the Stanford University Press in January, 1962, and is a record of great importance, based on many years of work and experience by its authors.

At the University of Saskatchewan his contributions were manifold. In addition to the burdens connected with the administration of a large department, his capacity in the administrative field brought him much work on university committees. As Chairman of the Faculty Relations Committee and later of the Faculty Association, over a number of years he worked hard and effectively for the revision of university salaries and working conditions. With all this, he was a vigorous and powerful teacher. Never satisfied with his own work, he revised his lectures yearly with meticulous care. With his great voice, his sense of humour, and his high standards of performance for himself and his students, he was both a joy and a challenge in the lecture or seminar room.
George Edwin Britnell  
1903–1961

GEORGE BRITNELL died at Saskatoon on October 14, 1961, after a long illness. Born at Wimbledon, England, on June 9, 1903, with his family, he came to Canada in April 1910, and to the family homestead near Macrorie, Saskatchewan, in 1913.

For a child living on a Saskatchewan homestead in that period a scholar’s education was to be won only through hard work and sacrifice and after inevitable delays. But he was fortunate in the teacher he found in his rural school; her influence on him was strong and her interest and affection followed him all his life. His high-school work was done at Outlook College, Outlook, Saskatchewan, and at Prince Albert Collegiate Institute. From the latter he graduated with the Governor-General’s Gold Medal in 1924.

After a two-year interval spent in farming and various other employments, he entered the University of Saskatchewan in 1926 and completed the work for the Bachelor of Arts degree in 1929. In addition to the requirements for this degree, and partially as electives for it, he also completed almost a full year in law with a great deal of distinction; to this he later added the equivalent of a second year’s legal training. In the spring of his graduating year he won the I.O.D.E. Overseas Fellowship for 1929–30.

After a year spent at the London School of Economics, where he fell strongly under the influence of Harold Laski, he returned to the University of Saskatchewan as Instructor in Economics. The years 1932–33 and 1935–36 were spent on leave at the University of Toronto. In 1932–33, during a period when budget requirements at the University of Saskatchewan had necessitated leaves on quarter-pay for unmarried members of the faculty, he completed most of the requirements for the Master’s degree on a scholarship at that institution and the remainder after his return to his teaching post. In 1935–36, he was Visiting Lecturer there. In 1938, Toronto awarded him the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. In 1954–55 he returned to Toronto as the first Harold Innis Visiting Research Professor of Political Economy. This was entirely fitting. Harold Innis had without doubt the strongest influence in determining the character of his scholarly interests and output and in addition was his close and good friend.

In 1936 he had been promoted to Assistant Professor in the Department of Economics at Saskatchewan, but in 1938 he was transferred to the Department of Political Science as Professor and Head. This post he continued to hold until 1945, although during the war years of 1941–44 he was on leave for work as Economic Adviser to the Wartime Prices and Trade Board and in 1944–45 as Chairman of the Economic Advisory Committee of the Government of Saskatchewan. When he returned to his university in 1945 it was as Professor and Head of the combined departments of

Economics and Political Science, an appointment which he held until his death.

His university work was paralleled throughout by extensive work for governments. Both this work and his large scholarly output were achieved through relentless sacrifice of himself because, except for the period of leave during the war, he generally carried a heavy load of university teaching and administration also, which he executed with conscientious care. He worked a seven-day week, and his hours were long. Holidays were short, infrequent, and in some years non-existent.

In 1940 he married Pauline May Paulson of Regina, and in time fathered two daughters, Margaret and Elin. But even his honeymoon was combined with work as Chairman of a Royal Commission!

Only brief mention can be made here of his activities. In the late summer and early autumn of 1937, with F. C. Cronkite, he prepared the lengthy brief of the Saskatchewan Government to the Rowell-Sirois Commission. In 1938, as a member of the research staff of that commission, with D. C. MacGregor, J. B. Rutherford, and J. J. Deutsch, he prepared a study of Canada's National Income. In 1940-41 he was Chairman of the Dominion Royal Commission on the Coal Mining Industry of Alberta and British Columbia and in 1941 he performed a similar service for the federal government respecting the coal industry of Saskatchewan. From May, 1950, to August, 1951, he was Chief of the Economic Mission to Guatemala for the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. In 1957 he was appointed Commonwealth Member to the Royal Commission on Federal-Provincial Relations for the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. In 1957-59 he served as a member of the Dominion Royal Commission on Energy. Men of his capacity, energy, and integrity of judgment are always rare; because his conscience required him to preserve the continuity of his work for his university and his province, he accepted many more opportunities for work outside the province and the country than he accepted.

