Servant of the House

The many roles of the Speaker

BY R.A.J. PHILLIPS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PETER CROYDON

Spectators in the House of Commons, as well as television viewers across the country, are occasionally exposed to a scene of unseemly violence. It involves the prime minister of Canada, the leader of the Opposition and a third honorable member who is apparently being dragged unwillingly through the chamber to the throne where the Speaker presides.

It is the reenactment of an episode whose precise origin is lost in the lore of the House of Commons. Centuries ago, when a Speaker was chosen, he resisted the appointment, which might bring him into perilous conflict with the king.

Things are different today. Election to the speakership of the House of Commons is a high honor: it ranks fifth in the Canadian order of precedence. The incumbent is typically nominated by the prime minister and seconded by the leader of the Opposition, supported by all members of the House and received with unfalling civility by the monarch's representative. To the differences that time has brought might be added the note that both the monarch and the Speaker now are women.

The appointment of the Hon. Jeanne Sauvé—a former television commentator and the first Quebec woman to become a cabinet minister—was more tranquil. She spared Mr. Trudeau and Mr. Clark the embarrassment of the traditional struggle. If Sauvé could have read the future, however, she would have been forgiven a show of reluctance to assume the chair: recent times have been among the most taxing since Confederation for the Speaker of the House of Commons.

The term "Speaker" is misleading, for the Speaker is the one member of the House of Commons who does not speak on the substance of any subject before the House. She is the servant of the House, chosen to interpret, apply and enforce the rules that it alone can make. Though tutored in the school of politics, a Speaker, on assuming office, becomes a graduate: partisanship ceases along with membership in the party caucus, to be replaced by benevolent neutrality and a single new loyalty—the House of Commons.

The House of Commons has given the Canadian Speaker somewhat less authority than her British counterpart. Presiding is never easy; the degree of difficulty depends largely upon the
Lucien Lamoureux of Cornwall, Ont., from 1965 to 1974. In the 1968 general election, for example, when Lamoureux stood as an independent, unopposed by Liberals and Conservatives, he was returned without a contest. In 1974, when he ran for a fourth term as a Liberal, he was defeated by John Diefenbaker, who had won the riding in the previous general election.

In the House of Commons, where his career was not marked by such dramatic events, Lamoureux was a respected member of the opposition. He was known for his knowledge of government affairs and his ability to craft thoughtful speeches. His presence in the House was an asset to the opposition, as he often delivered well-researched and well-argued speeches on a variety of topics.

Lamoureux's contributions to the House of Commons were numerous, but perhaps his most significant achievement was his role in the development of the House of Commons itself. He was a member of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, and he played a key role in the drafting of the House of Commons Procedure and Evidence Act, which was passed in 1979. This act established a code of conduct for members of the House of Commons, which is still in effect today.

Lamoureux's legacy in the House of Commons is one of respect and dedication. He was a respected member of the opposition, and his contributions to the development of the House of Commons were significant. His memory will be remembered with respect by those who knew him and by those who will follow in his footsteps.

The Sergeant-at-Arms leads the procession to the chamber of the House of Commons.
To the chair each Speaker brings not only the baggage of his or her personal history and reputation but an individual style and particular techniques, conscious or otherwise, to maintain that precious moral authority. Some have looked beyond the walls of the chamber to build human bridges. They have given a large ration of their limited time to occasions when they meet members, and when members meet one another, in social informality. The Speaker is provided with fitting quarters whose famous dining room — Room 16 — can seat 50 or 60 people. Then there is the Farm.

Set in the incomparable Gatineau Hills less than half an hour away from Ottawa, the Farm was the embodiment of Prime Minister King's dream of becoming a substantial gentleman farmer. Through dillious management, the project was not a marked success, but the property became a valued legacy to the nation when King died. In 1963 the old farm house was renovated and modernized, and such amenities as tennis courts were added. Alan MacLaughlin of Montreal became the first Speaker to use it, not only as a needed retreat from the pressures of Parliament Hill, but as a setting for official receptions and much more informal gatherings designed to contribute to the relationships between parliamentarians. There is a cheery feel here, composed of the setting, the Speaker in residence and the enigmatic man who created it. The history and traditions of Parliament are among the assets inherited by every Speaker. Canada stands well. On the hill.

In Confederation, in a frontier lumbering town, we built the most magnificent monument ever erected to parliamentary democracy outside the British Isles. It was a place to gather past and the future. Like a sheet anchor to windward, those venerable buildings remain a symbol of continuity as Canada grows and alters.

At the centre of change and conflict stands a person whose focus is the life of the House, "whose servant I am." The Speaker is more than a great office officer more than an administrator. She is the very embodiment of parliamentary democracy in its trials of the present and its hope for the future.

On a rainy Saturday morning in Quebec's Eastern Townships, the city couple park their car on the edge of the gravel road, pull rubber boots from the trunk and head off through the mud toward a small group of people gathering in the farmyard. This is a country auction to wind up the affairs of an old farmer who lived alone and died in his sleep. All his worldly goods were supposed to be spread out on the lawn, in warm sunshine; instead they're end-to-end in the dark barn, out of the rain. The aroma is pungent, the furnishing is old and battered, and the barn roof leaks.

In the dusk light, the city man lends low, peering at the backs and bottoms of dressers and old cupboards in his search for legitimate signs of age — the hand-carved dovetail joints in a drawer, the marks of early plans and saxes, the hand-wrought nails. He eavesdrops, tips the top of a dresser and says softly to the woman with him, "This piece alone is worth the trip."

On Toronto's Front Street, west of the Royal York Hotel, Sotheby's Canadian Heritage Auction is under way. This is their first venture into Canada, but all the big-league trappings are in place: air-conditioned elegance, glossy 88-page catalog, 80 percent premium payable by all bidders as part of the purchase price. Lot #1, "Pine Doors, Ontario, third quarter 19th century, having a single frize drawer, cupboard below enclosed by a pair of panelled doors, upon shaped bracket feet," final bid: $600. In two evening sessions, they sell more than 150 items — furniture, glassware, porcelains, pottery, stained glass, paintings and prints. The top price: $2,700 for a pair of family portraits.

