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THE HOUSE OF HISTORY
THE HOUSE THAT HISTORY BUILT

WHAT is the most historic building in Canada? The oldest? The reconstructed splinters of some ancient structure built at the trailing edge of history? Or is it the place where the greatest part of our history was unravelled?

That claim belongs to Parliament Hill in Ottawa, not to the Centre Block, where the House of Commons and Senate sit beneath the Peace Tower, but to a Victorian Gothic pile officially named the Eastern Departmental Building.

In the rooms of the East Block, Canada was shaped during the century that followed Confederation. Its corridors were the corridors of power. Its stairways were worn by the footsteps of Canadian history. "I had heard about the famous East Block before I went to work there in 1949," Prime Minister Trudeau recalls, "and I wondered if the legends about it were true. Years later, after working there as prime minister, I still wondered."

This year the East Block emerges from the most ambitious historic restoration Canada has ever undertaken. For those who search, ghosts of our uncertain beginnings hover in the Privy Council chamber, where the vision of a Canadian nation was once discussed by dreamers. The offices of Sir John A. Macdonald and the prime ministers who succeeded him have passed in time at 1872. The quarters where the vice-regal presence long made itself grandly felt have been rescued from the flotsam of later bureaucracy.

The East Block is one of four buildings that once stood on Parliament Hill. It is the only one that survives in recognizable form. The Centre Block was destroyed by fire in 1916. The interior of the West Block was gutted by misguided renovators 20 years ago. The Supreme Court Building was leveled half a dozen years earlier to create another parking lot for bureaucrats. The East Block, showing signs of senile decay, was occasionally threatened with demolition or at least modernization. Then good sense prevailed to create a remarkably successful combination of national political shrine and efficient office space.

The East Block was the offspring of a bold generation. Canada’s new seat of government was planned on a remarkably ambitious scale. In a roasting frontier lumber town was created the most grandiose cathedral to parliamentary democracy ever built outside Westminster. In today’s terms, it would be like constructing our largest national structure in northernmost Manitoba.

There was nothing pusillanimous or slow about those early planners. The news that Queen Victoria had selected Ottawa as the capital of united Canada was received in the

PHOTOGRAPHS BARRY DURSLEY

Where the ghosts of governments past still linger

By R.A.J. PHILLIPS

The Privy Council chamber, historic heart of the East Block, where the cabinet met for 105 years.
colony, with a mixture of wonder and disbelief, in 1858. By May 1859 advertisements were inviting architects to submit plans for a “plain, substantial style of architecture.”

At breakneck speed, the department of public works awarded a contract to Jones, Haycock and Clarke for $278,810. The first sod was turned before Christmas; work began in earnest the following spring. On a notoriously difficult site, there had been no test borings, no exploration of the fissures or cavities. Four years of mounting costs, mismanagement and scandal were to follow. Finally, in 1864, the government itself took over construction, and on June 8, 1866, Parliament sat for the first time in the Centre Block.

By now the East Block was four years behind schedule, but at the end of 1866 the last workman departed. Once estimated at $150,000, the bill had climbed to $706,549 for an L-shaped structure. In 1910 a new wing costing $359,121 filled in the present rectangle. Since then various other alterations have been made, almost all of them bad.

While architecture is singularly vulnerable to changing fashions, it is difficult to comprehend the cheerful vandalism of successive generations. The biggest changes came after World War II, when the bureaucracy was exploding.

The main entranceway, under the Southwest Tower, was gutted and fitted with oak doorways styled after fashionable suburbia. The elegant cage elevator was torn out for the modern grace of concrete block walls. The governor-general’s entrance was cemented up to accommodate a bureaucrat in suitable splendor. The prime minister’s entrance received a new inner doorway slashing across a fine stained-glass window. The main corridor, terminating in a Gothic window, was blocked off for an office. Fireplaces were eliminated with jackhammers. Washbasins, which once gave a near-goodliness to the offices of senior officials, were yanked out; a couple were saved when, according to legend, the occupants chained themselves to the plumbing. Wires festooned the corridors and fluorescent fixtures dangled everywhere. It was the spirit of an age that created its own bright blossoms with no sense of roots.

The vandalism was checked, and in 1966 Prime Minister Pearson was persuaded that the East Block was a national treasure and authorized some limited restoration. The Privy Council chamber was shorn of many of its later embellishments to reveal the beauty of its earlier days. Although the governor-general’s office and the vice-regal entrance were apparently beyond recovery, the stately stairway connecting them was restored, along with the offices of Sir John A. Macdonald and the prime minister.

A book on the history of the building was published.

Most important, the public was allowed entry for the first time since Confederation. It was a small and

hard-won victory. Visitors were permitted entry only for a few hours on weekends, but even this was fought by a bureaucracy that found comfort in its unsaillable walls. Now the public was discovering its past. The department of public works, long an arch-vandal, was being transformed into one of the most historically sensitive landlords in Canada.

In the early days there seemed to be infinite space inside the East Block. All departments of government were housed in it and in the West Block across the hill. Emblems such as wheat sheaves were carved in stone to indicate the various departments, as though they would never change. The architecture of each office reflected the hierarchy. Ministers rated a large office with a marble or stone fireplace, marble basin and ceilings with rows of richly decorated molding. Senior bureaucrats might claim decorated cornices, but without colored floral patterns. A clerk might have only machine-made woodwork, possibly with a concrete fireplace. The planners assumed that the civil service would never expand. They were wrong.

In the early days life was gracious. On Thursday afternoons the wives of ministers and senior officials called for tea by the fireplace. It is also told that in a less hurried era the clerk of the Privy Council and his secretary regularly sat by the open fireplace playing double solitaire. Working hours were ten to four, with two hours for lunch.

It was gracious but chilly. The main source of heat was to be an elaborate hot-air system with a primitive form of air conditioning. When it was tested on completion, a report noted with satisfaction that by burning four cords of wood a day, in cold weather a temperature of 50 degrees could generally be maintained. Even this modest standard could not be counted on, and the occupants suffered miserably in winter. Summer was better, but, alas, the air ducts on the side of Parliament Hill were closed off during World War I for fear that German spies, with nothing better to do, might enter them.

In many ways the East Block was a model of the modern technology of its time. It had a system of electric bells for communication. Its sanitary, ventilating and even heating arrangements were said to be unsurpassed in North America.

