

= John Edward Brownlee =

John Edward Brownlee , QC (August 27 , 1883 ? July 15 , 1961) was the fifth Premier of Alberta , Canada , serving from 1925 until 1934 . Born in Port Ryerse , Ontario , he studied history and political science at the University of Toronto 's Victoria College before moving west to Calgary to become a lawyer . His clients included the United Farmers of Alberta (UFA) ; through his connection with that lobby group , he was involved in founding the United Grain Growers (UGG) .

After the UFA entered electoral politics and won the 1921 election , new premier Herbert Greenfield asked Brownlee to serve as his attorney @-@ general . Brownlee agreed and was elected to the Legislative Assembly of Alberta in a by @-@ election in the riding of Ponoka . As attorney @-@ general , he was an important member of Greenfield 's government . He was closely involved in its most important activities , including efforts to better the lot of farmers living in Alberta 's drought @-@ ridden south , divest itself of money @-@ losing railways , and win jurisdiction over natural resources from the federal government . When a group of UFA backbenchers grew frustrated with Greenfield 's weak leadership , they asked Brownlee to replace him . Brownlee eventually agreed , and became premier in 1925 .

Brownlee enjoyed early success as premier : he handily won the 1926 election , signed an agreement with the federal government transferring control over Alberta 's natural resources to its provincial government , sold the struggling government railways to the Canadian National and Canadian Pacific railway companies , and ran a series of balanced budgets . Things became more difficult with the advent of the Great Depression . Brownlee was unable to restore the province to prosperity in the face of a global economic crisis , and reluctantly ran budget deficits . Political radicalism increased , and Brownlee found his orthodox approach to political economy under attack .

In 1934 , Vivian MacMillan , a family friend , sued Brownlee for seduction . Brownlee denied any sexual relationship , but the jury found in MacMillan 's favour . Though the judge disregarded the jury 's verdict , the trial 's lurid testimony and the stigma resulting from the jury 's finding forced Brownlee 's resignation as premier . He ran for re @-@ election in Ponoka in the 1935 provincial election but was defeated , as William Aberhart 's Social Credit League swept the province . Once out of politics , Brownlee resumed the practice of law and joined the management of the UGG , serving as its president and general manager from 1948 until shortly before his death in 1961 .

= = Early life = =

= = = Childhood = = =

John Edward Brownlee was born August 27 , 1883 in Port Ryerse , Ontario , to William " Bill " James Brownlee (1856 ? 1934) and Christina Brownlee (née Shaw) (c . 1860 ? 1941) . He was named for his maternal grandfather , miller John Shaw , and paternal grandfather , carpenter Edward James Brownlee . Christina Brownlee was a former school mistress and William James Brownlee was the operator of the Port Ryerse general store . John Brownlee had one sister , Maude , born September 12 , 1888 . The Brownlees lived in the general store building , and it was here that John spent the happiest times of his childhood : he much preferred his parents ' books , their political discussions with neighbours , and the details of their business to life outside the store . One anecdote has the village children , displeased with his serious temperament , throwing him into Lake Erie . By the age of seven , John was assisting at the store with such tasks as mixing butter from the different dairies with which his father dealt to produce a standardized blend .

By the end of the 1880s , Port Ryerse was dying out . The advent of railways was making tiny lake ports obsolete , and in Port Ryerse 's case this obsolescence was hastened by the town mill burning down in August 1890 . Against this backdrop , the family moved to Bradshaw , in Lambton County . There , John began school and attended Sunday school at the village 's Methodist church . He was the only pupil at his tiny school not from a farm ; he later claimed that this exposure to farmers gave

him an early understanding of their concerns . He also became involved with his church 's young people 's club , which put on speaking programs . He was by nature shy , serious , and introverted , which made these programs a challenge at first ; however , he found that he was able to succeed at them through focus and discipline .

In September 1897 , Brownlee began high school . The closest high school was in Sarnia , too distant for a daily commute , so at the age of fourteen Brownlee boarded away from his family , seeing them only during holidays and occasional weekends . He was a good student ? described by his instructors as " diligent " , if not brilliant ? but was not a social success , being too studious for many of his peers . He wrote his departmental examinations in July 1900 and graduated shortly thereafter .

= = = Early professional career = = =

After graduating high school , Brownlee travelled with his father on a sales trip through northern Ontario , and otherwise assisted with the operation of the family business . His family expected him to become a teacher and , in September 1901 , just after his eighteenth birthday , he enrolled at Sarnia Model School . There , Brownlee completed a fifteen @-@ week program that included such subjects as school management , pedagogy , school law , reading instruction , and hygiene . He graduated December 12 , 1901 , second in his twenty @-@ person class , and within a month was one of two teachers at Bradshaw 's school .

He fast gained a reputation as a competent instructor : his old work ethic served him well , and his seriousness , cool blue @-@ grey eyes , and six foot four frame combined to give him an impressive presence . His \$ 400 per year salary did not satisfy his ambition , and in the spring of 1904 , after two and a half years on the job , he decided that he wanted a university education . His teaching salary was not sufficient to finance this , so he spent the summer of 1904 selling a one volume encyclopaedia in the newly settled areas around Rapid City , Manitoba . Besides providing him with the income he required ? he was a patient , effective salesman and later boasted that he was never thrown off of a farm ? the job gave the now 21 @-@ year @-@ old Brownlee his first glimpse of Western Canada . Returning to Ontario at the summer 's end , he enrolled at Victoria College at the University of Toronto .