We grope for the past in so many different ways. From the boots of the farmyard to the broadsheets of Sotheby's, there's an army of Canadian enthusiasm, each member marching to his own collector's tune. Interest in antiques and things old has soared in the past 15 years. That $600 pine dry sink might have sold for $150 two years ago, $300 in 1975 and $150 or so back in 1970.

Other signs of the collecting boom: more night-school classes and clubs, more on Canadian topics than ever before; more antique shows, major ones as well as the shopping muff variety; more antique dealers, full-time and part-time.

Specially areas has blossomed as well. The Canadian Doll Enthusiast Newsletter, for example, is now in its fourth year of publication and has grown from an eight-page to a 20-page quarterly. Publisher Marsha L. Laskin sees a big future: "Doll collecting is really growing. Enthusiasts in British Columbia are the most organized, but clubs are popping up all across Canada. And our circula-
tation has just passed the 2,000 mark." These days we collect everything — old milk bottles, barrel wire, sleds, spools, kerosene lamps, carnival glass, brass beds, theatre posters, roll-top desks, ink wells and even earthenware hot-water bottles. They all come under the catch-all label of "Canadiana" — "objects made in Canada, a record of Canadian life," explains Janet Holmes of the Royal Ontario Museum's Canadiana department. Strictly speaking, an antique must be at least 100 years old. Many dealers and collectors, however, confuse their enthusiasm to earlier pieces created before the "factory-made" period, which began about 1880. The terms "collectible" and "bygone" describe more recent items of Canadiana.

Twenty-five years ago, few cared about such relics of the past. Bob Perkins was an exception. In the late 1930s he was living in Quebec and collecting primitive local pieces. Later he moved to Toronto and became one of the best-known antique dealers in Ontario. He remembers when a duck decoy sold for $15 instead of $100, when carloads of cheap antiques were readily available in the Maritimes for resale in Ontario, when the asking price for a large Quebec armoire was $60.

"Sure, there are more and more collectors," he says from behind a pine desk in his Yonge Street store. "What's really fascinating, though, is the why. People have very different reasons for collecting old things."

Our affection for the past goes well beyond simply collecting. We seem to have rediscovered the people who were here before us. We listen to their stories, visit heritage villages and museum displays of their time, revere and preserve their classic architecture. The popular explanation for this is the wave of nationalism and nostalgia that arrived with Canada's centennial in 1967. As one youngster said in a classroom, "Now we're legit!" As a 100-year-old country — though still a toddler by European standards — we started talking about the good old days. We started listening, too, and discovered that history is people.

Photography by Clive Webster

Some early Canadians favored "grain painting" to make local materials look like more expensive woods or, as in this early 19th-century furniture from German settlements in Ontario (below), to add color to a room. The pine dish cupboard is stained with walnut juice, and the table and chest of drawers bear the names or initials of the people they were made for.

An Ontario parlor (right) typical of the 1830s, with pine mantel, fire screen and drop-front desk. The sofa (above) is in the Empire style popular in England but is carved in local maple. The ventriloquist's doll is from Quebec.

The Review, Number 5, 1982
quickly covered with a coat of red or ochre paint. More fortunate immigrants brought furniture with them or could afford to import it from Europe and America. As the population of Upper Canada grew and became more prosperous, local craftsmen began to imitate these imports, using local butternut, cherry, walnut and bird’s-eye maple and guided by the pattern books of the great European designers.

Much of Ontario’s country furniture was lost during the 1920s and 1930s to collectors in the United States. Once Canadians became enthusiastic about primitive pieces, the layers of paint were usually stripped away to reveal the natural golden pine. Only in the past few years have the original paints and finishes come back into some favor. In Quebec, heritage items of all descriptions were ignored at home until the mid-1920s, when the occasional collector began to acquire such distinctive French-Canadian items as dressers, two-tiered buffets, armoires de coins, commodes, rocking chairs... Many fine Quebec pieces left the province for sale in Ontario and the United States, but today — usually the people of Quebec are among the most avid and knowledgeable collectors. The highest-priced market for antiques right now appears to be Quebec City,” says Bob Perkins. “And to their credit, most French-Canadian collectors are buying pieces with the original finishes.” For too many years the Maritime provincies were known as “good pickin’ country” for outsiders interested in early furniture, ceramics and glass. Many antiques were shipped to Ontario for resale and more to New England, where they were offered up as antique Vermont or Early Rhode Island.

In the past few years, however, Maritimers have awakened to their heritage. Collectors, young and old, are now in pursuit of anything and everything that says something about early life in the area. As you might expect, marine items are particularly popular. Most of the beautiful wood carvings that graced the prows of sail- ing vessels have been lost through sea disasters or neglect, but sea paintings, portraits of vessels, model ships and marine instruments are highly prized. The cutest items in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta arrived with settlers from Ontario, as far back as 1880. But interest in collecting isn’t widespread; the heritage boom that has swept Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes is still in the future for the Prairies.

Further west, in British Columbia,Canadian items go back to about 1840, but they are less popular than the works of early Indian artists and craftsmen. Totem poles, masks and basketwork from such tribes as the Tsleil, Kwakiutl and Nootka are in demand. There is also a great deal of interest in antiques from Britain — particularly furniture, silver and paintings....

Often the fascination lies in the search for something old and forgotten.

Don Loughhead, one of Canada’s most intriguing watercolor artists, has a special fondness for old bottles. His home is in a downtown Toronto warehouse, close to the Don River and the waterfront. “I know where they dumped all the garbage 20 or 30 years ago,” he admits with a laugh. “I’ve spent a lot of hours digging and digging where I wasn’t supposed to.” His reward: a collection of beautiful old bottles and bottles. Young and old can join in. At 14 or so one of my sons spent most of one summer restoring the hand-tured floor lamp that had been made by his great-grandfather. He stripped away the layers of black varnish, cleaned the ornate bits and crevices with a soft toothbrush, and rubbed for hours with the finest steel wool until the gloss of the natural walnut shone through. Now, years later, he still recalls that summer and that lamp as a special coming together.

Ann and Don Cooper have an affection for old pie. Their Toronto home is furnished with pieces they have picked up on holidays trips. “Our old spinning wheel came out of a country auction,” says Don. “Auctions can be a lot of fun, but you’ve got to watch yourself. The piece with the most meaning for us, though, is a plank stool that was made by a member of my family about 1870. There isn’t a crack in it — just pegs.