The first telephone came to the East Block in 1882, but it traveled a rocky path. Five years before, the first commercial telephone in Canada was installed between the offices of Alexander Mackenzie (the only prime minister to use the West Block) and Rideau Hall. Mackenzie became frustrated with the newfangled gadget and ordered it removed forever. Exercising a governor-general’s prerogative much more potent in those days, Lord Dufferin countermanded the order because his wife liked to have Captain Goutreau

Georges Cartier’s office has been used by every prime minister from Laurier to Trudeau.
of the marine department sing to her from Mackenzie’s office, while she accompanied him on a vice-regal piano.

Despite the meticulously planned architecture to accommodate persons of every rank and station, no office was created for the prime minister. It was assumed that this would be a part-time function of someone already holding a portfolio and therefore an office. Sir John A. Macdonald, as minister of justice and attorney-general, worked at the southwest corner of the second floor. The room was used by successive cabinet ministers, including Lester Pearson and the secretaries of state for external affairs who succeeded him.

At the northern end of this west wing is the office first used by Georges Etienne Cartier and later by every prime minister from Laurier to Trudeau. Mackenzie King had the longest tenancy. It was his habit to disappear to a nearby room for a box lunch and a nap. Because supplicants might collar the prime minister on his considerable walk to a washroom, it was proposed that plumbing be installed adjacent to his office. King bridled at the large expense of putting pipes through two feet of masonry walls. After long delay the prime minister finally gave way to human frailty.

Governor-generals, from Viscount Monck to the Earl of Athlone, also had to let sumptuous décor compensate for inconvenience. Their washroom was off a public stairway, but there they had a private bathtub. The governor-general’s levee was held in the East Block from its inception in 1870 until Lord Willington moved it in 1928 to the Centre Block. The governor-general ceased to use the East Block in 1942. By then his direct role in government had long since dwindled, and someone else wanted the office space. “As principal secretary to Prime Minister Trudeau,” Marc Lalonde remembers, “I worked in that office. The vice-regal splendor had long since gone. When I looked at the stacks of papers, the filing cabinets and telephones, I sometimes thought how pleasant life must have been for Lord Dufferin.”

The historic heart of the East Block is the Privy Council chamber, where the cabinet met, and the adjoining anteroom. The chamber is surprisingly small, and it may be that its dimensions influenced prime ministers in holding down the size of the cabinet, which grew from 10 in Macdonald’s time to more than 30 more recently.

“One of my vivid memories as a minister was the Privy Council chamber,” says George Hees. “It was a museum where history had been made, but we were still making history there—and lively history it often was.” In early times one may infer some conviviality from the surviving accounts for wines and spirits. Prime Minister Bennett was not convivial. He exercised the full authority of the chair and even used the chamber occasionally as an office to which he would summon ministers for accounting. An aspect of Mackenzie King’s austere domination was his refusal to let anyone smoke in his presence. During long cabinet sessions, heavy smokers would excuse themselves to consult the statutes lining the walls of the anteroom. There the air was blue.

At the first cabinet meeting over which he presided, St. Laurent symbolized his gentler approach to human weakness when he lit a cigarette. He also had the chamber air-conditioned so that no one would be bothered by smoke. Bother or not, Diefenbaker tolerated no smoking in his presence. The anteroom was popular again.

But Diefenbaker did introduce what was perhaps the greatest break with tradition. “For 80 years,” says Ellen Fairclough, “the Privy Council chamber was the most exclusive men’s club in Canada. As the first woman cabinet minister to enter it, I could imagine the puzzled frowns of those who met in this room nearly a century before. Fortunately, there was no hint of dismay on the part of my colleagues.”

The chamber met here for 105 years, though in more recent times it met also in the Centre Block when the House was sitting. Today it is a room of historic ghosts. In this place, in 1866, the proposed British North America Act was considered. It was probably in this room, on July 1, 1867, that Viscount Monck administered the oath of office to Macdonald and his cabinet before they joined the throngs celebrating Confederation on the hill. Here the elusive national dream was clutching in successive crises of transcontinental railway building, and the fateful decisions were made in response to the Riel uprising. When Canada was mobilized for two world wars, the government, meeting here, felt the shuddering of the nation.

More cabinet crises were weathered here than history has recorded. Jean Chretien remembers walking into the chamber for his first cabinet meeting.

“Here was the room where so many decisions vital to our nation had been taken, where so many dramas had been played out. And I thought to myself, ‘This is a long way from Shawinigan.’”

The East Block tends to have that awing effect on some of its inhabitants. “I have never walked in the East Block,” says Flora Macdonald, “without being overtaken by a sense of history. It is strange how wood and stone can be so constantly alive with the muted voices of Sir John A. Macdonald and all the makers of Canada who followed him.”

The East Block was traditionally a hotbed where outstanding young men and women were nurtured for high positions in public life. J.W. Pickersgill was one. He served as secretary to the prime minister, secretary to the cabinet and then for many years was himself a minister. Attitudes to the building in his day were less romantic. “Most of us took...”
the East Block for granted. We saw nothing remarkable about working in the same offices, sometimes with the same furniture, used by all our leading statesmen since Confederation. Nor did we stop to reflect that the people we were working with would themselves someday join that historic company."

There is an attic room where four young men once shared a cramped space below the roof. All were destined to become ambassadors. Two were to head the department of external affairs. One became prime minister. "There was nothing of the traditional foreign office glamour," Pearson recalled. "There were bats beneath the roof and darkness in the corridors."

With its reopening, the East Block has rejoined the stream of history. The departments once housed in it are scattered, and the office of the prime minister is in the restored Langevin Block across the street. The East Block has become part of Parliament itself, reserved for the use of ministers, members of Parliament, senators and parliamentary administrators.

Its character has reemerged. The famous corridors have been stripped of their modern paint and vast rooms of wires to return to the muted tones and handsome woodwork of earlier days. Callously blocked entrances are open again. The concrete block elevator shafts have met the fate they deserved, to be replaced with modern equipment hidden from the public, sometimes exuberant, sometimes brooding Victorian decor. Sunlight again filters through stained glass onto the great stairways. All the lighting in public places is an adaptation of the original gas fixtures, with the efficiency and safety of electricity. The five historic rooms are preserved in a moment of time, chosen as 1872.

