



THE GOOD AND THE BAD

Canada as seen through the eyes of a returning native

by PETER CALAMAI, Southam News Services

LONDON — First impressions are not always the truest when a man returns as a stranger to his own country.

It was through eyes which had been three years abroad—as Southam News Correspondent in London—that I looked at Canada last month. Once again, I marvelled at the wealth of Canada and again despaired at the private extravagance.

Canadians did not appreciate what a wonderful nation they had, I lectured a companion in Ottawa. Fresh from the Britain of bombs in the subways and daily horrors in Ulster, a returning native is forcibly struck by the peaceable Kingdom.

Unfortunately, I chose the nearby Parliament Hill as illustrative proof, since nothing could be more peaceable than lounging schoolkids and frisbee games.

A few hours later, the riot police charged in to beat back protesting dairy farmers and blood from cudged scamps was mixed with milk powder on Parliament Hill.

It seems wrong for a veteran of Ulster, Cyprus and the Yom Kippur War to be struck by the violence of Canadian society. But no one in the United Kingdom is engraving their social security

number on each possession in their house because burglaries are so common.

Nor is the force of the state anywhere so boldly stated in the United Kingdom as the sight of a Winnipeg city cop at Portage and Main, fingering his gun butt.

It was not a visit ideally suited to sample the temper of Canadians. Too much time was spent in big cities—Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Regina, Winnipeg, Calgary, Edmonton and Vancouver—and not enough time for eavesdropping on conversations.

There wasn't as much need to eavesdrop as in Britain, where some English assume an artificial character when talking to foreign journalists. With their own, at least, Canadians are still relatively open. The pleasure of riding CN's dome car "Athabaska" from Edmonton to Vancouver was intensified by the friendliness of fellow passengers.

Because of these limitations, what follows is in the way of random observations, not even pop sociology and certainly not judgements. Just jottings from a notebook.

First, Canada has some customs which were once reasonable to me but now seem strange.

Most striking is what I call the Canadian Interrogative. You may have heard of the Canadian Imperative (a la national destiny) but the Canadian Interrogative refers to a national speech trait. No matter how straight-forward the sentence, how simply declarative in purpose, most Canadian voices rise in pitch towards the end, tacking a vocal question mark onto a simple statement of fact.

The ultimate expression of this habit is, of course, to retrofit an "EH" to the sentence. If I decide never to come home again, it will only be to escape the barrage of "EHS" and "You Knows."

But when I do come back, I'll run up to the first ice machine outside a service station and buy up a five-pound bag, none of my English friends—including the local pub-keeper—believe such a thing exists, nor has anyone in Britain launched such a novel venture, even after successive sweltering summers.

It is a strange nation, however, which decides that no one flying in or out of Terminal II in Toronto will need a post office. European airports with a third the traffic of Toronto's ranch-style terminal routinely provide post office counters.

European hotels, however, do not pro-

vide facecloths. A proprietor of a bed and breakfast in the Midlands once explained the omission: "What, ask people to wash their faces with a cloth someone else used?"

I wonder what he'd make of Canadian hotels where washcloths are recycled but glasses warrant a "sterile" wrapping. Then there's CP hotels, proud of their Turn The Light off reminders in the room but air conditioning an empty room all day long.

While these aspects of Canadian life existed three years ago, my way of seeing them has changed. But Canadian life has altered itself during my travels.

Gambling has seized the public mind and pocket book with a stranglehold. When I left the province of Ontario was driving off-track betting shops out of business; now, they and every other level of government are themselves cashing in on human avarice.

Probably Canadians are no more greedy than Europeans but conspicuous consumption makes it seem so. At Winnipeg, a city bus goes direct downtown from the airport for 25 cents. Only myself, a teenager with a knapsack and a professor in aboriginal studies boarded. A dozen businessmen preferred separate taxis at \$6. apiece.

Perhaps this is only a natural reaction to the final fracturing of colonial ties with Britain, discarding what meagre

vacuum of Canadian identity, which persists. I left Canada this time with an illformed impression that all the elements of an identity were now present but no one knew how to fit them together.

Perhaps the cement is missing. It used to be the jingoistic belief that the future belongs to Canada. In four weeks and across two-thirds of the country, no one said that to me.

Instead, they told me how much they dislike and despise Quebec, the Quebec Government, the Quebecois, the Quebecers in the federal cabinet, the Olympics rip-off, Bill 22 and the insistence of bilingual air traffic control.

In three years, Quebec has lost the sympathy and forfeited the understanding of much of the nation. At least the Pakistanis will have companions as the outcasts.

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Another headache

As if the thought of the Olympics is not painful enough for us all, along comes external affairs to muck things up even more.

The Taiwan affair, involving whether that island should be allowed to masquerade as representative of the Chinese people, is just another headache we could do without. We would only have to worry about the exorbitant costs of the games if the federal government had kept its nose out of things.