In spite of one dealer’s claim that “there ain’t nothin’ left to pick ‘cause Ontario, Quebec and down East are cleaned right out,” old pieces of excellent Canadiana still come out of attics and sheds. But finding that jewel amid the junk is difficult. Now you have to watch for tricks and fakes. As prices climb, skillful forgery becomes more profitable. The most popular scam is to take a plain piece and turn it into an expensive one by adding decorative touches. The average collector may be fooled, but the experienced dealer rarely is. “Usually I can spot a fake all the way from the door,” says Bob Perkins. Today, much of the buying and selling of antiques and collectibles takes place among pieces that are already in collections. Someone dies and an estate must be settled; a financial crisis forces antiques into cash; a collector decides to sell one piece and trade up. And more and more of the action takes place among the leading auction houses and dealers. New collecting fields, however, are opening up. Revival crafts such as wood carving, posters and rug-hooking have large followings. Many are attended by dolls, old bottles, country-store artifacts, early advertising, duck decoys. One of the most popular of the new group is tools; collectors can attend their own exclusive shows and meet dealers who handle nothing but farm, medical and building tools. The future? It seems likely that our fascination with the past, with things old and well-made, will continue to flourish. For those early craftsmen, the men and women who did so much to shape our Canadian way of life, today’s enthusiasm is long overdue recognition.

A TIME FOR CONVERSATION

Bringing business and government together

BY PATRICIA CLARKE

Bob Landry, a dark, craggy man with graying hair, packed the Harold Town prints and the family photos in his office at Imperial’s Toronto headquarters last spring and moved to Ottawa. There, overlooking the Parliament buildings and the eternal flame, he settled in as the company’s first vice-president resident in the capital.

Landry was head of Imperial’s public affairs department for 10 years. He has spent his entire working life with the company, some of that time in Quebec, where he was born. Not only does he know the oil business inside out, but he also knows Ottawa, in both formal and informal ways, in

The Review, Number 5, 1980
part through his experience as a member of the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee. Of course, he is bilingual.

The fact that a man of Landry’s stature was chosen for the new Ottawa position, representing Imperial’s chief executive officer, Don McLvor, indicates the importance Imperial puts on its working relationships with the federal government. The company is far from alone in that concern. The increase in the number of corporate offices in Ottawa and independent consulting firms over the past 10 years testifies to two facts: one, that government policy has a significant impact on business operations today, and two, that most businesses are not satisfied with the effectiveness of their dialogue with government about that policy.

“Corporations are learning that government is the most important factor in corporate planning today,” says a pioneer in the field of government relations, Bill Lee, president of Executive Consultants Limited, David MacNaughton, president of Public Affairs International, agrees. “How companies deal with the external environment can have more effect on their success than almost anything else they do.”

To anticipate and adapt to government policies and ways to help share in its formulation are all great challenges to today’s managers in corporations as traditional skills such as financing or marketing or production. As the Institute for Political Involvement reported in 1978: “Government policy can determine the survival of a company or an industry. . . . The challenge. . . . of the modern business firm is how to contend in a society that turns increasingly to the political system for the resolution of both social and economic problems.”

Imperial’s relationship with government has been long and constantly changing one. One important change came in 1971, when the company appointed corporate managers in the various regions of the country, people who would devote much of their time to dealing with provincial governments, from St. John’s to Victoria. Imperial took the decision not just because of the growing role of the provinces within Confederation, but because of the plain fact that they were becoming more and more involved in energy matters. As Bert Shear, the corporate manager in Ontario, pointed out recently, “over half the ministries of the government of Ontario have specific bearing on the life of Imperial. We have to keep in touch with all of them.”

It’s fair to say that this emphasis is increasing even more, until now it occupies a major amount of time or scores of the company’s men and women. Moreover, it is Imperial’s intention that fostering good relations with governments should become part of the thinking, not just of government affairs specialists, but of everyone who works for the company. In future, employees will be encouraged, even more than in the past, to get involved in public service, including political organizations.

From all this activity, one could be forgiven for thinking that Imperial vice-president, spends 15 percent or more of his time working on the company’s relations with the federal government and another 10 percent on communication with the provincial governments. At times, in recent critical periods, other executives have been involved with governments almost full time.

Not to respond to the challenge, however, might be damaging not only to the company but also to the country. “The only way the system can work,” is for all sectors to have influence in the decision-making process,” says James Gillies, a former MP and now director of business-government studies at York University in Toronto, in his book Where Business Fails (published in 1981 by the Institute for Research on Public Policy). “It is not healthy for any major sector of society to be alienated from government — not good for government, not good for the sector and not good for the majority of citizens.”

In Ottawa, the government has become increasingly involved in energy issues. Such issues were seen as purely business decisions during what, in nostalgic memory, were the golden years of the 1940s and 1950s, when the goals of government and business seemed the same: growth, employment, economic stability. Business people were often the closest advisers of C.D. Howe, the federal minister most closely concerned with the Canadian economy between 1956 and 1967. The expectations of people seemed more simple and the problems facing government easier to solve. In a broad sense, energy policy was almost nonpolitical, except for the occasional controversy such as the pipeline debate of 1956. It was only in 1966 that the department of energy, mines and resources was created. But then came OPEC and the oil shortages of 1973, establishment of Petro-Canada in 1975, worry over supplies and unprecedented price increases throughout the 1970s, and finally the National Energy Program, which had strong public support and has had a major impact on the oil industry.

Today, points out Ken Powell, an Imperial executive who has spent the last year as Imperial’s manager of government affairs, “in our industry has a high political profile. And this will probably continue to be the case.”

While these changes forced business leaders to spend more and more time responding to government policy, some felt they were doing so less and less effectively. They no longer knew the right people to see. They came to see them too late, not while policies were in the talking stage but after they had been announced and when changes were difficult. In a University of Western Ontario survey, managers rated themselves “low” or “medium” in their effect on the political process. Choosing his words carefully, Bob Landry says, “It’s a widely held view in government that representations from the business community could be greatly improved.”