The vandalism of the years left few clues for the restorers: chips of early paint here, a few inches of original rug there, early black-and-white photos of furniture and fixtures. When a sloppy workman of long ago concealed a segging floor with a scrap of carpet, he inadvertently left the only evidence of the pattern, color and style of the original rugs, from which new floor coverings could be manufactured. Even the most historic furniture had, for the most part, been stolen, destroyed or otherwise lost. Restorers combed Parliament Hill looking for pieces. Their task was made more difficult by the fact that until recently no detailed, up-to-date records had been kept on these incalculably valuable furnishings — a situation that has now been corrected.

The office of the governor-general, lost for 40 years, has reemerged in startling elegance for public view. The original desk and chairs, happily kept in Rideau Hall, have been brought back to their rightful place. The ornate plaster, the fireplace, the windows are as they used to be, and even the view across Parliament Hill to the West Block is little changed since the days of Lord Dufferin. So it is in the office of Sir John A. Macdonald. The fine blue-gray Armprior marble fireplace has reappeared from the cream-colored latex paint with which one of the last occupants had it coated. Sir John’s furniture, from desk to coal basket, is back. Cartier’s office, used by prime ministers for nearly a century, was constantly losing its furniture. Now the pieces from the 1870s have been put in place, even in the desk lamp with its cumbersome umbilical cord reaching up to the gas chandelier.

An authentic reproduction of the original Privy Council table has been made in the workshops of Upper Canada Village. The chandelier has been given back the long-lost chains, frills and furbelows and now dimly lights the oaken chairs where the makers of Canada sat. The historic rooms and corridors were only a small part of the effort required to save the East Block and ready it for another century. Behind the recapture of Victorian moods were massive engineering and serious dilemmas about the structure itself. More than a million dollars was needed to repair the basement walls and provide the drainage specified in the 1859 contract but somehow overlooked. The outer walls are nearly three feet thick at ground level — they are seven feet thick below the main tower — and the interior partitions, made of brick and rubble stone, are from one to two feet. In the floors is more than a foot of concrete. All this made for hard work as miles of heating and air-conditioning ducts, electrical and communication wires, had to be concealed in passages drilled and chipped through concrete. Fortunately, early lack of economy in the upper floor spacing gave the engineers as much as four feet of height for utilities without disturbing the irreplaceable 14-foot ceilings.

There were conflicts and compromises. Insulation lost to authenticity. Fireproof carpeting in the corridors won over the original cocoa matting. The magnificent oak and iron handrails on the stairways are under a cloud because modern building codes say they should have been higher. There have been two suicides in the East Block, but no one has fallen over a stairway.

Far from settled is treatment to counteract the effects of acid rain and silt which have eroded the exterior stone carvings and saturated the base of the enormous walls. Scientists can analyze and recommend, but only politicians can stay the ravages of acid rain.

This is not a museum but a working building in whose Victorian corners moments of our most intriguing past have been preserved. It is ready for another century, and it cost no more than a transient shopping centre.

Canadians visiting their capital now have a rendezvous with history. On Parliament Hill, at last, the past and future are gathered.

It is a sign of our maturity. We are the richer for it. D

The offices of Sir John A. Macdonald and the prime ministers who succeeded him have paused in time at 1872.
A DELICATE BALANCE

Weighing the evidence for a fair oil price

BY MARTIN JONES

PHOTOGRAPH BY PETER PATERSO

For almost eight years, a debate has been raging within energy circles in Canada. At times heated and bitter, at times disinterested and academic, it has created controversy among politicians and policy makers, oilmen, economists, labor leaders and Canadian consumers. The debate is over oil pricing; and it is one of the major elements of the energy issue, which has driven deep cleavages between eastern and western Canada. Recently, it has even attracted increasing concern and comment from foreign observers and officials of international organizations.

At issue is the question of what is a "fair" price for Canadians to pay for oil. The long-running debate began shortly after the oil-exporting nations in the Middle East jack ed up the price of crude oil in the fall of 1973. In a matter of a few months, the price rose from $2.00 a barrel to more than $8.00 a barrel. Widely dependent on imports for most or all of their crude-oil needs — such as Germany, France, Japan and countless Third World nations — swallowed price increases in a single gulp, Canada decided to phase in oil price increases slowly, to check inflation and prevent undue economic hardship to consumers and manufacturers. It was a luxury that Canada thought it could afford, because much of our crude oil comes from Canadian sources, mainly the southern basin of Alberta.

Back in the mid-seventies, it was reasoned that Canadian oil prices would eventually reach a price level close to that of imported oil. However, in recent years the domestic price of oil has fallen further and further behind the cost of imports, as the prices levied by the Organization for Petro-
Exporting Countries increased dramatically between 1979 and 1980. Thus, today, the "made-in-Canada" prices for crude oil are the international price of approximately $40 a barrel. We pay the international price of $40 a barrel in exchange for an international commitment. On the other side of the coin, the cost of imports is largely paid by taxpayers, since it is subsidised by the federal government at a heavy cost — $5 million to $9 million a day, as of last June.

Pricing is a major issue in the continuing energy deadlock between Ottawa and the government of Alberta. There would be no sense in subsidising Canadian oil if oil prices rose to about 75 percent of the U.S. price. But in addition to the energy-producing provinces of Canada and, as one might suspect, the oil industry, there is a plethora of societies, chambers of commerce and banks, that argue that Canadian oil prices must rise to a level close to the world price in order to maintain the market. It includes such business organizations as the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, authoritative economic bodies such as the Economic Council of Canada and the Ontario Economic Council and, as strange as it may seem at first, the Canadian Consumers' Association.

Those who argue for higher prices feel their case has not been well understood. They maintain, with some justification, that we do not dispute that it is important to check inflation and cushion lower-income consumers. It discourages energy conserva-
tion, while dulling the incentive of the industry to make an all-out effort to develop the country's energy resources. As Diane Cohen, the re-
pected economist, remarks: "Oil prices have to rise to a lot faster in Can-
ada. Our oil prices are one-half of what they are in more-or-less oil-rich countries. It is likely that Canadians believe they are extraordinarily high. There is no per-
nuciation that you cannot get out of the ground without it costing more. And you can achieve lower energy conservation unless costs rise.

