

a slow start," Dave remarked, "It's been reasonably successful. I feel its greatest success is giving students employment, new experience, and demonstrating that local organizations and government can work together."

... Minnedosa RCMP detachment's Sgt. J. Horn, one of the most pleasant mounties I've ever met, indicates this area has had virtually no transient problem since his posting here. This despite increase in popularity of the Yellowhead and greater summer mobility of teen-aged transients generally and proximity of Clear Lake which attracts many hitch-hikers. Seldom do his men question a transient. Besides an age and sex factor the sergeant sees a major difference between today's transient and the "professional hitch-hiker" he encountered often as young policeman while stationed in Virden on the Trans-Canada west of Brandon 15 years ago. Many of those, he felt, were hard-core unemployed whose life style became hitching back and forth across Canada, some of whom "you could almost set a watch by."

Minnedosa, he says, like many smaller urban centres where facilities for transients are limited, has a "last resort policy" for stranded indigents. This usually consists of one or two meal tickets and sometimes a hotel room. However, probably because of recent re-routing of a portion of highways four and 10 to bypass Minnedosa's residential areas, the percentage of transients passing through the town itself has decreased sharply and consequently the number of requests for assistance is small averaging less than 15 annually. When he realized my hometown was Boissevain and I learned he was stationed there from 1958 to 1964 we shared some pleasant memories reminiscing.

The north junction of highways 10 and four is a popular embarking point for hitch-hikers heading north on Highway 10 to Clear Lake, The Pas, Flin Flon, or west on Highway four to Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia. Although no farmyards are located on the northern route near the junction, just west on the latter highway lives David Comrie Jr. David, a farmer-singer-auctioneer who farms here with his school teacher wife and three children, has had numerous experiences with transients through the years. Many drop in for a drink of water, to get away from a sudden thunderstorm, to ask directions, are sometimes hungry, and even to use the bathroom. The number of transients along this portion of Yellowhead, Dave says, is definitely on the increase.

For various reasons my own family has always been involved with transients in some way or other. I've become thoroughly convinced that attitudes toward transients are to high degree often related to the year of one's birth and consequently the transient situation during childhood when most influenced by hitch-hikers. For example, my wife and I were both born in the early 1930s. We were too young to feel either hostility or pity for the many unemployed transient "tramps" of the Depression. I can vaguely recall some stopping at our farm asking for food. However, both of us vividly remember countless servicemen hitch-hiking during the war immediately following the Depression. This was a brief period in Canadian history when public attitude toward transients was neither pity nor hostility, but pride; when it was patriotic to give one a ride. My hypothesis is that if a thorough study were undertaken to compare attitudes towards hitch-hikers of persons born in Canada a significant difference would be found between the present 43-50 year old (those children whom the Depression transient situation influenced most) and the present 35-42 year old groups (those children whom the Second World War servicemen transient situation influenced most) ---through no fault or conscious action on either part.

As teen-ager I hitch-hiked a lot; mostly on highways three, two, 10, 75. Now when I see a hitch-hiker I stop almost automatically; a practice I wouldn't necessarily recommend to everyone, and certainly not to women. My own '67 centennial project was picking up hitch-hikers; some 200 along highway 4. Of the 1,000 or so I've transported during my lifetime less than 10 would be considered trouble makers---drunk, on drugs, very hostile etc. To my knowledge only one was armed; and he tried to sell his .38 pistol. Sometimes you as driver get a pleasant surprise; a transient shares his lunch with you, you meet an old acquaintance---like a Brandon University student I transported recently whom I'd taught in Portage.

My own teen-age son Lory's logged some 6,000 miles hitch-hiking. This summer he and several other Cross-Reach (sponsored by United Church of Canada plus other organizations) volunteers (among them Larry Swanson of Dauphin and Scott Douglas of Portage) operated an interesting drop-in centre. Located in St. Stephens Broadway United Church adjacent to Memorial Park (Manitoba's major meeting place of transients) in Winnipeg, this centre served some 400 transients weekly, many of whom used the Trans-Canada and Yellowhead highways. Services included showers and coffee, referrals to hostels, feed-ins, counselling, survival tips. The drop-in was also a place to relax, read, play ping pong. As valuable a living experience for workers as its services were to transients.