= = = University = = =

In Toronto , Brownlee pursued an honours program with specializations in history and political science . Besides these chosen subjects , he was required to study mathematics , biology , English literature , composition , Latin , and two additional languages ? despite having some knowledge of French , he chose German and Hebrew . He continued his trend of diligent scholarship , and earned As in all subjects his first year except for Latin , German , and mathematics , in which he received Bs . The trend continued , and in his third year he was among the top five in his class in all subjects except economics , in which he was eighth . As he became more involved in extracurricular pursuits , these grades fell ; after his fourth and final year , he graduated with III Class Honours , leaving him out of the top tier of students . His professors included historian George Wrong , whom Brownlee held in high esteem .

Brownlee was involved in a wide array of extracurricular pursuits . Chief among these were the Union Literary Society (dubbed " the Lit ") , Acta Victoriana (the college 's literary journal) , and " the Bob " (a satirical revue) . The first of these allowed him to hone his skills at formal debate ; he earned a reputation as " one of the more effective although not the most dramatic of speakers " . In his involvement with the journal , he developed his business skills : in his second year he was named assistant business manager , and he was promoted to business manager in his fourth year . His financial management of Acta Victoriana , along with that of the college glee club (for which he also served as business manager during his fourth year , organizing a ten @-@ day tour of the Niagara region) , earned him accolades . For the Bob , Brownlee temporarily abandoned his seriousness to write skits poking fun at the college and his classmates ; these won good reviews ,

with the Acta Victoriana declaring the 1908 edition , which Brownlee headed , " one of the best ever " . The summer following his third year , he attended the Conference of College Young Men 's Associations at Niagara @-@ on @-@ the @-@ Lake , where he attended Bible study classes and heard guest speakers encourage him to pursue a career in the clergy .

Brownlee 's summers in university were spent selling stereoscopic viewers in England and magazine subscriptions in Toronto . He also derived a salary in his fourth year as business manager of the Acta Victoriana . These sources of income allowed him to rent a small room in a private home , and to subscribe to a meal plan at a local eatery for C \$ 2 @.@ 50 per week .

= = = Family = = =

During Brownlee 's convocation in 1908 , he sneaked off to go canoeing in the Humber River with a female classmate , Isabella Govenlock . Upon their return , they announced that they were engaged . The news stunned friends of both , none of whom was aware of any romance between the two ; moreover , the apparent spontaneity of the engagement seemed at odds with Brownlee 's reputation for seriousness and caution . The engagement did not last , and the following winter Brownlee met and began to court Florence Edy , an arts student at McMaster College . In the summer of 1909 , Edy moved with her family to Calgary ; Brownlee , for a combination of personal and professional reasons , soon followed . The pair was married December 23 , 1912 , at the Toronto home of Edy 's sister Blanche . A honeymoon trip back to Calgary via Chicago followed .

Brownlee and his wife had two sons : John Edy Brownlee was born December 1915 , and Alan Marshall Brownlee was born September 1917 . Florence 's pregnancy with Alan , combined with a bout of poor health before it , made her a virtual invalid in subsequent years . This was exacerbated by the 1919 birth and death in infancy of a daughter . Also in 1919 , Brownlee visited his family in Ontario ; he returned to Alberta with his sister , Maude , who assisted Florence with the care of her children . Soon after , a full @-@ time maid was hired .

While John Brownlee relished life in Alberta , Florence missed her friends and family in Ontario . Her own health was only made worse by worry about her sons ' : John was perpetually nervous , and Alan was high @-@ strung and sickly . It did not help that , beginning in 1921 , her husband spent the work week in Edmonton , commuting home to Calgary only for the weekends . This situation continued until 1923 , when the family moved to Edmonton 's Garneau region . In 1926 , on the way home from a visit east , Florence Brownlee and her sons were examined at the Mayo Clinic , where all three were given clean bills of health ; Florence in particular was advised to " resume a more active life " .

Although Brownlee 's public image was of a severe and humourless technocrat , in private he allowed himself some levity . Christmas morning 1923 , the Brownlee boys awoke to find footprints of coal dust leading from the fireplace to the stairs and a handwritten note from Santa Claus apologizing for the mess and explaining that he had been searching for one of his reindeer . It transpired that he had mistaken one of Florence 's feet , emerging from the covers at the foot of her bed , for an antler . On another occasion , Brownlee reacted to his sons ' displeasure at leaving his parents ' cat in Ontario by acquiring a large bloodhound , which he himself came to enjoy .

= = Legal career = =

= = = Early career = = =

At the time of Brownlee 's graduation from Victoria College , the path of entry to his chosen profession , law , was through three years of articling instead of law school . Brownlee and Victoria classmate Fred Albright resolved to go west ; after narrowing the choice to either Calgary or Vancouver , the former was selected on the basis that its legal community was less established , and it offered better prospects to young lawyers without significant capital . There , Brownlee was articled to Lougheed , Bennett , Allison & McLaws , whose partners included Sir James Lougheed

and R. B. Bennett . Brownlee became quite close to Bennett ; the future Prime Minister often visited him after hours while Brownlee was studying , and used his honed memory and impressive oratorical skills to give the younger man detailed lectures on whatever area of law he was reading about , illustrated by precise and invariably accurate references to cases . Despite his relationship with Bennett , Brownlee was dissatisfied with the work he was being given , and he moved to Muir , Jephson and Adams , where he hoped to practice more commercial law . There he benefited from the tutelage of James Muir , who spent hours finding precise citations relevant to Brownlee 's studies , and then left the casebooks open to the appropriate page for Brownlee to find the next morning .

On December 16 , 1912 , Brownlee was called to the Alberta Bar . He began work as an associate with Muir , Jephson and Adams ; in 1914 he was made partner . He took advantage of his membership in Victoria College 's newly founded Calgary alumni branch to build professional connections . On the outbreak of World War I , Brownlee did not enlist ; his biographer , Lakeland College historian Franklin Foster , speculates that this may have been because of his eyesight , but notes that he did not involve himself in patriotic fundraising or volunteer work and questions whether he " completely shared the values and ideals of his generation " .