Some things are best left alone or

in this case, to the International Olympic Committee.

Considering the bundle they are going to cost, it might be an understatement to point out that Canada, or Montreal if you prefer, is merely the host to the Olympics. But it is true. As such, it is not Ottawa's responsibility to rule on which country shall and which shall not participate.

If Taiwan insists upon its assinine pretension of representing China, let her go ahead. It's no skin off Canada's nose.

Pets and people

The Hamilton Spectator

Good heavens, Harriet! Look what they're doing to our Morris. . .

Inflation, unemployment, bilingualism and all other urgent issues pale by comparison to the real debate going on in the country at this time.

Pets, in an age of growing emotional and psychological dependency on the part of their owners, are becoming the biggest municipal headache in North America, a Toronto symposium of veterinarians and humane societies has been told.

A thousand U.S. mayors cited animal nuisances as their most frequent annoyance. "The impact of animals appears to be the number one concern of people in Scarborough," an alderman from that community reported.

The situation is explosive.

While politicians, vets and animal control officers are studying ways to clamp down on overpopulation (feline IUDs, doggie vasectomies and "morning after" pills, no less), owners, it may be expected, won't deny their pets a vigorous defence of their civil liberties.

Remember the anti-vivisectionists' outcry over university research not so long ago?

Politicians at all levels beware! Canadians who have slammed bedroom doors in the face of the state won't tolerate its interference in their kennels and kitty-litter.

Citizen to Citizen

Statement

On the front page of the June 25th, 1976 Citizen was an article containing two statements about the Immigrant Services Society East Indian Report. One was from B. Madhok, spokesman for the then newly-formed citizen action committee demanding a public apology from the Prince George Advisory Committee of the society. The other was from the Advisory Committee acknowledging it was regrettable the report was released and that the Advisory Committee felt badly that it was.

Since then I heard nothing until seeing The Citizen's July 8th edition when Vern Manhas, spokesman for the recently formed East Indian Community Services Society (Prince George) was quoted as saying no public apology was received and was still awaited.

That was the first time I ever heard of the East Indian Society and that Mr. Manhas was its spokesman.

Nevertheless, the Prince George Advisory Committee hereby publicly apologizes for the release of the report and the manner in which it was handled by The Citizen.

The suggestion that I met with the new East Indian Society after its formation is false! The meeting was June 25th with Mr. Madhok's citizen action committee and Mr. Manhas was present.

Furthermore, The Citizen's July 8th report that I seemed "to crucify all members" of the East Indian Community is false and couldn't be further from the truth. I can only think Mr. Manhas was misquoted or totally misunderstood my remarks, which is unfortunate.

The Advisory Committee hopes it can meet with the citizen action committee or the East Indian Society or any other East Indian group, if they wish, to avoid further misunderstanding and to promote better communication.

— Grant C. Hughes,
Committee Chairman
P.G. Advisory Committee,
Immigrant Services Society

It's appreciated

To the nurses, doctors, first aiders and the concerned citizens of the Prince George area who offer their assistance at a car accident and are ignored or seem to be ignored.

Thank you. We the ambulance crew do not ignore you on purpose or completely. Your offer is heard and is stored in the back of the crew member's mind. But at that time his mind is occupied with the care and equipment needed to aid in helping his patient.

We often need and ask for assistance at many of our terrible accident scenes and that assistance is always given. So please don't stop offering but don't be offended if it is not accepted or if you seem to be ignored.

Again to all the people of this area. Thank you from the ambulance service of Prince George. Please drive with care; we want assistance from you not for you.

— Pete Boudreau
Ambulance Driver



WHATEVER THAT IS

National point of view

CHARLES LYNCH, Southam News Services



OTTAWA — An Ontario proposal to put more power in the hands of the provinces has been rejected by the federal government, with federal Finance Minister Donald Macdonald saying it is "not logical from the national point of view."

It would be interesting to have Mr. Macdonald define the national point of view, something that nobody else seems able to do.

He seems to think that something like the kind of Ottawa-owned-and-operated Canada we have known and enjoyed can be preserved into the future, and that the national illusions we once cherished can be fulfilled. If he is right, then those of us who have been advocating a loosening of the bonds of nationhood are wrong. Speaking for myself, my conversion to regionalism was based not on the belief that it would produce a better Canada than we have had, but rather on the conviction that it was the only way to save any kind of Canada at all.

For many Canadians, a looser federation would not be better than a strong Canada.

Increased self-reliance would carry a price tag for Quebec, and clearly it would put heavy strains on the people of the Atlantic Provinces. But if we aren't willing to fight to preserve the benefits of nationhood as we have known them—if, in other words, a majority of Canadians don't feel that what we have had is worth the struggle—then obviously adjustments have to be made.