From the time of his return to the university in 1945 to his last illness his services to the Province of Saskatchewan were continuously maintained. He was Special Adviser to the Government of Saskatchewan from 1945 to 1951; from October, 1946, up to the time of his death he was Chairman of the Committee later known as the Saskatchewan Economic and Technical Committee on Transportation and Freight Rates, and even from his hospital bed he maintained some participation in its work; from 1948 to 1951 he was a member of a three-man committee known as the Saskatchewan Special Committee on Provincial-Municipal Fiscal Relations. The heaviest tasks of the period probably were connected with the Transportation Committee. Direction of and participation in the preparation of briefs and reports, and appearances before Royal Commissions and as a witness at various appeals took a heavy toll of time and strength and involved much commuting to Regina on days free of lectures, and many trips to Ottawa.

He was the main author of an impressive list of public documents
George Edwin Britnell.
GEORGE EDWIN BRITNELL, 1903-1961

The death of George Britnell on October 14, 1961, after an illness of several months, was a great loss to scholarship and to university and public life. His passing bereaved a host of friends in Canada and in other countries. He was an outstanding scholar and teacher, a gifted administrator, a devoted public servant, and an untiring worker in the community interest at every level from the local through the national to that of the Commonwealth and beyond.

Born at Wimbledon, England, on June 9, 1903, Britnell came to Canada in April, 1910, and attended school for a year at Stoney Creek, Ontario, while his father went to find land in the fabulous west. He homesteaded in Saskatchewan, on the eastern margins of the “pre-emption area,” the massive territory rejected by the land-grant railways as too irregular in rainfall to be “fairly fit for settlement” within the meaning of their grants, and thrown open for settlement by the Dominion Lands Act of 1908. Scarcity of free lands elsewhere and exceptionally favourable moisture conditions in 1909 and earlier years fostered the speedy occupation of the region. The Britnell homestead was seven miles from market at Macrorie and within a score of miles of the dam now under construction for the South Saskatchewan River irrigation project. The family moved to the neighbourhood in 1911 and to the homestead in 1913. There Britnell grew up, took primary education in the frontier rural school, passed entrance examinations in 1918 and, in winters between seasons of farm work, attended school to complete Grade IX by 1920.

Neither range nor intensity of later interests or activities erased the imprint of these early years or separated Britnell entirely from the Macrorie farm community. The rigours and uncertainties of a livelihood dependent on wheat growing with uncertain rainfall and more uncertain prices, the real and imaginary injustices encountered on a capital-poor frontier, the isolation, the absence of amenities and community services, the struggle for independence and an education—these shaped the man. They created a life-long understanding and compassion for the exposed, the vulnerable, the exploited, whether individuals or entire communities or regions. Britnell owned farm land at Macrorie until his death. Whatever the season he could tell the precise stage and state of the farming operations conducted by his brother on the home farm. He knew whether seeding or summerfallow was just completed, the moisture situation, the harvest prospect, when the last round was made by the harvester-combine and, finally, the latest word on the delivery quota. The single day or two stolen each year from relentless work for a drive to the farm with members of his family provided depths of satisfaction which he found in no other way.