= = = Farmers ' lawyer = = =

One of Muir , Jephson and Adams ' major clients was a new agricultural lobby organization called the United Farmers of Alberta (UFA) , and it was with this group that Brownlee began to work most closely . Among his first tasks for the UFA was to assist with the creation of a province @-@ wide farmer @-@ owned company to own and operate the province 's grain elevators . Early in 1913 , he was part of a delegation to lobby the provincial government of Arthur Sifton to grant a charter to such a company ; Sifton was cognizant of the political power of the UFA , and quickly incorporated the Alberta Farmers ' Cooperative Elevator Company (AFCEC) Limited , but refused the farmers ' request to guarantee bank loans to the new company . These guarantees were instead received from the Grain Growers ' Grain Company (GGG) , a Manitoba @-@ based equivalent of the AFCEC .

Brownlee became the AFCEC 's lawyer , and in that capacity dealt with lawsuits against the company alleging incompetence on the part of its general manager and fraud on the part of a former auditor . His most important work for the AFCEC , however , was in merging it with the GGG to form the United Grain Growers (UGG) . In 1916 , new AFCEC president Cecil Rice @-@ Jones began to advocate the amalgamation of western Canada 's farmer @-@ controlled grain elevator companies . The Saskatchewan Co @-@ operative Elevator Company was uninterested , leaving the AFCEC and the GGG as the two potential partners . After accompanying Rice @-@ Jones to a meeting with Alberta Public Works Minister Charles Stewart , Brownlee initially found himself in agreement with Stewart 's belief that the companies ' shareholders would not accept amalgamation , and that a holding company should instead be created to run both companies ' affairs . After further study , however , he changed his mind and pursued the amalgamation with his typical focus . He reviewed the two companies ' corporate charters , and found that the GGG 's prevented it from either selling out to another company or acquiring sufficient capitalization to buy out the AFCEC . The charter could only be amended by the Parliament of Canada , and the GGG was concerned that any request for amendment would lead eastern Canadian financial interests to successfully lobby for a weakening of farmers ' rights . A meeting of both companies ' boards at the GGG 's Winnipeg offices nevertheless reached the reluctant conclusion that such a request was necessary for amalgamation . Though Brownlee continued to fear resistance from shareholders , both companies ' annual general meetings approved the proposal . Brownlee was heavily involved at both meetings , fielding questions from shareholders about legal ramifications and serving on ad hoc subcommittees to study aspects of the proposal . Once the proposal was approved , he drew up the necessary agreements , bylaws , stock certificates , and other instruments . The UGG came into existence September 1 , 1917 .

As lawyer for the UGG , Brownlee began to sympathize with the prevailing farmers ' view that the

eastern Canadian business establishment was hostile to their interests (for example , when the UGG wanted to sell twine , no manufacturer would supply it) . He recommended that the UGG reduce farmers ' reliance on the eastern establishment by expanding its operations into insurance , investment , and real estate . The result was the United Grain Growers Securities Ltd . He also helped the UGG quietly sell the stock it held in the Home Bank when UGG directors began to doubt the bank 's soundness ; this subtlety was considered essential , as the directors were concerned that airing their doubts publicly would make the bank 's failure a self @-@ fulfilling prophecy . When UGG Assistant General Manager J. R. Murray found an interested buyer , Brownlee advised Murray against insisting on an intricate written sales contract for fear that the buyer would sense the directors ' concerns . His advice was heeded , and the sale was concluded December 29 , 1919 . The bank failed less than four years later .

In July 1919 Brownlee left Muir , Jephson and Adams to accept a full @-@ time position with the UGG at \$ 6 @,@ 000 per year . Several months later this was increased to \$ 7 @,@ 500 in view of his increased responsibilities as General Manager of UGG Securities . In 1922 , he was made King 's Counsel . Brownlee was doing well in both law and business , and expected to continue doing so for the foreseeable future .

= = = UFA and politicization = = =

Though most of his legal work was for the AFCEC and then the UGG , Brownlee also made contact with leaders of the UFA proper , including William Irvine , Irene Parlby , Herbert Greenfield , and , most importantly , Henry Wise Wood . The charismatic Wood was the UFA 's president , and Brownlee often accompanied him to speaking engagements at UFA locals across Alberta in 1919 and 1920 . Wood held audiences enraptured with his sermons on cooperation and social justice ? Brownlee at one point likened the UFA to a religion ? while Brownlee explained the services offered by the UFA 's central office and answered members ' legal questions . His trips with Wood aroused Brownlee 's interest in the political side of the farmers ' movement , which he began to study in greater detail .

Another of Brownlee 's contacts was T. A. Crerar , who had recently become leader of the Progressive Party of Canada , and it was to him that Brownlee turned for his political education . Crerar introduced Brownlee to Ernest Charles Drury , the newly elected United Farmers of Ontario Premier of Ontario , and arranged for a meeting between Brownlee and Charles Stewart , by now Alberta Premier . During the latter meeting , Brownlee told Stewart that he felt that the UFA 's desires could be accommodated within Stewart 's Liberal government , but warned against a quick election . Foster suggests that this strategic advice from a political neophyte offended Stewart ; whether this is true or not , Stewart did call a quick election , for July 1921 . The UFA had decided in January 1919 , against Woods ' wishes , that it would run candidates in the next election .