What Ontario proposed was just

such an adjustment—an expansion of provincial prerogatives, and a contraction of federal ones.

Specifically, Ontario wanted the federal government to withdraw from the financing of medicare, hospital insurance and university education, handing these programs over to the provinces together with 2 per cent of all personal income tax presently collected by Ottawa.

The proposal was supported by British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba and Quebec, and opposed by Saskatchewan and the Atlantic Provinces.

Noting that lineup, one is entitled to question Mr. Macdonald's reading of "the national point of view."

There have always been inequalities, and clearly there always will be. Inequalities in the social services might work hardship in what Mr. Macdonald calls "the less well-favored provinces", but this is a reality that must be faced. The ideal of a single nationwide standard of living is one that has never been attained, and one that can no longer be sustained.

Ceding more power to Quebec and the other provinces that want it—all of the most prosperous and most populous provinces, is an idea whose time has come, and unless Mr. Macdonald has a better one it behooves him to label the Ontario proposal a "gimmick."

Macdonald himself seems to catch a glimmer of the reality with his proposal to turn over to the provinces 7.5 per cent of federal income tax,

one percent of corporation tax and all of the federal excise tax on liquor.

The provinces turned that down, though it would have been a start, always assuming that when the federal government abandons tax revenues to the provinces, it doesn't simply impose new taxes of its own. That would simply mean additional burdens to the taxpayer, who in his provincial and federal roles is one and the same person.

Federal-provincial conferences are exercises in futility—what we need in these adjustments-to-come is some sort of supreme arbiter who would ensure that as the federal slice of the tax pie shrinks, the federal government apparatus shrinks with it, while the provincial governing machinery expands.

This, of course, is the crunch for the "feds", most of whom are incapable of negotiating themselves into a lesser role even if they believe it to be in the national interest, which most of them do not.

Ontario's plan, put forward by Provincial Treasurer Darcy McKeough, would cut Ottawa's share of income taxes from 76.6 per cent to 61 per cent, and would raise the share of the provincial governments from 23.4 per cent to 39 per cent. It implies that the provincial governments will be prepared to tax to finance their own programs, and with all the inequalities that would result it seems to me to offer better prospects for Canada's uncertain future than anything the federal government has in mind.

Trudeau under attack

By CLAUDE RYAN,
Montreal Le Devoir

Planes are flying again in Canadian skies . . . but the calm may be only temporary, and bought at the price of costly compromise.

The Government has doubtlessly not renounced its essential objective in this affair — The applicant of its bilingualism policy to air services in Quebec province. The Canadian Air Transport Controllers Association (CATCA) and the Canadian Airline Pilots Association (CALPA) wished to be rid of this objective, which they consider to be unrealistic and dangerous. . .

Mr. Lang may claim that he has lost nothing of the government's basic objective. On everything else, and especially on the methods of inquiry and follow-up to be used, he made major concessions. . .

The pilots were the first group openly to defy, through an illegal strike, one of the country's most important laws. In view of the circumstances surrounding their protest of the bilingualism policy, we would have expected an unusual firmness on the government's part. On the contrary, however, the pilots and their cousins were treated like . . . no other group before them.

Nothing illustrates this better than a quick review of the exceptional concessions extracted from the government in exchange for a return-to-work agreement.

1. The government had named two judges, one English-speaking and the other French-speaking to conduct the inquiry . . . CATCA and CALPA demanded reassurances by the nomination of a third, an English-speaking commissioner. They obtained complete satisfaction. . .

2. In several places in the agreement, it is expressly provided that CATCA and CALPA will be accorded special treatment by the inquiry.

3. In a manner which creates a dangerous precedent and which may be highly embarrassing within a year or two, the government committed itself to suspending its bilingualism program unless the three commissioners unanimously recommend otherwise. . .

4. Another insidious and dangerous precedent: The government has committed itself to two private organizations whose principal notoriety is derived from the brazenness with which they have placed themselves above the law of the country — not to act on the commissioners' report until MPs have expressed their opinion by a free vote in Parliament.

5. The three commissioners would have to possess a rare civic spirit and great modesty to accept serving in such a stupidly rigid context. More than one great commissioner-inquirer of the past would have refused outright to work in circumstances so restrictive to his liberty of action. . .

Mr. Trudeau, especially in his talks with the government of Quebec, has always preserved as the apple of his eye the smallest morsel of authority he felt was threatened by his opposite number. That is why it is so difficult to understand why, knowing his convictions in this regard, his government has accorded an extremely unusual special status to people who, from the height of their illegality, have not ceased to dictate their conclusions to it, with, alas, more success than we would have thought possible.

Please write

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Letters must be free of libel, personal abuse or other impropriety.

They should be no more than 300 words in length and may be edited for space and other reasons. Typed letters should be double spaced.