The problem of conservation has been a particularly vexing one for Canada. We are shockingly defenceless in the world market. We can lay part of the blame on the fact that we inhabit a far-flung country with a cold climate that boosts both heating and transportation smaller cars and are more likely to take public transport. New buildings and comprehensive policies in the works. But Canadians believe they are extraordinarily high. There is no perception that you cannot get out of the ground without it costing more. And you can achieve lower energy conservation unless costs rise.

The new pricing scheme does provide the industry with an annual increase in its gross revenues. That amount is $1.5 billion. How much the prices will rise will depend on the outcome of the negotiations. But the current access is expected to deterio-
rate sharply this year. Oil prices in the spring will be 15 to 20 percent higher than they were last year, and this would undoubtedly be a tax reduction in the consumption of pet-
rol products and a reduced fall for imported oil.

Conservation is only one of the ways in which Canada is losing a substantial share of the world market to OPEC. The main problem is that Canada, with its large share of the world market, has been unable to increase its exports to the United States. The United States, however, has increased its own production, which has put a downward pressure on prices. As a result, Canada is losing market share and is unable to increase its exports to the United States.

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the federal and Ontario governments in favor of lower oil prices is that cheap energy provides Canadian manufacturers with a competitive advantage in world markets. It is an argument, though, that is rapidly losing credibility, particularly as one leading trade associations within the business and industrial communities — including the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business — have come out publicly in favor of higher prices. Lower energy costs do permit Canadian manufacturers to be more competitive. But other factors are even more important, such as security of supply and the economic stimulus of large energy investments. In any case, energy costs are a small percentage of manufacturers' total cost. Moreover, as Garneau argues, if Canadian prices do not rise greatly to world levels, Canadian manufacturers will be making investment decisions that reflect neither the scarcity of cheap energy nor the more prudent use of energy by consumers in other markets. "From the manufacturers' point of view, we should have oil prices in keeping with what's happening internationally, so our products reflect the energy scarcity. If we isolate ourselves in terms of pricing, manufacturers will be left in a quandary." Garneau points to a recent example in the electrical industry: Canadian manufacturers found that they were unable to sell their appliances in California because they did not meet the state's energy conservation regulations.

Thus, business leaders argue that if unrealistic energy prices impede development efforts — which result in a greater supply and orders for manufactured goods — then they'd rather forego the lower energy prices.

One argument against higher energy prices is that this will be more difficult. But perhaps the impact is that expensive energy will have upon the consumer, particularly the lower-income consumer. There is no denying that, in the short run at least, higher oil prices may lead to higher prices for a wide variety of goods and services, and create hardships for the middle disad-

"We fool ourselves when we speak of isolation from world prices"
around, and the two Quebec boys were sitting at a table a few spaces away from our sons in Toronto. There are a number of organizations that arrange the nuts and bolts of overseas volunteering and travel agency visits. An agency called Visites Interprovinciales does a lot of the work in this area and one of their clients is the Quebec City area, which was keen on sending their boys, one aged 11 and one aged 13, to visit the French families. The French families were sent pictures of our sons.

The older boy, Louis Legaré, was from Lac St. Charles, and they showed him smiling. Martin Gagné, from Breakeyville, was smiling too. The smiles didn’t help us — we began to worry and so did our boys. Richard, our 13-year-old, said he’d rather spend two weeks at the dentist than go and stay with some strangers.

Anthony, the 10-year-old, always wore a terrifyed look on his face; he wasn’t suiting — he was some other thing.

We hung on tightly to our detachment. After all, Anthony had come home from school one day in February and told us, “I’m the worst one in French in our class.” He’d been very upset, tears in his eyes. And since he was in a French immersion system that would continue into the fall, we figured we had to do something to help him. Richard, meanwhile, was at a private school, and his accent was something like John Diefenbaker’s used to be.

We telephoned the Legarés and the Gagnés and set the dates, beginning in early August, and made the travel arrangements. Then we began to worry even more. What if Louis Legaré and Louis or Anthony and Martin didn’t get along? They had to spend four weeks together! What if they hated one another? Would they be bickering all the time, or would letters from the Legarés and the Gagnés convince us that they would warm to each other’s ways of doing things — or at least that they got along? We didn’t want to visit them if they didn’t.

Anthony was doing fine, she said. He and Martin had hit it off perfectly. No problems. Anthony was speaking French fluently. Picking it up very well. Anthony came back on, said good-bye, and in Toronto we toasted Visites Interprovinciales for its ability to back winning combinations. The truth, of course, is that we’ve been much too concerned. Visites Interprovinciales and the many other exchange organizers know that Anthony is doing very well. Visites Interprovinciales has been running French-English exchanges since 1936, and the executive secretary, Margot Brown of Toronto, says Visites Interprovinciales have a feeling for the young people are rare. “Kids are kids,” she says. “They get along when they have the prejudices that adults have.” But happy exchange visits are certainly not a matter of luck, and there are about eight or nine Canadian organizations that arrange bilingual visits, and they work very hard at making these programs successful. Some organizations use computers to match students for the right kind of experience. Visites Interprovinciales emphasizes the old-fashioned, personal touch. It does gather a lot of interests of applicants, but the crucial matching comes when Mr. Browne sits down at her dining room table, spreads the applications in front of her and begins to study the faces in the photographs. She’ll pick up the pictures of, say, a 12-year-old girl from Chicoutimi and a 12-year-old girl from Winnipeg, look hard at them for a minute or so and decide that, yes, these two will get along just fine.

Exchange visits have been soaring in popularity since French immersion (in which students are taught in French all day or half-day) began spreading across Canada during the early seventies. In fact, most requests for exchanges with Quebec come from the provinces that have the most immimmigrant French classes — notably, Quebec, Alberta, and Ontario, in that order. In 1980 about 50,000 young Canadians took part in bilingual visits. Most exchanges are now group visits; a whole classroom may go. The 17 students in Calgary (as an example) will visit back and forth with a Grade 7 class from a school in Trois-Rivières. Visites Interprovinciales sent 3,000 young people to France in 1980, an increase of nearly 300% over the summer visits of individuals. All the rest of the school groups took place during the school year.

One big reason exchange visits have flourished in the past 10 years or so is financial help from governments. Both federal and provincial governments are helping with travel costs for exchange students. The federal government has a program called Open House Canada which combines to send children to Europe. Visites Interprovinciales and to local groups that want to set up their own exchanges. Not all of those exchanges are French-English. They may be North-South, East-West, Labrador-Newfoundland — as long as Open House is satisfied that they’ll help the children learn about country.