Neither opportunity nor common example favoured education beyond minimum levels in the Saskatchewan rural environment of the 1920's. Britnell acknowledged a tremendous debt of gratitude to his teacher, Mrs. Harry Hall, for intellectual stimulation and for early and lasting encouragement to continue his studies. With no high school readily available he enrolled in a Lutheran college at Outlook some twenty miles away. There he found particular challenge in the views of the principal concerning social and political...
By 1939 the pattern but not the scope of Britnell's life work was well established in both its intra- and extra-mural fields. From the first he had been a clear and provocative teacher, a vigorous and forthright lecturer. For those enrolled in his classes he had small patience for the socialite, none for the drone, little for the unimaginative. For the working student aware of the world in which he lived, with even the smallest spark of intellectual curiosity, he provided abrasive stimulus and blunt challenge. His lectures were prepared and organized with meticulous care. It was against his nature to skimp on any task and the teaching of even the most familiar subject matter merited, in his opinion, preparatory review. He had no use for instruction that relied on a jotted heading or two to be rounded out by rambling improvisation. As the years passed by he was, if possible, more rather than less exacting in his self-imposed standards of preparation for classroom teaching. The lecture notes for at least his upper-year classes were typed and retyped; they were revised annually and typed again. Yet with all this fixity of subject matter and formality of expression his students uniformly testified to classroom experiences of great and sustained vitality.

The Wheat Economy, published in 1939, and the half dozen articles which preceded it clearly projected the characteristic features of Britnell's impressive subsequent output of scholarly publications. One of a series sponsored jointly by the Canadian Institute of International Affairs and the Institute of Pacific Relations the book was a detailed and painstaking analysis of the standard of living in Saskatchewan. The study took shape through the years of maximum economic calamity in the prairie provinces and the hardships so vividly portrayed in the volume were the realities of the author's first-hand experience and observation rather than academic abstractions. In a number of his later publications he examined at irregular intervals the varying fortunes of the wheat economy through war and postwar readjustments. In others he assessed standards of living in distant areas such as Guatemala and southeast Africa where the economic and political vulnerability of the frontier revealed wholly unexpected similarities with his home economy.

Some of Britnell's writings during the 1940's and 1950's represented research undertaken specifically for publication. Others emerged from consultative assignments and might be regarded as by-products of the policy-making process. Regardless of their occasion or purpose they were prepared with the same exacting and scholarly care and with rigorous regard for the assumption that policy formulation merits and necessitates a full understanding of all relevant circumstances and their interrelations.

In August, 1937, Britnell was persuaded to cut short an exploratory tour of the Maritimes to go to Regina and, jointly with F. C. Cronkite, to prepare the Saskatchewan Government's brief for presentation to the Rowell-Sirois Commission. Within three months an impressive, book-length document was ready and in print. Its elaborate factual base drew heavily on Britnell's researches for The Wheat Economy, not yet published. The argument was closely reasoned and persuasive. The preparation and defence of this submission was his first experience of consequence in counselling government. It showed conclusively his ability to utilize academic training and research.
reform. When these views led to the severance of the principal's connection with the college in mid-winter 1923, Britnell and a kindred spirit packed up and left in sympathy. He went to Prince Albert Collegiate to complete the term and a year later, in 1924, graduated with the Governor General's gold medal.

The prospect for university remained uncertain. Meanwhile he worked for the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool and on the home farm, he operated the post office in Macrorie for a summer, he wrote for the Western Producer—an employment commenced in high school—and he read voraciously in his spare time. Finally enrolled at the University of Saskatchewan in 1926, he registered in the general Arts course and showed no early inclination to specialize. He studied English including a class in Victorian poetry, Latin, German, history and economics, and biology for the unavoidable "lab class." Although F. H. Underhill and R. MacG. Dawson were successively professors of political science at Saskatchewan during his three years as an undergraduate student he apparently had no formal contact with them or with their subject. He took a class in political philosophy in the philosophy department. A. S. Morton was then at the height of his powers in the history department and Britnell studied with him. He took economics from W. W. Swanson, W. A. Carrothers and R. McQueen, the latter undoubtedly exercising a powerful and lasting influence on his interests and intellectual development. He continued to write for the Western Producer and was active in debating and public speaking.

On what seems to have been a sudden or at least belated resolve he turned to Law in his final year, took extra classes and fulfilled the requirements for the Arts degree in 1929 with electives from a nearly-complete first year in Law—a foundation to which he added unobtrusively in later years. He was awarded the Carswell Company prize for the highest marks in his Law exams and won the IODE Overseas Fellowship for 1929–30.