The lack of understanding between government and business — Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau once described them as the new “two solitudes” — has not only hurt individual businesses, it may have hurt the nation. Such was the view of a federal task force that reported in 1976 to the department of industry, trade and commerce. It pointed out that most western industrial countries take for granted that successful industrial policy depends on close, continuing contacts between government and industry. But in Canada, it said, antagonism and misunderstanding “prevent the full realization of the public benefit in an efficiently managed economy.” That was in 1976. But it is “as true today,” says Shelly Ehrenworth, an official of the federal government who has been involved in setting up business-government dialogue at the Niagara Institute, a centre for the study of leadership at Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

The new climate caught some businesses with their plans down. Officials at the department of energy, mines and resources remember one major oil company that “made it almost a point of principle not to be responsive to government.” Some appeared to believe that if they ignored what was happening, it might go away. “No chance, say the experts. Though it might employ a carrot rather than a stick, “the general thrust of government to try to influence business decisions would probably continue, whichever of the parties was in power,” says Ken Harry, a former political science professor now responsible for public affairs research at the Conference Board of Canada, an independent research institution.

Some kept on trying what used to work — flying visits to a minister or deputy. But that didn’t work any more.
partly because of the quantum leap in the number of public servants in the early 1970s. There were too many players now, and you couldn’t find the right one without a program.

Other companies tried to adapt to the new environment. Enter the government-relations specialists. Some companies hired their services from one of Ottawa’s many consulting firms. Others strengthened their public affairs departments with their own political scientists and sociologists. Others employed people who had had first-hand experience in government affairs. Bill Neville, once assistant to a Liberal cabinet minister and later chief of staff for Conservative leader Joe Clark, is a new vice-president of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce. Dick O’Hagan, press secretary to two prime ministers, is a vice-president of the Bank of Montreal. Along with one or more of these options, many are opening Ottawa offices.

One side of the government-relations job is to advise the company on political and social trends and help to identify options. Another is to help the company modify its thinking, so that political issues are among the first considerations in its planning, rather than among the last. Bill Lee likes his people to be almost ex-officio members of a client’s planning team. “I question,” he says, “whether any large corporation can make a big planning decision today without considering public policy.”

At Imperial, it is the job of the men and women in the research and analysis division of the company’s corporate affairs department to examine such policy and offer the company their best judgment. The division is headed by Peter Barth, an economist and former editorial writer on The Toronto Star, who also teaches at Toronto’s York University. “An institutionalized devil’s advocate” is the way Barth describes his work. “Part of my job is to put myself in the other person’s shoes.”

The information Barth’s division provides is used in many ways at Imperial, including various projects the company is developing. “I can’t think of any recent, significant corporate policy on which the broad political dimensions have not been considered,” he says.

What is Imperial striving for is an attitude throughout the company that is tuned to political and social issues. To help its people acquire that sensitivity, the company is building government relations into its management training programs. For example, last year, with the help of the Niagara Institute, it brought together a dozen senior managers with 10 government people and four outside experts for three days of sessions on where and how of why government policy making and how business can fit in.

For many Imperial people such sensitivity is nothing new. They’ve dealt with governments every day — with municipalities on the design and location of service stations, with provinces on transporting petroleum products on the highways, with federal agencies on the type of suit that should be worn in helicopters over water, with federal and provincial governments both as landlords who set the terms and conditions for operating and developing their land and as regulators who conserve the resource and protect the environment. Imperial’s Tom Thomson knows the experience first hand and says it contributes to an awareness among Imperial people of the importance of business and government relations.

“When you come up through the marketing department as I did, conscious of government involvement at all levels, you develop a clear understanding of how closely related to the community the company is and must remain.”

The relationship requires enormous effort. It took nearly 20 man-years to complete the 1.5-metre stack of submissions required for approval of Esso Resources’ new Norman Wells project, which includes expanded production in the Northwest Territories and a pipeline to carry the new oil south. Literally hundreds of permits were required to build the company’s islands in the Beaufort Sea. One count produced a list (probably not complete) of 22 sets of regulations affecting shipping to and from the Arctic operations.

“It’s easy to complain about the time involved,” says Peter Staut, Imperial’s vice-president for natural resources, “but the environment does need to be protected and resources do need to be conserved. One bad operator could spoil it for everybody. It’s just part of the business. As times change, so must our understanding of government’s role. In the past we may have tended to go in a bit prescriptively, assuming we had all the answers. But when you are dealing with politically sensitive areas, such as native rights or land claims, that rigid approach doesn’t meet the legitimate objectives of the policy makers. We’re trying to understand all aspects of the environment we’re working in, and we’ve become a lot more sensitive to the socio-economic aspects of what we do.”

An example of the new process was the approval by the federal government last year of the Norman Wells project. Because it had all sorts of practical and economic benefits, the company might have assumed 10 years ago that approval would be automatic. By last year, it recognized that the decision would be political as much as technical, and so it specifically designated proposals to recognize what it could then identify as government’s goals.

Bob Landry looks to a business and government as two groups of decision makers, each with a mandate to carry out. Each has external pressures — the marketplace for one, public opinion for the other. They have interests in common and interests that conflict. But each is trying to act in the Canadian interest and respond to the needs of its constituents who — customers and voters — are the same people.

“Our mandate as senior management,” Landry says, “is to improve Imperial’s understanding of government’s objectives and the pressures on the officials in government and the elected representatives.” A second part of the mandate, Landry believes, is to provide government with a broad knowledge of the industry and the affect on it if certain policies are adopted. This means building up relationships, in Ottawa and the provinces, with public servants at a number of levels and elected representatives both in government and in opposition. Thus, when legislation affecting business generally or the energy sector specifically is being developed, the industry will, it hopes, have an opportunity to present a point of view.

That was what Imperial’s chief executive, Don McVor, was doing when he spent an hour and a half this spring in Ottawa with the Standing Committee on Energy Legislation. In response to questions, he ranged widely over current supply and demand for petroleum products, the economics of large oil-sands projects, the industry’s cash-flow problems. He also pledged to continue Imperial’s efforts to use Canadian goods and services in its projects as much as possible — efforts that Roy MacLaren, the committee’s Liberal vice-chairman, said were “admirable.”

It is, Imperial hopes, more than a one-way street. As Ken Powell puts it: “We go to Ottawa to listen and learn. And we think Ottawa is also listening and learning. We have something to receive and sometimes to give — technical expertise, economic expertise, a worldwide energy understanding. We think that is a real contribution to the whole governmental process.”