Brian Ghigli is the Open House director, located in Ottawa. “We spend a great deal of time trying to overcome the initial resistance, the students are only interested in French-English exchanges,” he says. But he adds that about 60 percent of exchanges are bilingual. If you ask about the background of exchange visits in Canada, people tell you: “To talk to Martin and Anthony. The French boys looked apprehensive.

On the drive home we sort of swallowed the language situation in Quebec. Louis, the older French boy, had a pretty good knowledge of English, which was fortunate, considering Richard’s ignorance of French. The younger Quebecer, Martin, was skimpier in English — but then Anthony was pretty good in French. Strangely, and luckily — we’d wound up with a good linguistic fit. The visitors were painfully polite in the car, and we knew we’d have to give them some time to hear their accent. It was a good thing, in a way, because Richard and Anthony were talking nonstop about Quebec.

We heard about the baseball games in Lac St. Charles, about Louis’ cat, Martin’s cottage beside the Chaudière River, and some of the old stone houses of Quebec City. Louis wants to see a baseball game while he’s here; he told us to contact Richard any of their new friends — how they’d get along together. They’re learning English and the English are learning Quebec. The four of them appeared on an escalator, popping into view one behind the other: Richard, Louis, Browne. “It’s there. There’s a kind of charm goes on.”

We wondered if Louis had done any work. I explained that we were waiting for them on Saturday afternoon at Montreal International Airport. We also warned them that we had some new French friends — “You like baseball, Martin?” Browne was looking at him. “Are you going to get a baseball cap?”

“I did,” said Martin, getting the drift. As we eased into the driveway, we wondered once more how the visitors would go with the other kids in our neighborhood. Oh well. Sure enough, low was a small pricel to pay for a good, solid grounding in a second language. The visitors did get to a baseball game and to a go-cart track. They went to the Canadian National Exhibition, the Volcanic Rocks, and their family drove across into New York to see the Statue of Liberty. The French boys took in a couple of movies — in English and they, stuttered around with all the neighborhood boys. Nobody, not even close to teasing them. They liked the Quebec, the subways, the lighthouses, the cats in Quebec, they said. And everyone on exchange liked Martin. None of this should have surprised us, but it did. We’d expected them to survive the visit, but we had expected — not really — that they’d have such a good time. Or that we’d have such a good time, too. The visit turned out to be an emotional thing for us, too, because we were such French boys fade away. They began coming into the kitchen to chat, Louis using English and Martin using mostly French — though he began using some English.

Louis’ English improved. Martin picked up a speaking vocabulary cat, and they told us about the详. He certainly hadn’t become fluent. But both of them did improve pronunciation more about English just as Richard and Anthony learned a great deal about French.

And everyone, including us. developed a surprising closeness. At the airport we said very sad goodbye. When the last moment came, and the visitors turned to head through the security check, Louis called to me to whisper softly. Jean, the French boy could no longer speak — in either language — and we couldn’t — he couldn’t do it. So we gave him two of our own handshakes and hugs. In the end, language didn’t matter.
Judy switched off the plastic-cased alarm clock, threw back the polyester and cotton sheet and the acrylic blanket, and sat up on the foam mattress. His feet found his vinyl slippers, and he padded across the acrylic carpet to the vinyl tile of the bathroom. There he stepped into the shower, turned on the water from the plastic piping and squeezed the petroleum-based shampoo from its polyethylene bottle.

As he dressed — in his polyester shorts, shirt, socks, pants and tie and his vinyl-heeled shoes — he noted that the ivy in the window was flourishing since he had given it a shot of fertilizer and insecticide, both made from petrochemicals.

He picked up his newspaper, printed with petrochemical-based inks on paper manufactured with the help of petrochemicals, and went out to his 1980-model car, which not counting its synthetic rubber tires and vinyl upholstery contained 80 kilograms of plastic parts. As he backed out the driveway he flicked on the radio. A reporter was talking about Canada's supplies of oil and natural gas. And that, to John, meant only one thing: what was going to happen to his gasoline?

Ninety-five percent of our oil and natural gas is used for gasoline and other forms of energy. But the five percent used as fuel and raw materials for petrochemical products touches every part of our daily lives, from drugs to detergents, from lipstick to luggage, including the clothes we wear, the houses we live in, even the food we eat. In the process of transformation, that five percent creates new jobs, new profits, new export opportunities and winds up being worth more than the 95 percent that is burned for energy.

"Petrochemicals are involved in almost every industry as a vital component," says Wilbert Canniff, assistant to the president of the Canadian Chemical Producers Association (CCCPA). "If we couldn't get petrochemicals, it would..."
practically shut down the economy." A petroleum compound derived from crude oil or natural gas by rearranging their carbon chains to form something new. While the technology was known, the industry scarcely existed in Canada before World War II. Then Japan cut off our rubber supplies. To replace them, a crown-owned company, the Canadian Polymer Corporation Limited, was built in Sarnia, Ont., next to Imperial Oil's plant, the largest in Canada and a secure source of the hydrocarbons needed for the oil-based "rubber." At Polymer's request, Imperial formed the St. Clair Processing Corporation Limited, a nucleus of chemists, engineers and operators to construct and run Polymer units. That was when many company employees first learned about this phase of the petrochemical industry. The company's hopes for the possibility of Imperial getting in on the action.

The petrochemical operation started in 1955 with three employees. Twenty-five years later, the Esso Chemical Company Limited was incorporated in a $3.65-billion-a-year business with nearly 2,000 employees and a capital investment of $27 billion. Customers for Esso gas at the pump may use Esso chemicals every day without knowing that the petrochemicals they've bought with the company's fertilizers. Farmers use Esso's Twin or rope for putting hay, storing water, covering silos or making bales. Your vinyl home siding or insulation may have come from an Imperial subsidiary, Building Products of Canada Limited.