After a year at the London School of Economics and Political Science in which the highlights were lectures from Laski, endless reading, wide travel and a stint in Fleet Street he was appointed Instructor in Economics at the University of Saskatchewan, July 1, 1930, at a salary of $1800 a year. His appointment was renewed a year later at an advance of $5 per month. This was wiped out by an economy wave before he lifted his first enlarged cheque and his total salary was reduced to $1500. In 1932 the revenues of the province were cut by drought and depression from $16.5 million to less than $12 million and university departments were required to reduce staff by placing junior members on leave of absence at one-quarter salary. Britnell seized the opportunity to go to Toronto on a scholarship. He completed most of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree within the year and the remainder while back teaching at Saskatchewan during the year 1933–34. In 1935–36 he was Lecturer in Economics at the University of Toronto. In 1938 he was appointed Assistant Professor of Economics at Saskatchewan and in 1938 he received the Ph.D. degree from Toronto. At the same time, a year after Dawson's departure for Toronto, Britnell was appointed to replace him as Professor and Head of the Department of Political Science, a position he held until 1945.
skill in the furtherance of the understanding so essential to intelligent and realistic policy formulation. During the summer of 1938 he assisted in the study of national income as a member of the economic research staff of the Rowell-Sirois commission in Ottawa—one of the very few Canadian economists surely who were called to advise Dominion and provincial governments simultaneously in the disputed area of Dominion-provincial fiscal relations. In 1940-41 he was chairman of a Dominion royal commission on the cost of living in the coal mining industry of Alberta and British Columbia and, in 1941, he headed a similar commission on the industry in Saskatchewan. From 1941 to 1944 he was in Ottawa as economic adviser to the Wartime Prices and Trade Board.

Britnell welcomed opportunities to travel. In 1936 he was a delegate to the sixth conference of the Institute of Pacific Relations at Yosemite and, in 1938, to the second British Commonwealth Relations Conference at Sydney, Australia. He spent the summer of 1939 touring the British Isles and returned home only on the eve of war. While serving with the Wartime Prices and Trade Board he went as a member of the Canadian delegation to the International Conference on Food and Agriculture held in Hot Springs, Virginia, in 1943.

In 1940 he married Pauline May Paulson, daughter of W. H. Paulson who had served continuously as Liberal MLA for the constituency of Wynyard, Saskatchewan, from 1912 to 1934. To the frank amazement of some at least of his closest friends he settled quickly and with apparent ease into the role of model husband and devoted family man. Among his intimates he freely extolled the virtues of domesticity and unabashedly proclaimed his pride in home and family.

Relinquishing his post with the Wartime Prices and Trade Board in 1944, he served for a year as chairman of the Economic Advisory Committee for the newly-elected CCF government in Regina. In 1945 he returned to the University of Saskatchewan as Professor and Head of the Department of Economics and Political Science, a position which he held until his death. He was special adviser to the Saskatchewan government from 1945 to 1951. In 1946 he was appointed chairman of a group which was later formalized as the Saskatchewan Economic and Technical Committee on Transportation and Freight Rates, a position which he held continuously thereafter. From 1948 to 1951 he was a member of a three-man committee engaged in preparing a report for the provincial government on provincial-municipal relations. From May, 1950, to August, 1951, he was chief of an economic mission to Guatemala for the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. In 1957 he was Commonwealth member of the Royal Commission on Federal-Provincial Fiscal Relations for the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. This assignment provided the occasion for a working visit of several weeks, accompanied by his wife, to Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia. From 1957 to 1959 he was a member of the Dominion Royal Commission on Energy.