How do you distinguish a contribution to the governmental process” from lobbying? Maybe you don’t. But is lobbying bad? “Lobbying is not only legitimate but necessary,” says Bill Neville, “unless those being governed have no right or ability to influence how they are being governed.”

“I was in government a long time,”

Bill Lee points out, “and I would hate to have all public policy decided only by public servants. Even though we have the best public service in the world, lobbying is a positive contribution to a more workable public policy.”

Lobbying, to these men, means making facts and arguments available to be considered on their merits, whether in Nova Scotia, Alberta or Ottawa. And senior government people agree that facts are what they want and need. As one senior official in energy, mines and resources declares: “Public policy has to be based on knowledge. The government has its objectives, but if it is to frame sensible policies to implement them, it needs to talk to people who know the problems and can discuss them in depth.” As for Imperial, he says: “It’s a good company to work with. Its people have information we need, and they can get it in a hurry. Their cooperation makes for better public policy formulation than otherwise.”

That matches the perception of senior imperial people who meet regularly with government in both the provinces and in Ottawa. The dialogue,” says Tom Thomson,” helps us understand each other’s viewpoint. For our part, we’re coming to understand more about political heads and pressures and governments’ own objectives. By and large, I think, governments respect Imperial. It’s natural that we will know the complexities of our business better than they do. We have a lot of technical knowledge and a perspective on our industry that is world wide. Governments need that, offering it to them is part of our job.”

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The Review, Number 5, 1982

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Oldtimer hockey

It isn't whether you win or lose...

BY ANTHONY TILLY

Photography by Barry Gray

In February 15, 1982 — opening night at an arena in suburban Toronto. The crowd — a friendly mixture of wives, kids, competitors and some onlookers — has come to watch the Oldtimers. Four teams of players, each from across the country. In January 1975, this tournament drew 50 teams of players who had reached the grand old age of 55. Months later, the Canadian Oldtimers Hockey Association (COHA) was officially born. Since then it has survived early growing pains and moved to Ottawa to become a branch of the Ministry of Fitness and Amateur Sports. Now headed by ex-NHLer Lawrence Regan, the COHA has about 16,000 members who average 55 years of age.

On February 12, close to 2,000 of these perennial boys of winter converged in Toronto for the first Oldtimers World Cup to be held in Canada. From 1976 to 1981, Amsterdam, Zurich, Tokyo, Copenhagen, Edinburgh and Helsinki had hosted as many as 50 teams from three continents. In 1982, with sponsorship from various corporations and the Canadian and Ontario government, the COHA wanted 88 teams in search of older gold and a good time.

Meanwhile, back at the arena, the two teams were still in action, and they are a treat to watch. The Toronto Italians are playing in a World Cup tournament for the first time, but the COHA head-landers have duly noted their three members: Frank Mahovlich, Bill White and Norm Ulman (and their string of local tournament wins. At the other end, the risk, the Finnish Superstars have earned their team name, having won the World Cup for the last three years. The oldtimer rules (no body-checking, slapshots or fighting) allow the game to swell back and forth, with the occasional goal and a fast pace. The Italians open the scoring when defender Ralph Ruffo's hard shot from the point glances in off Norm Ulman. Minutes later the Finns even it. More turning takes the lead, only to see the Italians score again. Back. Then, with only three minutes left, the Superstars pull in front, 3:1. The Finns send out their white protection, White on defence. Ulman takes the shot, and Malhotra steps in to score for the win. It's a great way to end the tournament.

The Finns clinched their victory with a 4-1 win over the Regan's team, the U.S. charter, as the teams leave the ice, the applause is loud. Afterwords, Ralph Ruffo, still works excitedly on his gong. Ralph and his brother Pat ran Ruffo Brothers' Eso in Toronto and play, with the Toronto Italians, his analysis of the game. "We definitely deserved a better fate," he announces with mock seriousness. "We just didn't handle it well, yet."

The Italian Superstars are back on the line and in the last few minutes. He tears back and smiles. "We had a good game," he announces with mock seriousness. "We just didn't have it all.

Not had, indeed. Yet it wasn't all had for the NHLers, either. In fact, three of the oldtimer games are far from dominated by former pros, and the most successful oldtimer team in Canada, the Mount Royal Xs, includes just one ex-NHLer: Playing with Dick Sarrazin, formerly of the Philadelphia Flyers, are former semi-professional and amateurs who just love the game with a passion. When the Mount Royal Xs take to the ice in the 1982 World Cup, one of these players seems to fly across the arena. It's French, 6'4, 205, three years in the NHL and three years playing in the COHA. He's the smallest player in the 82 tournament. Off the ice, he's a social worker. He always has an injury, his skates, his arm, his leg, and his head. When the assistant coach opens the gate too low, he's the first to lose, being by diving headfirst over the boards.

Fred Charland has helped this team of competitive amateurs bring a great tournament record to the World Cup. 1982-4 over eight years. This en- tirable record does not include the Xs' most satisfying victory. Last year Mount Royal beat the Montreal Canadians, 5-1 in Oldman's outstanding victory, then Richard and Yvan Cournoyer, 1-5. The Mount Royal Xs, the Finland Superstars, the Italian Xs, and the Balmy Beach Belugas (a Toronto team with an old pros, portrayed by Larry Bowler in the tournament) are the top teams in older hockey.

Across Canada there are many oldtimer teams that will never compete against this international elite — even if they would have their leg and power for the next two decades. Frankly, that doesn't worry them. Congratulating groups just gather to play the game and enjoy the game, usually at a time when they would be sleeping. Somebody organizes a friendly, local league, and the national gray-head count only when they get ambitious and enter a COHA-sanctioned tournament. In 1981-82, about 150 oldtimer teams entered these tournaments, plus many COHA-sanctioned junior and women's tournaments in every province.

Actually, it's hard to keep track of players and teams in the COHA. That doesn't bother Larry Regan. As executive director, he watches happily as players change teams and teams opt out for a tournament the next year or then return to their local competition the next. Regan likes it that way. "We're loosely organized in that area and want to remain so. The main thing is not to participate — and we all play ourselves too seriously."