Before the provincial election , there was a federal by @-@ election scheduled for June 1921 in Medicine Hat . Crerar 's Progressives were running Robert Gardiner , a local farmer , and Crerar asked Wood and Greenfield (the Vice President of the UFA) to broker an alliance between farmers and labour in the mixed rural @-@ urban riding . Before these efforts could come to fruition , the federal government of Conservative Arthur Meighen disclosed allegations of irregularities in the management of some of the UGG 's elevators . At a hearing on June 4 , former employees testified of storage bins with false bottoms and bribed railway employees . These allegations involved events from 1912 until 1914 , and their sudden prominence in 1921 made some in the UFA suspect that the hearings were politically motivated . Brownlee , as the UGG 's attorney , was successful in obtaining an injunction against further hearings until the UGG had time to conduct its own investigation and , as importantly , until the Medicine Hat by @-@ election was over . Gardiner won by a wide margin .

While most of the UFA was preparing for the 1921 provincial election , Brownlee went on vacation in Victoria for a month ; despite his recent interest in politics , he still viewed himself as a lawyer and businessman with little role to play in the UFA 's electoral activities . Before leaving Calgary , he was assured by Wood that the UFA would not win more than 20 of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta 's 61 seats ; in fact , it won 38 . Brownlee watched the results come in at the offices of the Victoria

Colonist .

The UFA , not a political party in the conventional sense , had contested the election without a leader . While its control of the majority of seats in the legislature entitled it , under the conventions of the Westminster parliamentary system , to form the government , it was not clear who would become Premier . Wood was the natural choice , but he declined the job for several reasons . To Brownlee 's surprise , Wood proposed that he should become premier instead . Brownlee declined , surmising that many of the newly elected farmer @-@ politicians would have seen an urban lawyer in the premier 's office as a repudiation of much of what they stood for . Ultimately , Greenfield was selected .

= = Attorney @-@ General = =

Greenfield appointed Brownlee his attorney @-@ general , and soon after Brownlee was acclaimed in a by @-@ election in Ponoka . His training in business and law , unique in the UFA caucus , gave him a central role in most of the government 's initiatives ; he also led the defense against attacks from the Liberal opposition , and eventually became responsible for setting the agenda for cabinet meetings .

Brownlee quickly entrenched himself in the conservative wing of the UFA caucus . He resisted measures that would take decision @-@ making out of government departments and transfer them to the caucus or UFA locals , and opposed the efforts of some UFA backbenchers to transform the application of the Westminster system in Alberta . When the UFA 's more radical elements called for the creation of a government @-@ owned bank , Brownlee dismissed the idea as neither financially nor constitutionally feasible . His concern for the government 's finances extended to its budget deficit ; when he found Greenfield 's spending cuts wanting , he cut staff from his own department to set an example . In a further attempt to better the government 's financial position , he unsuccessfully advocated the sale of the its four money @-@ losing railways to Canadian National (CPR) or Canadian Pacific (CPR) .

A longstanding objective of the Alberta government had been winning control of Alberta 's lands and natural resources from the federal government . The older provinces already had this control , but when Alberta , Saskatchewan , and Manitoba were admitted to Confederation , the federal government retained resource rights and paid the provincial governments an annual grant as compensation . As attorney @-@ general , Brownlee was Alberta 's chief negotiator in these efforts , and met frequently with representatives of Liberal Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King . While negotiations occasionally seemed promising , King was unwilling to fully commit to the transfer , possibly because Charles Stewart , now King 's Alberta lieutenant , and John R. Boyle , leader of the provincial Liberals , were sworn enemies of the UFA .

As a farmers ' government , the UFA was committed to helping farmers in the province 's drought @-@ stricken south . Brownlee authored the Drought Relief Act , which created a Drought Relief Commissioner to provide farmers with financial counselling and help them reach settlements with banks when they were unable to pay their debts . He also played a leading role in the creation of the Alberta Wheat Pool .

Brownlee 's department was responsible for administration of prohibition . Though the policy initially enjoyed the support of most Albertans , disregard for it was sufficiently widespread that effective enforcement proved impossible . The 1922 murder of Alberta Provincial Police constable Steve Lawson by bootleggers Emil Picariello and Florence Lassandro , for which they were hanged , helped turn public opinion against it . A referendum held on the issue found most voters willing to replace prohibition with government @-@ owned liquor stores and rigidly @-@ regulated beer parlours . And the Act was repealed . The Lord 's Day Act , which prohibited most commerce on Sundays , was also Brownlee 's responsibility , though he had little enthusiasm for it and prosecuted only the most flagrant violations .

Many UFA MLAs came to see the government 's reliance on Brownlee as embarrassing , and Greenfield 's abilities as too limited to continue to lead . In 1924 , they pressured Greenfield to resign so Brownlee could replace him ; Brownlee scuppered the plot by warning that Greenfield 's

resignation would be accompanied by his own . A second attempt in 1925 was successful when Wood intervened to convince Brownlee to accept the premiership and Greenfield assured him that he would be pleased to be rid of it . Brownlee became Premier of Alberta November 23 , 1925 .

= = Premier = =

= = First term (1926 ? 1930) = = =

Brownlee 's first challenges as premier were similar to those he had faced as attorney @-@ general : winning control of Alberta 's natural resources , selling the money @-@ losing railways , and balancing the provincial budget . Before he could do any of these , however , he needed to win the impending provincial election . He accomplished this by winning 43 seats in the 1926 election , an increase from the 38 that the UFA had won in 1921 and enough for a majority in the 60 @-@ seat legislature .