Chairmanship of the Saskatchewan Technical and Economic Committee on Transportation and Freight Rates entailed the most continuous and in many ways the most arduous of Britnell’s off-campus public services throughout the
political science

essential to intelligent and 

of 1938 he assisted in the 

of very few Canadian economists 

provincial governments simul-

provincial fiscal relations. In 

commission on the cost of 

industry in Saskatchewan. From 

Wartime Prices and 

1938 he was a delegate to 

relations at Yosemite and, in 

ations Conference at Sydney, 

the British Isles and returned 

Wartime Prices and 

delation to the Inter-

field in Hot Springs, Virginia, 

righter of W. H. Paulson who 

constituency of Wynyard, 

management of some at least 

apparent ease into the role 

among his intimates he freely 

proclaimed his pride in 

and Trade Board in 1944, 

nic Advisory Committee for 

45 he returned to the 

ead of the Department of 

which he held until his death. 

nent from 1945 to 1951, 

ich was later formalized as 

tee on Transportation and 

usually thereafter. From 1948 

tee engaged in preparing a 

al-municipal relations. From 

omic mission to Guatemala 

al Development. In 1957 he 

ission on Federal-Provincial 

and Nyasaland. This assign-

several weeks, accompanied 

om 1957 to 1959 he was a 

ergy.

Economic Committee on 

ast continuous and in many 

public services throughout the 

fifteen postwar years. A glance at the list of his publications after 1945 will 

show the extent to which his research and writing were tied in with advisory 

duties relating to transportation. He appeared repeatedly in Ottawa as a 

witness for the province. His last major public service was to advise and 

represent the Saskatchewan government in its appearances before the Mac-

Pherson Royal Commission on Transportation starting in 1959. This required 
him to direct and collaborate in the preparation of the provincial submissions 

and necessitated a dozen trips to hearings in Ottawa and other distant centres, 
The whole reaching practical finale in a gruelling week presenting and defending 
the Saskatchewan submission on the witness stand in Ottawa in September, 
1960.

Britnell was a member of the Social Science Research Council of Canada 

from 1947 to 1960 except for the years 1951 to 1953 and had a voice in the 

formulation of its policies at crucial stages in its development. He was con-

tinuous active as member or chairman for a dozen successive years on its 

various committees for the awarding of grants in aid of research and pre-
doctoral fellowships, and for the selection of candidates for professorial leaves 
of absence. He was chairman of the Council from 1956 to 1958 and thus had 

responsibility for leadership in the consultations concerned with establishing 
the lines of authority and function between the older and continuing organization 
and the newly-created Canada Council. Nearer home he was a member 
of the Saskatoon Library Board from 1951 to 1954 and vice-president of the 
Saskatchewan Archives Board from 1945 until his death. Improbable as it may appear, Britnell accomplished the great body of 

advisory and other off-campus activities in the last fifteen years of his life 

without a single leave of absence of any significant extent. He was on leave 

for the year 1954–55 as research professor at the University of Toronto. Other-

wise, from the time of his return to the University of Saskatchewan in 1945 
until his fatal illness in 1961 he taught and administered the Department of 
Economics and Political Science without assistance or relief. No matter how 
many enterprises he conducted at a particular time, not the least detail of 
responsibility at the university or elsewhere was neglected or slighted. There 
remained, of course, practically no time for vacation from year to year and 
none for anything even distantly approaching relaxation from week to week. Regardless of the range and intensity of Britnell's outside activities his 
heart was unwaveringly fixed in his attachment to the university. He re-
peatedly declined attractive offers of employment in government and private 
business. Except for the newspaper work of his earlier years he rarely if ever 
disposed of the services of his intellect to a non-public agency for compensa-
tion. He undertook advisory work with governments as a public obligation 
and only on terms of complete political independence and on the understand-
ing that his duties would not require severance from the university. He was 
convinced of the extreme complexity of policy formation in the public sphere 
and felt obliged to assist within the close limits of his knowledge and research 
capacities. While holding the master planner in something akin to contempt, 
at the same time he had little patience with the ivory tower recluse and no 
great regard for elegant and esoteric models completely abstracted from
reality. He might be classified more properly as a political economist than as either an economist or a political scientist sans phrase.