Most of Canada's petrochemical industry, including Esso Chemical's main plant, grew up in Sarnia's "Chemical Valley," handy to rich oil fields and gas to produce the "feedstocks" (or raw materials) and in the middle of the Great Lakes industrial heartland, one of North America's major petrochemical markets. But in the last 25 years or so, that market has shifted west. Explosive expansion in Alberta promises great benefits to Canadian industry in terms of new exports and an improved balance of trade. Ten years ago the Canadian petrochemical industry had gross fixed assets of a billion dollars. By the end of the decade they were about $3 billion. In the same period sales increased by 700 per cent to $2 billion. New plants, new plants, new plants, the newspapers have been touting an accurate total. The magazine Oilweek added up $6 billion worth of projects, as of January, under way or proposed for the next four years. All but six percent of that is for Alberta or British Columbia, and most of it is in Calgary.

Why? George Moreton, president of Esso Chemical, explains that "Alberta has a feedstock advantage. It is a province and federal policies aimed at promoting the industry. It's a good environment.

That combination is expected to make Canada a world-scale producer of almost all the major petrochemicals, a net exporter of petrochemicals probably this year, and in five years a significant factor on world markets. Most petrochemical plants in Canada have been using oil as a feedstock. Most of the new plants in Alberta and British Columbia will use gas liquids. Alberta has a surplus supply, resulting in an area where companies can choose where to go.

That gives Canadian petrochemicals a competitive edge over other countries which have to feedstock at world prices. The discount on the Canadian dollar helps, too, as does the encouraging image of the whole industry. Together, that's enough of an edge to make up for certain disadvantages: it costs $20 a ton more to ship to Alberta than on the U.S. Gulf Coast; winters are colder and wages are higher, and it costs more to ship to most world markets. We believe that before too long the entire industry will increase its penetration of export markets," says W. W. Cram, director of industry development for the Chemicals Branch of the Department of Industry, trade and commerce.

The good environment Moreton speaks of arises from the Alberta government's determination to diversify its economy by creating a petrochemical industry to strengthen the new heartland of Canada. The program has been successful; a look at the economics of the industry shows why.

 Petrochemicals are the building blocks for a host of essential products. Though not a large employer itself (about 12,000 up to 3,000 people), the chemical business directly or indirectly supports a quarter of a million jobs across Canada. Even the companies, 1,400 plastics enterprises and numerous other industries.

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Most of the dozen men struggling up the 3,000-metre Prataign Peak last July were middle-aged executives who had never climbed a mountain before. Men like the president of Andrews & Wine & the executive vice-president of Geotext Construction. The president of Domtar Chemical Group. A management consultant. A city planning director. Chilled, tired, they climbed a glacier up to Pratignan, near Lake Louise in the rugged Alberta Rockies. They reached the peak in exultation, then on their descent helped carry one of the party who had twisted an ankle. The next day the men went into the woods on their own, set up camp, and hiked over five miles and, with their thoughts, meditated on the 10 days of mental and physical adventure they had had together.

It all may sound like some course at an Outward Bound school, in fact, it was an executives’ wilderness seminar run by the Banff Centre — a 48-year-old Canadian institution more popularly known as the Banff School of Fine Arts. While the centre does have a flourishing arts school, it also has a school of management that dates back a quarter-century.

That wilderness seminar conducted by the Banff School of Management is a significant example of how the centre is shaking its origins as a preeminent summer camp for the arts-crafty set, who liked to learn in the lush environment of Banff, our first and most famous national park. As it grew, the centre began attracting a faculty of distinguished Canadians: luminous names like Arthur Lismer and A.Y. Jackson of the Group of Seven; authors Hugh MacLeish and Harry Boyle; choreographers Gwenth Lloyd, co-founder of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, and Arnold Spohr, the ballet company’s artistic director. The concerts that traditionally concluded the summer sessions became a major festival of the arts and an important tourist attraction in western Canada. Now, with faculty and students from around the world, the centre is building on its future as an international all-seasons school of advanced training for business people and environmentalists as well as serious artists.

Professionals in all those fields already attend Banff throughout the year, and this fall 80 musicians at the Banff Centre will be participating in the third Winter Cycle of the School of Fine Arts. As well, there will be programs in music, theatre, writing, live performance, otronc media and film, technical theatre and in visual arts — printmaking, drawing, painting, sculpture, typography, ceramics, textiles. The Winter Cycle programs are designed for young artists on the threshold of professional careers, who work on individual creative projects under the guidance of both resident and visiting faculty.

Because of the shorter semester and the wide range of the students’ ages and experience, the summer courses tend to be more structured. Summer programs in the School of Fine Arts include music, opera, dance, drama, musical theatre, audio-recording, writing, theatre technical training and the visual arts. Students need no previous training in the arts. Admission is based on merit, creative talent and the willingness to train by doing. Most of the teaching is on a one-on-one basis — almost all of the 80 students work with four instructors.

Some lessons in living

BY PAUL GREScoe

The Review, Number 8, 1981
That was the only course scheduled during the high-season season by the School of Management. The school flourishes the rest of the year with workshops and seminars that annually attract 1,500 professional people—at all levels. Twice a year, executive secretaries attend a three-day seminar that teaches them communications, problem-solving, and methods for managing their bosses' time as well as their own. There's a course for personnel managers that calls for a lot of role-playing and case studies (one concerning a middle-aged, married computer executive who falls for an assistant young enough to be his daughter). And in a one-week seminar sponsored by the Niagara Institute in Ontario, business and labor leaders discuss human values in organizational life, prompted by readings in Plato, Napoleon and Marx.

The School of Management's most intriguing offering, and its newest, is the wilderness seminars which attract dozens of executives each year. They are designed to renew the participants in mind and body. Ray Spuxman, Vancouver's city manager, brought his 10 days in the mountains as "an adventure in an era when there is little chance for true adventure." The Young Presidents Organization of New York City sends representatives each year to take part in the Banff wilderness seminars.

Broadening the horizons of business people has long been a goal of the Banff Centre. "We hope to give managers the opportunity to experience a structured outdoor activity, to allow them to understand the natural environment," says Ted Mills, associate director of the Banff School of Management. "The other aspect is that too many of us in management positions—male and female—have no real understanding of what the cultural side of our society is all about."

Ultimately, culture is what the Banff Centre is all about. Senator Donald Cameron, who spent three and a half decades building the centre, had always hoped that Banff would one day be "the Salzburg of America"—which was the name to the broad culture of that Austrian city.