Once returned to office , Brownlee turned his attention to his other priorities . Many of them required the cooperation of King 's Liberal federal government : provincial control of resources would require the acquiescence of the federal government , and Brownlee felt that the deficit was in part the result of the federal government 's failure to cover its rightful share of expenses . King was himself reliant on the UFA : his minority government was survived thank to the support of Progressives and allied factions , including the 11 UFA MPs . Though some UFA legislators preferred Arthur Meighen 's Conservatives , Brownlee personally supported the King government , and even appeared to consider an offer from the Prime Minister to take Brownlee into his cabinet .

Brownlee attempted to leverage his relationship with King to win provincial control of natural resources . He won such an agreement in 1926 , but it was soon scuttled by the federal addition of a clause requiring Alberta to continue supporting separate Roman Catholic schools . Wrangling over this clause persisted until 1929 , when a compromise was reached . All that remained was the question of compensation to Alberta for land given away by the federal government , and by the end of 1929 agreement on this too was reached . Brownlee returned from Ottawa to Alberta , where he was greeted by 3 @, @ 000 cheering supporters .

Brownlee was similarly successful in divesting the government of its railways . When his initial attempts to sell them to the CNR or CPR failed , the provincial government took over direct operation of the lines in 1927 . In 1928 , they began to show a profit , and one of the lines was soon sold to the CPR . A joint offer from the CPR and CNR for the remaining lines was judged too low , and they were sold to the CPR near the end of 1928 for \$ 25 million .

Control of natural resources and the divestment of the railways were two factors that permitted balanced provincial budgets , the first of which was registered in 1925 . Despite this success , Brownlee continued to advocate austerity , and tried unsuccessfully to persuade the federal government to assume a greater share of the costs of new social programs , such as the old age pension . His resulting reputation as a penny @-@ pincher came at a cost to his personal popularity .

Brownlee 's government also attempted to advance a progressive agenda . One way this manifested itself was an attempt to consolidate Alberta 's thousands of school districts into a far smaller number of school divisions . The plan was supported by educational reformers who believed that the decentralized status quo made province @-@ wide reform impossible , but was scrapped when rural residents expressed fears that it would mean the closure of local schools . Another progressive initiative was the Sexual Sterilization Act of Alberta , which allowed for the sterilization of " mental defectives " . While the act , repealed in 1972 , is now viewed as barbaric , at the time it enjoyed the support of moral reformers like Nellie McClung , who believed it was for the subjects ' own protection .

= = Second term (1930 ? 1934) = = =

Brownlee campaigned vigorously during the 1930 election , and was re-elected with a slightly diminished majority . However , the Great Depression was making itself felt in Alberta . The price of wheat , Alberta 's major export , declined from a high of \$ 1 .78 per bushel in the summer of 1929 , to \$ 1 .00 in the following March , to \$ 0 .45 by the end of 1930 . The Alberta Wheat Pool (AWP) guaranteed its members a minimum price of \$ 1 .00 per bushel (itself not enough for many farmers to earn a living) , and it found itself facing ruination . Banks denied credit to it and to individual farmers , which in turn made it difficult for the latter to afford seed for the 1931 crop . The provincial government faced calls to provide loan guarantees . Brownlee was concerned that such guarantees would encourage lenders to make loans at higher interest rates , with the knowledge that the provincial government would pay them if the farmers defaulted . He sought a federally guaranteed minimum price of \$ 0 .70 per bushel , but was rebuffed by Prime Minister R. B. Bennett , who saw the source of the problem as a global oversupply .

As farms failed , many young people migrated from farms to Alberta 's cities , where the situation was scarcely better . As the unemployment rate rose , so did labour militancy . December 1932 saw a " hunger march " , in which more than a thousand unemployed men and women attempted to hold a protest march to the Alberta legislature . Brownlee requested the Edmonton city government to prohibit such a display . While he pronounced himself sympathetic to the workers ' ordeal , he said he felt such an event would create a volatile atmosphere that would breed radicalism and communism . It was through this lens that he had viewed the 1932 founding of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) . Though many UFA members supported this new party , which saw itself as a partnership between farmers and labourers , Brownlee considered it dangerously socialist . When the Hunger Marchers attempted to go ahead without government sanction and were brutally dispersed by Mounties and Edmonton city police , Brownlee took much of the blame .

Further weakening Brownlee 's control of the situation , the UFA , around this time , took a sharp leftward turn , as Robert Gardiner replaced retiring Henry Wise Wood as president of the provincial body .

The weakened economy presented significant challenges to provincial government finances . 1931 saw the first deficit of Brownlee 's premiership , of approximately \$ 2 .5 million , and 1932 's was still larger . During the latter year , the province came within hours of defaulting on a \$ 3 million bond , which was avoided only by a loan from the federal government . Brownlee cut spending aggressively : he closed most of the province 's agricultural colleges , reduced the civil service by more than a third , cut provincial employees ' salaries , and disbanded the Alberta Provincial Police , replacing it with the RCMP . His government also increased corporate taxes and implemented a new provincial income tax . These measures proved insufficient , and Brownlee joined his colleagues in the other western provinces in entreating Bennett to help . Bennett said he was privately sympathetic to Brownlee but refused to provide assistance .

In 1933 , Brownlee was appointed to the Royal Commission on Banking and Currency as a representative of unorthodox economic views (despite his conservative approach to Alberta 's finances - outside of the province he was viewed as a spokesperson of the progressive movement) . Brownlee argued that banks were treating Eastern and Western debtors unequally , and that they were charging predatory interest rates to farmers . He joined the majority on the Commission in calling for the creation of a central bank in Canada but was alone in proposing that it be entirely publicly controlled .