Yet Regan does, in fact, take the COHA's behind-the-scenes role very seriously. He's gradually built up a network of regemen directors and a full-time staff of five to make sure the COHA does its job well. The board of directors includes Larry Regan, Ontario's Assistant Attorney General Roy McMurray, and Ontario neurosurgeon Brian Beres. The board of directors — led by President George Kmezner of Campbellton, B.C. — makes sure that the staff in Ottawa keeps getting the boys on the same page. The other main concern is the Saint John Mooseheads and the Summerside Old Spuds the tournaments, tax arrangements, insurance policies and other services they need.

Meanwhile, Larry Regan keeps a tight grip on the COHA's perpetual cup. In 1982, he received his office received $80,000 from the ministry of fitness and amateur sports. That money was earmarked for specific administrative costs. Beyond that, Regan had to make sure that participants fees and donations...
tions from sponsors such as Labatt’s, Anheuser-Busch, Goosby’s Distilleries, General Motors and Cooper Canada covered COHA tournaments and other events.

The books balanced and the non-profit organization attracted many new members from 35 to 55 years of age and well beyond. Yet a problem remains for many who would-be members. Many oldertimers just can’t wait to run out of age. Some have taken matters into their own hands and formed local groups in touch with all the COHA rules except the minimum age.

One of these oldtimers is Joe Martinello. Thirty and lean, he’s still a kid, not even a prospect by the usual oldtimers standards. But he’s a founding member and five-year veteran of the Stouffville Men’s Amateur Hockey League. Sponsored by local business, this seven’s eight teams start play at 7:30 Sunday mornings so that they can squeeze four games into their precious ice time.

Martinello, who is one of the few players to commute from nearby Toronto, explains that the league has kept most of its original Stouffville players. A waiting list of 50 more want to join the eight teams, because the league’s appeal isn’t just hockey. As in many oldtimers groups, the players enjoy the camaraderie. As the annual banquet, they and their wives celebrate every conceivable accomplishment.

Martinello has achieved another achievement: “We had one ever had a first year who was awarded a prize for being the only player in the history of the league never to score a goal or assist or have a penalty. We gave him the Firstame Award of the year!”

Of course, the camaraderie comes because of the players’ shared love of the game, not the other way around. For Martinello, captain of the Bets Pools Flyers, hockey holds an irresistible attraction. It’s so strong that he couldn’t wait to get back to the rink last winter, 11 days after a kidney operation. So on February 7, he faced on his skates while teammates grumbled aboutFileInfo wasting 50 cents on a get-together.

On that day, Martinello tried to explain his Sunday morning obsession. He is frustrated Gordie Howe. And I think it’s really true that a lot of the guys are experiencing great Walter Mittel by. Do you know “The Hockey Sweater” by Roch Carrier? All the little boys become Rocket Richard. Well, I think that is basically what happens in the psyche of the typical player in our league.

That morning, I watched “The Hockey Sweater” in action as the Bets Pools Flyers skated out to meet Stouffville Travel Centre. The league records – the standings and top 15 scorers, lovingly copied on a son or daughter’s three-ring paper – showed that the Gordie Howes of the improving but fifth-place Flyers would have a tough time against the Rocket Richards of their second-place opponents.

And they did. Despite the encouragement of their faithful fan, Margaret Martinello, whose usually gentle voice somehow boomed an authoritative “C’mon Flyers” and a salty “Nuts” when things went wrong, the Flyers lost 3-1. The next two months would bring a championship to the Flyers and 25 days in hospital to Joe Martinello. But who could tell that? So, as the teams skated off and a tractor arrived to do its imitation of a Zamboni ice cleaner, the team captain sneaked in a couple of extra laps, working on his imitation of Gordie Howe.

But I shouldn’t laugh. In fact, I can’t. The truth is, I too suffer from this lasting Canadian love affair with hockey, and I play summer and winter with a group that would give little trouble to the Bets Pools Flyers. We rarely even play a competitive, refereed match against another team.

With good reason: we’ve yet to win such a game. The last time we tried, we were so bad that when one of our members drew a penalty, the opposition borrowed a rule from football and declined to accept it.

This inexcusable record started in 1968, years before I joined up. About a dozen rugby players decided they needed some winter exercise. They joined forces with 18 friends. But a few months later, fed up with their teammates’ more timid style of play, the rugby players decided they’d tackle basketball instead. Thus our “pick-up” hockey group was born. When I joined about six years ago, we still looked like all-warriors in ice longs; in black sweaters; red, black and red; holding ones in sweatsuits. Each week we chose sides from the assem-

bled talent, then spent the next hour trying to decide if we could buy yellow and red sweaters and kneepads for the whole season.

And maybe it was the beer and pizza one night in 1980 when, after one of our better games, one of the olderfellas said, “I could arrange a trip to Finland for some exhibition games. Perhaps our senior members might want to play the game.”

Andy Hardy movies were in the ones in which the gang gets together and turns its clever, amusing production into a big-time hit. But wasn’t fan Frank Mahovlich? And wasn’t Bernie Dunn the classic defensive centre in the Bill White tradition? And our Ultimatum? I’m too embarrassed to say.

Eight of our group became committed to the trip; our evangelical zeal eventually attracted eight others. Five — including President Ian Macdonald and psychiatrist Daniel Cappon — volunteered to join the hockey holiday. Thirteen were invited to join the trip. In April 1981, the Toronto Maple Leafs took off.

In Helsinki, the awful truth started to sink in. Our photos were admitted to being more interested in Helsinki already knew about our feet of snow and had realized that without the COHA to handicap our opponents (10 kilogram weights on another team), we had made a terrible mistake.

The Finnur representative had repeatedly assured us that the opposition of our calibre. As it turned out, that was impossible. Oh, we were spared a game with the Finnish Superstars. Instead we met with their Finnish rivals, teams that had finished second and third in the 1981 World Cup.

We did our best, playing our overworked hearts out. But the scores in the two games, 9.3 and 11.4, reflected much more than our hard work. Let’s just say that the Finnish players are not simply good hockey players; they are considerate, gracious people.

After the last game, we tried to explain ourselves. We left out the part about the rugby players. Unfortunately, the Finnish still didn’t understand. In their country, only the very best players, those ready for the real Ultimatum and Mahovlich, keep on playing after 35. Frankly, that got us thinking. We finally realized how unique our oldtimers hockey is. From the Toronto Italians and the Mount Royal Xs to the Bets Pools Flyers and the Thursday night pickup group, from the fit and frisky to the balding and bulging, there are thousands of service-station owners and social workers, presidents and psychiatrists — we won’t go lower to play this game.