The Banff Centre began with much more modest hopes. In 1922 three adjudicators at an Alberta drama festival in Lethbridge sat over drinks and decided that what Canada needed was not a good five-cent cigar. "What this country really needs is a good school of dramatic arts ... and the place to hold it is Banff." The following year, with a $30,000 grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, 102 students registered in Banff for the first semester of the School in the Arts Related to the Theatre.

Donald Cameron, then a 31-year-old agricultural secretary in the University of Alberta's extension department, was involved from the beginning, helping to find an old wooden theatre to house the school. The year it opened, he was in Europe on a Carnegie scholarship studying adult-education methods and came home impressed with the concept of the Danish folk schools, which educated people of any age, any class. By 1936, as the new director of university extension, Cameron was also named director of the Banff School of Fine Arts— as it was rechristened when painting, piano and creative writing classes were added to the curriculum.

The first big name to teach at Banff was Dr. Frederick Koch, head of the University of North Carolina's drama department, who had taught such illustrious American playwrights as Maxwell Anderson. Cameron had a hunch Koch would be receptive to creative writing at the new school and asked Koch if he'd come for the summer for $850, about half his usual fee. "Well," the professor said, "I've never been in the Canadian northwest or the Canadian Rockies, and I'd rather like to go there. So if you promise not to work me too hard, ..."

Cameron's boldness would save the school from extinction. It not only survived World War II, it began to draw students as interesting as its instructors. An Alberta Supreme Court judge studied French; the millionaire American owner of the White Sewing Machine Company studied weaving. But in 1945 the University of Alberta decided that it had no funds to spend on the building that by then the Banff school desperately needed. The university's president presumed the decision would kill the school.

The 28-year-old Cameron approached Eric Harvie, the Calgary lawyer whose oil-bearing lands would be part of the Postumus discovery of 1917, "I want a million dollars," Cameron told him, and Harvie—delighted by the enthusiasm—put him in touch with Mrs. J.H. Wood, the wealthy widow of a Calgary Herald publisher and a patron of the arts. Her eventual donation of $125,000, which built two chalets, was the first substantial gift to the school. The next was the land around Tunnel Mountain—perhaps the most beautiful and expensive site in Banff. With the National Parks Administration gave the school in 1946 on perpetual lease for a dollar a year. Donald Cameron was becoming an accomplished fund raiser, and he had vowed to produce the $1 million he needed to buy the land. He set the goal of $1 million, and in 1946, the Banff School was able to purchase 4,000 acres of the Tunnel Mountain property for $500,000.
TAKE ME BACK TO MY BACKYARD

BY PATRICK DONOHUE

ILLUSTRATION BY JAMES HILL

A moment of my past life often flashes unexpectedly into my mind: I am standing at a backyard gate. In the middle of the yard is a tall elm tree. A wooden swing hangs from it by a long rope knotted in huge clumps. Beyond the shade of the tree, the brilliant green of the lawn is interrupted by the rich black of a vegetable patch. There are streaks of blue delphiniums along the borders of the yard. At the end of the yard, discreetly shaded by rambling forsythia, a faded shod tennis toward extinction. Three people are sitting on a blanket under the elm. The murmur of their voices carries up the yard to the gate where I am standing.

That was the summer I finished university. During my travels I had stopped in a small town to call on a friend. I remember parking the car in front of his house and walking down the driveway to the backyard gate, where I paused, drinking in the scene which often returns to me, lighting up my mind like the luminous image from a slide projector.

I'm not sure why that backyard made such an impression on me—maybe because I saw it at a turning
point in my life. Over the years, that backyard came to stand for certain childhood associations, for a kind of simple, almost forgotten, perfection that seemed to grow more and more remote from the struggle to get ahead in the world. To me, a backyard was a kind of garden. The concept of a garden is rooted in the idea of creating a protected, shady, and somewhat sheltered world. In this world, you can forget the outside world, the drudgery of the daily routine, and the problems of the day. This is why I always loved to spend time in my backyard.

In that corner we made a small trellis with some of the more mature and sturdy plants. This was our garden in miniature. It was a favorite place to sit and relax, to enjoy the quietness of the backyard, and to watch the children play. The children loved the backyard, and they would often spend hours there, exploring and playing. I remember one summer when we had several grandchildren staying with us. They would spend hours playing in the backyard, and they would often ask me to join them. I would sit on the lawn chair and watch them play, and I would often think about how much I loved my backyard.

One day in late summer our puppy got up the courage to venture beyond the shelter of my lawn chair and investigate the bushes and undergrowth. He moved cautiously, an inch at a time, his fur glistering in the dappled sunlight through the leaves. "Look," Jane whispered. "Isn't he a fine sight?"

The proud lion stalking the jungle. "I said. She demurred. "I think lions stalk the plain, not this bushy character."

"Okay then, a lion-hearted puppy stalking the backyard jungle."

After many more excursions he has made the territory his own. The bushes remain, but he has effectively eliminated the cluttered undergrowth by his frantic darting back and forth to banish squirrels, sparrows and other intruders.

The touch of wilderness is what separates the backyard from a garden. In this respect, the North American backyard strikes me as a compromise between the totally untamed frontier and the well-organized gardens of the old world. As a child, I used to marvel at immigrants from Britain who insisted on calling an ordinary backyard a "garden" while looking into the history of these words, I discovered that "yard" is aixture of "gardan." The two words have the same derivation but have developed separate meanings. To me, the word "yard," as we use it, has a distinctly North American sound.

A friend was recently acquainting me about Japanese gardens, and we found that they have a lot in common with my idea of backyards. A Japanese garden is a kind of "natural" garden, but it is not a natural garden in the strict sense of the word. It is simply a place to experience the outdoors, a place to get away from the noise and clutter of the city. The materials used are natural, and there isn't much in the way of artificial colors or shapes. Like the backyard, the Japanese garden doesn't try to create a perfect landscape. It is a work in progress, a work in progress that evolves over time. Both environments are somewhat unfinished, but they do offer a sense of touch in a tiny space.

The big difference is that the Japanese garden is carefully planned while the backyard is not. Because of their severe shortage of land, the Japanese have learned to make the most of the open space in nature. Here we can be more laissez-faire about our outdoor living areas.

Sounds are important in a Japanese garden: the trickle of water, the sigh of wind, the rustle of leaves. In a backyard, the sounds may be more pronounced, but they are still an important part of the experience. The sound of rain on the roof, the sound of leaves rustling in the wind, the sound of a bird singing. All these sounds create a sense of peace and tranquility.