During the Great Depression 's early years , Calgary schoolteacher and evangelist William Aberhart began to preach a version of C. H. Douglas 's social credit economic theory . Brownlee believed that Aberhart 's proposals would be both unconstitutional (if implemented by a provincial government , which did not have control over monetary policy) and ineffective (since they would not create markets for Alberta 's agricultural products) . As Aberhart gained popularity , Brownlee attacked his solutions as illusory but had little of his own to offer but critiques and orthodoxy .

== Sex scandal ==

In 1934 , Brownlee was sued for the seduction of Vivian MacMillan , a Brownlee family friend and clerk in the provincial Attorney @-@ General 's office . MacMillan alleged that Brownlee had seduced her in 1930 and that the subsequent affair had lasted until 1933 ; Brownlee denied her story completely and said that the lawsuit was the result of a conspiracy between MacMillan , her fiancée , and Brownlee 's opponents in the Liberal Party . After a sensational and well @-@ publicized trial , the jury found in MacMillan 's favour . However , Justice William Carlos Ives , who presided over the trial , disregarded its finding , ruling that MacMillan had failed to show that she had suffered any damage . Appeals eventually led to the Judicial Committee of the British Privy Council , at the time Canada 's highest court of appeal , where MacMillan emerged victorious .

Once the jury issued its finding , Brownlee realized that his time as Premier was finished . He announced that he would resign as soon as a successor could be found , and on July 10 , 1934 , was replaced by Richard Gavin Reid .

= = Later political career = =

In the months after his resignation , Brownlee kept a low profile , though he was still MLA for Ponoka . He returned to the public eye with a speech to the January 1935 UFA convention attacking Aberhart 's plans to implement social credit in Alberta alone : " I would impress you that nothing but disillusionment , loss of hope and additional despair can follow any attempt to inaugurate a system of that kind , because the Province has no jurisdiction in these matters . " Despite hearing directly from Aberhart , the convention defeated by a wide margin a motion to endorse his version of social credit .

Reid 's government made Brownlee its chief strategist against Aberhart and social credit . One tactic he adopted was C. H. Douglas to serve as a consultant to the Alberta government on economic reconstruction . In doing this , Brownlee hoped both to co @-@ opt the promise of social credit for the benefit of the UFA and to discredit Aberhart by demonstrating how widely his interpretation of social credit differed from Douglas 's . This effort failed because Albertans , confronted by the contrast between the fiery , charismatic Aberhart and the aloof , technocratic Douglas , preferred the former . Brownlee also invited Aberhart to come to Edmonton and prepare proposals on which the government could act ; this was an attempt to force him to take specific positions that could be attacked rather than relying on vague assurances of economic salvation , but was foiled by Aberhart 's continued evasiveness .

Brownlee himself toured southern Alberta attacking Aberhart 's policies as vague and unconstitutional . In April 1935 , he gave a series of radio speeches designed to counter Aberhart 's popular radio program , Back to the Bible Hour . When his customary appeals to logic did not work , Brownlee resorted to attacking Aberhart personally , comparing him to the Pied Piper of Hamelin . Aberhart did not resist the comparison , retorting that the pied piper had " rid the capitol of all the rats " ; Brownlee responded that , after doing that , he had led its children to their destruction . In May 1935 , after Aberhart announced that his social credit movement would contest the next provincial election , Brownlee ridiculed its candidate @-@ selection process ? in which Aberhart personally interviewed and selected more candidates for each riding than could ultimately run ? as one in which the candidates would be " wrapped in cellophane and carefully hidden away so they will not dry out on [Aberhart] , until the day he calls out the fittest and discards the rest " .

The 1935 election took place August 22 . Brownlee spent most of the campaign trying to retain his own riding of Ponoka . Despite the respect he commanded , his constituents were in desperate economic straits and tired of the UFA 's orthodoxy , which had failed to raise their condition . As Brownlee later recalled :

One man got up and said , " Mr. Brownlee , we have listened to you with a great deal of attention and the answers you have given seem pretty hard to meet . But I have one more question ? I 'm selling my wheat at 25 cents a bushel . If I tried to sell a steer tomorrow I 'd probably hardly get enough to pay the freight . I get 3 cents a dozen for eggs . I 'm lucky to get a dollar for a can of cream . Will you tell me what I 've got to lose ? " and a cheer went over the audience . I knew then what the result of the election was going to be .

On election day , every UFA candidate in the province was defeated , as Aberhart 's Social Crediters won 56 of 63 seats . In Ponoka , Social Credit 's Edith Rogers defeated Brownlee 2 @, @ 295 votes to 879 . After this election , Brownlee never sought political office again .

= = Life after politics = =

Shortly after his electoral defeat , Brownlee started a new law firm based in Edmonton . The United Grain Growers soon re @-@ appointed him as their general counsel . By 1940 , Brownlee had restored his career to it position before he entered politics : his firm counted a number of major agricultural companies among its clients , and the UGG too brought him considerable work . He was also hired to write a legal column for the Western Review newspaper .

In his capacity as UGG general counsel , Brownlee was responsible for its restructuring . Its bylaws provided that only farmers could buy shares directly from the company , but placed no limitation on who could buy them from other shareholders . This had the effect of limiting capital inflow , since few farmers could afford to buy shares during the depression , and transferring control of the company to non @-@ farmers , who were purchasing shares from impoverished farmers . Brownlee 's solution was to create two classes of share : an investment share with a par value of \$ 20 , and a voting share with a par value of \$ 5 . The former could be held by any person , to a maximum of 250 shares per person , while the latter could be held only by farmers , to a maximum of 25 shares per person .

= = = UGG director and vice president = = =

When he restructured the UGG 's capital , Brownlee included a rider that non @-@ farmers who held shares at the time the new structure came into effect could hold voting shares . This clause allowed him to do so , and in consequence to be elected to the company 's board of directors at the 1942 annual shareholders ' meeting ; he was also appointed the UGG 's vice president .