As for his concept of a university, in his opinion the teaching scholar, regardless of his rank, was the central and perhaps the only indispensable figure in the university community. Himself an exceptionally strong department head and a powerful committee worker he nevertheless insisted that administrative functions existed only to facilitate and further the teaching scholar's work. He held this to be a truism, although one all too commonly denied or overlooked. Teaching and research he regarded as properly complementary and, in the social sciences at least, as scarcely capable of independent survival. He was certain that university teaching could not maintain effectiveness and intellectual challenge without constant refreshment from the research efforts of the teacher. The question whether effective research could exist in a university without being closely linked with teaching, he did not bother to consider in the abstract. He simply held that members of his department should occupy essentially teaching posts with research and writing assumed to be indispensable complementary interests.

He refused to subscribe to the classification of university teachers as first or second class citizens depending on whether they taught only advanced and graduate classes on the one hand or elementary classes on the other. In his view the effective instruction of elementary students is a legitimate university function and at the same time one of the most exacting and difficult tests of a working scholar's competence. He felt that neither the freshman nor the teaching novice deserved to be abandoned exclusively to the mercies of the other. With few exceptions, and then only when unavoidable, every probationary member of his department was given a teaching programme comprising both elementary and upper classes. Even the senior members continued to share the instruction of elementary students by deliberate assignment. Britnell himself taught a section of an elementary class throughout his entire university career.

His work as a department head showed that he was an effective and imaginative builder. He commanded wholehearted respect and loyalty, and this for many reasons. His integrity and fairness were unquestioned in matters of the smallest as well as the greatest import. His scholarly abilities in research, writing and instruction prompted emulation. He was deeply interested in the welfare of his colleagues. He continually sought their advancement and, if the need arose, was fiercely protective in their behalf. He rejoiced in their honours and recognitions. He encouraged them to take leave of absence on scholarship or exchange appointment without regard for his own convenience.

He was always willing to see his students and discuss their studies and difficulties. He personally supervised much of the graduate work and consulted on every programme of specialization. Few areas of extra-curricular student activities aroused him to enthusiasm but no one who came to him with a problem of genuine intellectual concern could justly accuse him of disinterest.

Britnell was much honoured in his lifetime but most of the formal tributes that came his way were garbed in working rather than purely complimetary. He was selected a participant in the International Economic Seminar in 1950 and was a fine credit to his department and to the University as a whole.
plimentary titles. He was elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 1950 and president of the Canadian Political Science Association in 1956. He was selected as the first Harold Innis Visiting Research Professor of Political Economy at the University of Toronto for the year 1954-55 and was participant in the council meeting and symposium on world inflation held by the International Economic Association in Denmark in September, 1959. The mark of his work and leadership will long remain in Canadian academic and public life.

He will be warmly remembered by a multitude of friends. With little interest in casual or inconsequential association, he had an exceptional capacity for deep and lasting friendship. He was never too busy for an office chat or an evening’s visit at home. He was an engaging conversationalist with a fine sense of humour, a raconteur of no mean ability, and altogether a gracious host.

V. C. Fowke

PUBLICATIONS BY G. E. BRITNELL

1. Books:

2. Research Papers, Monographs, and Journal Articles:
   - The Western Farmer, the Machine Age Series (Toronto: Social Service Council of Canada, 1935), pp. 16.
   - "Dominion Legislation Affecting Western Canada," this Journal, VI, no. 2, May, 1940, 275-82.
   - "Price Control, Price Supports and the Farmer," in Graduate Lectures of the Faculty of Agriculture, Sixth Series (Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, 1945), 22-32.
   - "The Historical Pattern of Canadian Economic and Political Problems" in Canadian Economic Problems (Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, 1947).

“Problems of Economic and Social Change in Guatemala,” this *Journal*, XVII, no. 4, Nov., 1951, 469–81.


“Perspective on Change in the Prairie Economy,” this *Journal*, XIX, no. 4, Nov., 1953, 437–54.


*Workable Competition and Monopoly: The Public Interest and the Control of Combines in Canada*, with V. C. Fowke, M. F. Timlin and K. A. H. Buckley (Saskatoon, 1956), pp. 16.


3. Reports, Briefs, etc.:

A Submission by the Government of Saskatchewan to the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations, with F. C. Cronkite (Regina: King’s Printer, 1947), pp. iv, 434.