I have found that the most important aspect of backyards in literary criticism is the way they express the meaning of childhood. The concept of childhood is a complex one, and it is often associated with a sense of innocence and purity. Backyards are a place where children can be free to explore and play, and they can also be a place where they can learn and grow. Backyards are a place to learn about nature, and the importance of nature in our lives.

In the real world we may not be able to return to a garden of pristine innocence. Backyards are about as close as we can get. It is a bit like the old cliché about finding the bluebird of happiness in the backyard. The backyard is a place where we can be free to explore and play, and it is a place where we can learn and grow. Backyards are a place to learn about nature, and the importance of nature in our lives.
In Closing

One day a while ago, I got up early and found the sun already warm and began to think of how patiently we used to wait for summer back home in Glace Bay, which was right beside the Atlantic so that the spring was long and cool and the summer did not really come until the ice was out. In fact, the real days of summer — the time when you could actually feel the sun upon your neck and begin to think about going swimming at the sandbar — came toward the end of June, when school was out. Then, in just a couple of days, the whole town seemed to slow down, so that even the sound from the shafts of the coal mine, a steady hum and hiss which drifted down the street all day, seemed to let up a bit, as if like all of us it was finally winding down for summer.

One morning almost 40 years ago, the day after school closed, I was sitting on the front step when a delivery truck drew up, a man hopped out, and with a solemnity that he had obviously practised several times that day, he looked toward me and spoke.

"Son, you’re going to have to make good marks to keep this one." Then, like a magician, he reached into the truck and produced a bicycle, with a mason frame, and cream mudguards, and tires so clean and fresh you could smell the rubber 10 feet away. I stood there a long time after he left it, my mother and myself, just staring at it, not all that sure I should touch it right away. Then, slowly I walked it down the street, hopped on and pedaled away for almost the entire day — down streets where the steam rose from the earth, past the coal company houses with their small gardens full of rosebushes and out beyond the town, where the day smelled of salt air and warm spruce and the only sound was the tap, tap, tap of a hammer on a barn in a distant field. I felt the way you feel when you are 10 and school is out, that everything around me was good and, most of all, that everything abroad would be as smooth as the humming of my tires in the soft summer air.

In those years we lived in a house on MacLean Street which my father had had a carpenter build for us in 1959, for $3,600. The carpenter, a man named MacInnis, used to come to visit us for as long as he lived, going through the entire house just to see that the work he had done was standing up through the years. It was a two-storey wooden house, with shingles that were always dark green, and was set, for the first few years, between two vacant lots, one of which we took to calling "the meadow," perhaps because in those first few great days of summer it would be filled with wild flowers, violets, roses, daisies, which along with the faint scent of woodsmoke gave the air a rare fragrance. Often, in the lot on the opposite side of the house — where the grass was brown and the ground hard from the games we played — I hit a softball and watched, first with pride and then with dread, as it began falling straight for the windows of the dining room, which, except on Sundays, my mother kept as an island of linen and crystal. I closed my eyes. Then, miraculously, I heard, not a crash of glass, but a quick bump! and the hall, having struck the window on a descending angle and with diminished force, glanced off and rolled away. I was sure on that summer afternoon that I had witnessed a miracle, almost like the ones I was learning about in Sunday school.

Somewhere around the first week of July, our neighborhood began looking toward to one of the biggest days of summer in Glace Bay in those years, the celebration of The Glorious Twelfth, the day on which the Orange Lodge, which seemed to include almost half the men in the town, lined up for the most exciting parade of the year. In fact, it was the most exciting parade some people there would ever see, one in which the marchers were all heroes for a day. In some places the Orange Lodge may inspire thoughts of narrowness, but there was little sectarian feeling in my town, and in the eyes of a child in that place in those days, the Orangemen had much to do with the rituals of summer and a child’s sense of being part of a special occasion.

My father was not really that much of an Orangeman, but his friends certainly I were, and after all The Glorious Twelfth was the day of the biggest parade of the summer. So I stood there, summer after summer, with my mother and father and, in time, a young brother, waiting for the strains of the Salvation Army Band and the man on the white horse who always headed the parade, a man who, with gleaming white hair and spotless regalia, was as true to the day as King William himself, whose figure he stood for. As he passed he always nodded to us, for besides being a big Orangeman, he was our insurance agent, who as often as not was in our kitchen, passing the time while making his rounds. When the parade was over, we all went to a huge picnic in a field off Highland Street, which was usually rather plain but which on that day and well into the night was transformed by the music of the merry-go-round, the spinning of the wheels of fortune and the smells of hot dogs, spun candy and sizzling fried onions.

Summer was a time for door-to-door salesmen. In fact, the ones who seemed to call most often were not strictly salesmen but peddlers of raffle tickets, not for charities but for themselves — tickets on stuffed pandas, lawn ornaments and cushion covers bearing words like, “For King and Country.” My mother was never interested, not because she was against salesmen, but because our family was against raffles of any kind. Once, on a silent morning in August, a tap came on the screen door at the back, and I went to see a man standing there with a large model sailing ship, a schooner, under his arm. I let him in. He sat at the table and began a story so full of pathos that it must have affected even my young brother, who was barely old enough to sit there. The poor man struggled to breathe, he mopped his brow; he told us that he’d been given the last rites only a couple of weeks ago; he told us that he had walked all day in the heat. He was selling tickets on the boat, three for a quarter. If one of the tickets we bought contained the number of cars he could count from his window near Halifax three days in a row, we’d win. My mother said no, she was sorry, but we did not buy raffle tickets.

“You won’t help me out," he said.

“T’m sorry, no tickets,” my mother said.

He turned to me. “She won’t help me out,” he said. “She won’t help me out” He left. I asked about him around the neighborhood, and one boy, whose mother had bought some tickets, said the man told them to watch the press for the winner. “Just watch the press,” he had said. I did, for many weeks, but both the man and the ship slipped away as surely as the summer itself.

I have no idea, of course, if the summers are still the same in that place which I will always regard as home. But surely no one will mind if I go on believing that they are as they always were and that somewhere in that town this summer, a boy will climb on a bicycle and pedal away into a discovery of things that come in the summers of childhood, things that are so fleeting and so very eternal.

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