At the time of Brownlee 's appointment , the UGG was embroiled in an income tax dispute . Though the farmers ' movement had generally supported the 1917 introduction of income tax , as rates climbed the UGG began to resent it , especially given that the pools were exempt . While the rationale for this exemption ? that the pools were agents of their members , and that any income should therefore be taxed as personal income once disbursed , and not as corporate income pre @-@ disbursement ? was initially accepted , the UGG argued that the pools ' 1931 reorganization eliminated the differences between them and the UGG , and that the exemption thus put the UGG at a competitive disadvantage . In 1941 , Brownlee travelled to Ottawa to express the UGG 's case ; there he collaborated with O. M. Biggar , representing the private grain companies in the form of the North @-@ West Line Elevators Association (NLEA) , who also objected to the pools ' exemption , on a joint brief to the Minister of National Revenue . The government ruled that the pools were taxable ; the pools appealed to the Exchequer Court , which found in the government 's favour in 1943 . By this time , the government had agreed not to tax the pools for pre @-@ 1941 revenue and to grant generous exemptions on taxation thereafter .

After World War II , the federal government appointed the Royal Commission on Taxation of Cooperatives to examine the question in greater detail . Brownlee prepared the UGG 's submission , and was pleased with the Commission 's eventual findings : it recognized the UGG as a cooperative , and recommended that it be granted the same exemptions as the pools enjoyed . However , the government still intended to collect taxes from 1940 and 1941 from the UGG , but not from the pools . In February 1947 , Brownlee returned to Ottawa to present the UGG 's case to Finance Minister Douglas Abbott , who eventually sided with the UGG and extended the pools ' exemption to it .

The acrimony this dispute engendered between the pools and the UGG led the former to suggest that the latter was not a true cooperative , but rather an old @-@ style grain company . Brownlee played a major role in disputing these allegations , and was a major contributor to The Grain Growers ' Record 1906 ? 1943 , the UGG 's written response . When he , as the UGG 's delegate to the Canadian Federation of Agriculture , opposed a resolution calling for the continued tax @-@

exempt status of pools , the resolution 's proponents suggested stating that it was " endorsed by the cooperatives " ; Brownlee objected that the UGG was a cooperative , and the wording was withdrawn . The Alberta Wheat Pool later published a pamphlet entitled A History of Events Leading to Taxation of Cooperatives , which placed much of the blame on the UGG and Brownlee , accusing the latter of working with the hated private grain companies to " enforce taxation of the Wheat Pools " . Seizing on an incorrect date in the pamphlet , Brownlee dismissed the charges ? which were substantially true , in light of his 1941 joint brief with Biggar ? as factually incorrect . Though UGG shareholders subjected him to vigorous questioning , he held firm and the controversy died down after he gave a series of radio addresses in Alberta , Saskatchewan , and Manitoba .

= = = UGG President = = =

In the mid @-@ 1940s , UGG President and General Manager R. S. Law fell ill , and in February 1947 , Brownlee was named the UGG 's Acting General Manager . On January 1 , 1948 , he became full General Manager . In spring 1948 Law stepped down completely , and on May 1 Brownlee succeeded him as President and General Manager .

In this capacity , he had offices in Calgary and Winnipeg . He worked constantly , often arriving at work on a Monday with a briefcase full of dictation machine recordings for secretaries to transcribe . Foster says that Brownlee was known by his staff as " a man whose life was his work , who lived in his briefcase , and whose only recreation seemed to be changing from one job to another " .

He turned this work ethic to expanding the company , building new grain elevators and purchasing existing ones . At the same time , he undertook a study of the operating costs and volume of each of the UGG 's delivery points . He found that roughly a dozen elevators were losing money , with climbing costs threatening to increase this number . Brownlee tried to reach accommodations with the UGG 's competitors to divide among them centres too small to support more than one elevator , and achieved some success , especially with the Alberta Wheat Pool . At the same time , Brownlee increased the UGG 's presence in larger centres , especially Regina , Brandon , and Winnipeg .

Brownlee remained intimately involved in the grain industry even outside the UGG , in part through his position on the Canadian Federation of Agriculture executive . In this capacity , he found himself in the middle of a controversy over the British Wheat Agreement (BWA) . The BWA was an agreement to sell wheat to British clients at a fixed price over a four @-@ year period . The price was to be adjusted during the following two years , " having regard to " world wheat prices . During the first four years , world wheat prices were continually above the price stipulated in the agreement , breeding resentment towards the British , especially since they sold much of this fixed price wheat for a large profit in European markets . This was exacerbated when the British refused to adjust the price upwards for the last two years , on the grounds that there was nothing in the agreement to compel them to do so . The result was considerable ill will and a loss by grain farmers of an estimated \$ 350 million . The federal government , which had negotiated the agreement , offered to supplement the British payments by \$ 65 million , a sum large enough to raise the ire of eastern Canadians but too small to placate western farmers . Brownlee , who had opposed the agreement , authorized a purchase of advertising across the country pointing out that the government fixed the domestic price of wheat at \$ 0 @.@ 77 per bushel while the world price reached as high as \$ 2 @.@ 18 . In Brownlee 's view , the \$ 65 million payment by the government paled in comparison to the benefit to consumers of the federal policy . Subsequent international agreements , for which Brownlee acted as an advisor to the Canadian delegation , resulted in more favourable terms for farmers . Brownlee 's continued status as one of the grain industry 's leading figures was also exhibited by his involvement in government relations . He appeared before the Canadian House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture to oppose a system of allocating box cars to each grain elevator by formula , favouring instead a system whereby the Canadian Wheat Board retained the flexibility to assign them as it saw fit . In his September 1960 submission to the Royal Commission on Transportation , In Defense of the Crow 's Nest Pass Rates , he rejected the railways ' calls to deregulate the rates they charged for the shipment of grain .