The Saskatchewan Submission in Reply to the Dominion Government Proposals delivered to the Dominion-Provincial Conference on Reconstruction, with F. C. Cronkite, et al. (Regina: King’s Printer, 1946), pp. 86.

Supplementary Submission of the Government of Saskatchewan to the Dominion-Provincial Conference on Reconstruction, with F. C. Cronkite, et al. (Regina: King’s Printer, 1946), pp. 21.

Submission to the Trade and Tariff Committee by the Governments of Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, with W. J. Waines, et al. (Winnipeg: King’s Printer, 1948), pp. 16.

Political Science
Canada,” with V. C. Fowke, 627-42.
Guatemala,” this JOURNAL, XVII,
Proceedings of the Fourth
Administration of Canada (Toronto,
Underdeveloped Countries: 
Guatemala,” American Economic Re-
nual Meeting of the American
interest and the Control of 
Timlin and K. A. H. Buckley
George Luis Arriola, ed., Integr-
this JOURNAL, XXIII, no. 4, 
Development.” Encyclopedia
developed Countries: A Com-
Proceedings of the Seventy-
Commission on 
(1961 ed.).
press, Jan., 1982).

to the Royal Commission on 
J. B. Rutherford, and
Commission for the Coal Mining Indus-
the Coal Mining Industry of
of the Government of Saskat-
minion Government Proposals on Reconstruction, with F. C.
saskatchewan to the Domin-
C. Cronkite, et al. (Regina: 
the Governments of Alberta,
rees, et al. (Winnipeg: King’s 
cept (Regina, 1946), pp. 10.

Notes and Memoranda

A Report on Farm Income, Farm Prices and Farm Price and Cost Indexes (Regina, 1946), pp. 16.
A Report on the Tenure of Crown Lands in Saskatchewan, with V. C. Fowke 
(Regina, 1947), pp. 44.
Brief of Argument of the Province of Saskatchewan in Opposing the Application of the Railway Association of Canada before the Board of Transport Commiss-
ioners for Canada for a Thirty Per Cent Increase in Freight Rates, with F. C. 
Cronkite, et al. (Regina: King’s Printer, 1947), pp. 107.
Submission of the Province of Saskatchewan to the Royal Commission on Transporta-
tion, with V. C. Fowke and F. C. Cronkite (Regina: King’s Printer, 1949), 
pp. 98.
Joint Submission of the Governments of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba to 
the Royal Commission on Transportation with respect to Crow’s Nest Pass Rates 
Crain and Grain Products, with V. C. Fowke (Regina: King’s Printer, 1950), 
pp. 20.
Report on Provincial-Municipal Fiscal Relations in Saskatchewan, with F. C. 
Cronkite and L. Jacobs (Regina: King’s Printer, 1950), pp. 141.
The Economic Development of Guatemala: Summary of the Report of a Mission 
(Washington: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 1951), 
pp. x, 94.
Workable Competition and Monopoly: A Brief presented to the Royal Commission on 
Canada’s Economic Prospects at the Public Hearings in Ottawa, March 8, 1956, 
with V. C. Fowke, M. F. Timlin and K. A. H. Buckley (Saskatoon, mimeo.), 
pp. 18).
Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland: Report of the Fiscal Review Commission, 
1957 (Salisbury, SR, 1957).
(Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1958), pp. xiv, 98.
of Canada (Ottawa, 1959), 1-13.
Submission of the Province of Saskatchewan to the Prime Minister and Govern-
ment of Canada Against the Imposition of Tolls on the St. Lawrence Seaway and the Welland Canal, with V. C. Fowke (Regina: Queen’s Printer, 1958), 
pp. 11.
(Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1959), pp. vii, 189.
Submission of the Province of Saskatchewan to the Royal Commission on Transporta-
tion, 1960, with V. C. Fowke (Regina: Queen’s Printer, 1961), vols. I-III.
Final Summation and Argument of the Province of Saskatchewan to the Royal 
Commission on Transportation, with V. C. Fowke (Regina: Queen’s Printer, 1961).

4. Reviews and Review Articles:
American Economic Review
Journal of Political Economy
Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science
Canadian Historical Review
Canadian Forum, etc.