Is this a form of collective madness? I don’t think so. Joe Martinello is an intelligent lawyer with no trace of a jekyll and hyde personality. Similarly, most tongue-in-cheek comparisons to Howe or Richard are made by men who love to work hard together, then sit back and laugh at themselves. Oldtimers hockey is like that. And as Jim Dabin says, “It’s cheaper than a psychiatrist.

Yet one question remains. If this exemplary combination of fitness and fun is really good for us, how long can we keep on this cheap therapy? In our group, the goal is to match our oldest player, 58-year-old Bernie Dunn. In the wider world of oldtimers hockey, people look to another hero.

Last February 17, when the World Cup was over, there was another game. Toronto’s Balmy Beach Bantogs took their turn trying to beat the Finland Superstars. In goal was Mike Starbuck, goalie who had started his NHL career when he was close to oldertimers age — Johnnny Bower.

The game was close. Early in the second period, the potbellied Snoopers goalie made a standing save to keep his head ahead 1-0. The crowd clapped its appreciation; an equally appreciative Bower hanged his stick on the ice to add his salute.

After a scoreless first, Johnny Bower was standing and shaking himself at that save. Then, as he peeled off his equipment, Bower explained his approach: “If you win all the battles on the main thing is to come out and have some fun. I’m just very happy to be a part of it.”

And what about retirement? First came the rational answer: “If I’m good, I’ll play as long as I can. And finally came a senior oldtimer’s s and happy answer for us all: a wise but young chukle.”
To the tune of a basso profondo blast from her horn, the Imperial Bedford, 188 metres from stern to stern — the length of a couple of hockey rinks, plus bleachers — eases from her berth at the company dock near Esso Petroleum’s refinery at Dartmouth, N.S. The sun has set but the sea is placid and the sky clear; Halifax harbor twinkles with the running lights of many vessels moving in the dark.

The Bedford is bound for Saint John, N.B. Capt. Len Crewe is stationed on the bridge, in the superstructure near the stern of the ship, which bristles with modern aids to navigation (including a Loran-C electronic navigation system, the newest and most accurate equipment for obtaining a “fix,” a ship’s position at sea). But Crewe, first mate Jim King and wheelhouseman Bob MacDonald are keeping their eyes peeled nonetheless.

“I stay on the bridge until we’re at sea, and I’m always here in bad weather,” Crewe says. He is a veteran who has skippered four of the 14 ships operated by Esso Petroleum Canada, a division of Imperial Oil. Those seven tankers and three barges carry vital petroleum supplies to customers that range from the Nova Scotia Power Commission to Esso Petroleum plants in the most remote communities along the northern coast of British Columbia. They are only the latest in an 85-year line of ships that have served under Imperial’s flag. “To people on the B.C. coast or in settlements in the Maritimes,” says Harry Westlake, Esso’s operations manager in the marine division, “Imperial’s fleet is a part of Canada’s history that they’ve seen first hand. And like everything else, the fleet is changing to meet new demands. We’re working hard to make it more efficient, more safe and — just as important — a good place to work for the men who choose to sail in it.”

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The first vessel in Imperial’s fleet was introduced in 1900. It was a tugboat named the Regina, a sturdy little craft that chugged out of Sarnia, Ont., sire of Imperial’s first refinery, hauling three barges loaded with oil and gas along the St. Clair River and on to the markets of Toronto and Montreal. Then, in 1902, the company chartered its first tanker, which was put to work not transporting refined products to market, but plying the waters from Ohio to Sarnia, bringing crude oil to the company’s refinery there. By 1920 there were nine tankers in service, and the Imperial flag was fluttering not only over the inland and coastal waters of Canada, but over the high seas, as the company’s vessels charted their courses over the oceans to Europe and South America, bringing crude to Canada.

In retrospect, it was a good time, both for Imperial and the many young men, often from villages and towns in Nova Scotia — Isaac’s Harbor, Musquodoboit, Lunenburg — who signed on with Imperial to make a living and also to see the world. “In those days,” W. Gerald Kent, a Nova Scotian who became an Imperial master, recalled nostalgically, “the world
belonged to us. No matter where you went, everyone was glad to see you.”

So were thousands of Canadians. For aside from servicing fuel from Imperial’s refineries, the company ships have long had a second and equally memorable role: carrying mail, food and other supplies to some of the remote communities, reachable only by boat or plane, that lie along the rugged west coast. People would crowd the small dock as the captain and crew stepped ashore, bringing not only fuel and supplies, but the magic of contact from outside. Sometimes loggers would hitch their floating camps to the ships for a tow down to the next logging site. Others times a ship would go in search of a fishing camp that had moved to new waters since the last deliveries.

And on both east and west coasts, the vessels have done their share of rescue work. Every Imperial seaman has stories of taking storm-tossed fishing boats in tow or sharing a cargo of fuel with an impoverished customer, anxiously waving an undershot from one isolated dock. In 1970 a company vessel tackled more than 200 passengers, including some four-legged voyageurs — pet dogs and cats — from the Alaska state ferry after it grounded on an island near Prince Rupert, B.C.

On a broader front, the Imperial fleet performed courageous duties during two world wars. The company’s contribution to the First World War effort was mostly accomplished in home waters, but in 1939 Imperial’s deep-sea ships were resorted by the Canadian government for war service abroad, carrying crude oil from South America to refineries in France and England. Under the direction of the government, the company also manned a fleet of Panamanian tankers and later operated Canadian government-owned ships.

With German submarines prowling the Atlantic, that was a dangerous assignment. Altogether, during the war years, four company-owned ships and two other tankers manned by Imperial were lost to enemy action; 77 men gave

journeys of the Bedford, Acadia and St. Clair are now the longest regular runs of Imperial tankers, except for occasional charters. Imperial ships surely leave Canadian waters.

But there may be a new kind of journey in store for the fleet. As the world’s need for energy grows, the search for oil and gas is increasingly aimed offshore. Consulting his crystal ball, Harry Abel, Imperial’s marine and pipeline manager, predicts that if there are major oil finds off the east coast, there may be a new role for the fleet. “Ships would be needed at least until the fields were developed to an extent that would justify pipelines.”