Brownlee 's presidency coincided with the fiftieth anniversary of the Grain Growers Grain Company

, one of the UGG 's founding organizations . In celebration of the event , Brownlee travelled around the country speaking to UGG outlets . He also oversaw the publication , and wrote much , of The First Fifty Years , a history of the UGG to that point . In this capacity , he came into conflict with UGG Vice President R. C. Brown , in charge of the UGG department that published the book , and Assistant General Manager P. C. Watt . Brownlee had an interventionist style as President , which Foster acknowledged sometimes " verged on outright interference " . As the years wore on , his decision @-@ making became more autocratic , with the board of directors expected to serve as a rubber stamp .

On June 21 , 1961 , ill health forced Brownlee 's resignation from the UGG .

= = = Later political activities = = =

Brownlee never sought political office after his 1935 defeat , and commented publicly on political issues only rarely . His distaste for Aberhart 's social credit government ? and in particular its contention , which Brownlee viewed as unfair , that the UFA had left the government bankrupt ? did not prevent him from advising it behind the scenes on a number of issues , most notably Alberta 's submission to the Rowell @-@ Sirois Commission , The Case for Alberta .

In the early 1940s , he met M. J. Coldwell , the new federal leader of the CCF , on a train . According to Coldwell , in the ensuing conversation Brownlee indicated that he would be prepared to consider running federally as a CCF candidate . Coldwell excitedly reported this to some of the CCF 's Alberta leaders ; one of them telephoned Brownlee to question whether Coldwell 's report was true . Brownlee adhered to a conservative view of how politics should be conducted , and was perhaps put off by the audacious telephone call ; despite an apology from Coldwell , Brownlee did not indicate any further interest in running for the CCF .

Brownlee 's occasional public comments on political issues still attracted considerable attention . He spoke to the 1944 UFA convention on post @-@ war reconstruction , and expressed pessimism about Canada 's economic prospects . He advocated a policy of full employment , and emphasized that jobs had to be meaningful rather than " put [ting] men to work building roads like coolies in China when machines can do it better " . He criticized the government @-@ imposed wartime ceiling on wheat prices , of \$ 1 @.@ 25 per bushel , as forcing farmers to shoulder an unfair burden of a national crisis , as they had during the depression .

= = = Personal life = = =

Brownlee 's father had died in January 1934 , while the MacMillan suit was still pending . In April 1941 , his mother died intestate and left an estate of \$ 1 @,@ 507 . Brownlee relinquished any claim on the estate in favour of his sister , who had cared for their mother in her last years .

Brownlee 's sons became successful at their careers : Alan graduated from law at the University of Alberta and joined his father 's firm , which was renamed Brownlee , Baldwin and Brownlee , while John studied photography in Los Angeles and returned to Canada to work as a photographer . Both married and had children . In time , Brownlee relinquished the law firm ? now Brownlee and Brownlee ? to Alan , and returned to Calgary , where he and his wife led a quiet , reserved life . When Calgary planners announced their intention to widen Memorial Drive , where the Brownlees lived , several residents expressed concern that the plan would destroy the street 's trees ; they consulted Brownlee , who telephoned the mayor and saved the trees .

In his last years , Brownlee received a number of honours . Premier of Manitoba Duff Roblin inducted him into the province 's Order of the Buffalo Hunt in November 1960 , in recognition of his contributions to the prairie provinces . The UFA awarded him an honorary life membership , and Prime Minister John Diefenbaker appointed him to the National Productivity Council , though ill health prevented him from participating after its inaugural March 1961 meeting .

Beginning in June 1957 , Brownlee underwent a series of major surgeries . By this time his memory was failing , and he often had to ask his wife for details that escaped him . He died July 15 , 1961 , two weeks after resigning from the UGG board and barely three after resigning as President .

= = Legacy = =

As Premier , Brownlee is most remembered for the sex scandal that ended his career ; his accomplishments are largely forgotten . Still , he is highly regarded by historians : Foster calls him " Alberta 's greatest politician and cites , in particular , his successful negotiations for the transfer of resource rights to the provincial government as the cause of Alberta 's subsequent prosperity . Journalist Ted Byfield concurs , noting that his willingness to confront the federal government sets him apart from Ernest Manning , another contender for the title . In 1980 , the Edmonton Journal wrote , " The lasting political estate left by former Premier John Brownlee has made Alberta what it is today , one of Canada 's wealthiest provinces fuelled by billions of dollars in oil and gas royalties . "

A University of Calgary undergraduate seminar in 2005 ranked Brownlee as the province 's third greatest premier , behind Manning and Peter Lougheed .

Brownlee 's impact is also felt through the organizations he participated in founding : the Alberta Wheat Pool remained an important player in Canadian agriculture until 1998 , when it merged with Manitoba Pool Elevators to form Agricore Cooperative Ltd .. In 2001 , this new company merged with the UGG to form Agricore United . In 2007 , the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool took it over , forming Viterra . Brownlee 's vision , unique among the members of the Macmillan Commission , of a publicly controlled central bank became a reality in 1938 , when the Bank of Canada shifted from private to government control .

Brownlee was buried at Evergreen Memorial Gardens near Edmonton . The provincial government 's John E. Brownlee Building in Edmonton is named in his honour , as is the University of Alberta Faculty of Law 's John E. Brownlee Memorial Prize in Local Government Law .

= = Electoral record = =

= = = As party leader = = =

= = = As MLA = = =