Discussion of deepsea shipping often leads to the crucial question of environmental protection — safeguards taken to prevent spills and, should one happen in spite of the best efforts, the steps that are taken to contain it and clean it up. Back in 1970 Imperial faced one of the most threatening oil spills, when the Liberianflag tanker Arrow ran aground off Chaleur Bay, N.S., carrying a load of 110,000 barrels of heavy fuel. The ship was under a one-time charter to Imperial. Though the company was not to blame for the spill, Imperial, as recipient of the cargo, reacted immediately, with round-the-clock expertise as well as workers and equipment, some of it flown in from various parts of North America. The company is one of the founding members of the Petroleum Association for the Conservation of the Canadian Environment (PACE), which has developed detailed plans to coordinate the best expertise in the country to prevent spills or, if they do happen, to contain and clean them up.

But the best way to deal with an oil spill is not to let it happen in the first place. This is part of the reason behind Imperial’s careful maintenance of its ships and constant search for new ways to make them safer and more efficient. Throughout a ship’s journeys, wind, weather and the corrosive effects of salt water take a heavy toll, explains El Johnson, Imperial’s senior supervisor of marine engineering. Maintaining its ships according to high standards accounts for a big percentage of Imperial’s fleet operating costs. For example, certainly the role of the fleet has changed from the days when it roamed the oceans. The annual northern
1980. In addition, the Aradia, which was built with an innovative interior configuration crammed into its steel hull, recently received a new exterior coating to protect it against ice abrasion.

Up-to-date technology is crucial to preventing accidents, and the Imperial fleet boasts the most modern shipboard equipment. The St. Clair, another of the Atlantic coast tankers, was the first Canadian commercial vessel to be equipped with a new satellite-communications system called Marisat.

An efficient and effective marine service, however, calls for more well-stocked ships and the best of equipment. The people who operate them must be well-trained, and the ships must meet the highest standards of safety. As Harry Westlake puts it, "We have to do everything possible to prevent an accident, one that involves either the ship or any of the men on it."

Doing everything possible has usually meant doing more than even government regulations demand. Imperial ships generally carry more safety equipment than is required by law; the division recently bought "survival suits" for every sailor on the east coast.

These outfits, which make the wearer look like a rubber sapling, can keep a person alive in sea-freezing water for up to 15 hours. Westlake doesn't believe that the suits — which together cost approximately $50,000 — will ever be "used, but they are important as insurance to the company and responsibility to our men."

They are also fire retardant, since fire is a major concern at sea. Government regulations require monthly fire drills, but Imperial's crews take the test every two weeks. "In the course of a year," explains John Pyun, senior supervisor for marine operations, "we cover just about every kind of fire emergency, from ordinary explosion in the boiler room to a great fire in the galley."

The company also sends its seamen to government-approved firefighting and safety courses. By the end of this year at least 75 percent of the seamen on the east coast fleet will have studied first aid. The men constitute a well-trained force that can give the company's suggestions for accident prevention.

Imperial traditionally has been concerned about the welfare of its seamen. Their working environment is carefully monitored. Acting on the advice of industrial hygienist Gerry Saunders, the company has been able to reduce many of the hazards crews are exposed to. Saunders, a member of Imperial's medical department, recently completed a further study of the fleet, this time testing noise, asbestos and toxic vapor levels throughout each ship, and the marine division is now studying the results.

Seamen have a chance to discuss these and other concerns with Harry Westlake and the rest of the marine division managers. Since the end of World War II, members of the marine division ashore and delegates from each ship have participated in an employee-management system, meeting regularly, sometimes on shipboard, to deal with relationships between officers and crew, ship and shore. Discussion at the meetings can range from the future of the fleet to the variety of the food up for grabs by midnight refrigerator raiders to requests for more time ashore — the subject at one meeting a year ago.

"A month at sea is nothing when you get a month off!"

The question of leave is especially important for sailors. How can you lead a normal family and social life when you're away from home for 90 days at a time, with a month of leave between? But at a recent meeting with seamen of the east coast fleet, Westlake had a suggestion: a new 12-hour workday, split into six hours off, six hours on. This new system would give the men a month ashore for every month at sea. A similar work cycle proposed by crew members had already been instituted on the west coast, with considerable success. If adopted, Imperial would become the first commercial operator on the east coast to use the new system.

The idea seemed a good one to the delegates, and two crew members, Chris Bastedo and Jerry Thorne, volunteered to confer with the men on the ships and draft a report. When the men reported back favorably, staff on shore began working out a schedule. This time the plan could involve some additional expenses. Jim McLaughlin, the planning and economics manager, pointed out that the company needed to have one man more available for each ship to make it work. But the company saw it was more important to implement a schedule that would improve the quality of our seamen's lives. The scheme could also have benefits for the company; adds Ernie Coates, the regional marine superintendent, "Imperial is expecting a lesser turnover of seamen under the new schedule, he explains, and there are long-term savings in that kind of improvement."

The marine department decided to give the system its first east coast tryout on the Bedford. So as the voyage nears its end, the ship rolling and pitching on the choppy Bay of Fundy waters, the men discuss how they feel about the new schedule. They seem wholeheartedly enthusiastic. "Everything's working fine," is the verdict of Len Crewe and chief engineer Mel Barnes, whose own working hours are unchanged — the skipper and the chief are on call at all times.

No matter that Richard May, the bosun, is forced to play a game of solitaire in the mess. He doesn't really mind. "A month at sea is nothing when you get a month off," says Eugene Boutilier, the steward's department, taking a break from his chores. Boutilier has a family, and on the same subject, Steve Henley, a relative newcomer to the fleet, chimes in: "Last summer, I was going to get married, but my girl was not too thrilled about my being away so long. Maybe things will be different now."

When the ship reaches Saint John the crew prepares to make a relatively uneventful voyage, and as she heads into harbor the men on duty prepare for docking with orderly calm. For the onlooker, there's a definite feeling that that discipline is part of a tradition, a tradition that's prevailed through pioneering days on the country's waterways, long, frustrating forays through the ice to the extraordinary and essential business of delivering petroleum supplies to Canadians as safely and efficiently as possible.

FINALLY, a couple of years before Burns died in 1947, experiments had begun that would eventually fulfill his wish, in the practical if not the figurative sense. An English contemporary of the Scottish poet, Thomas Widdowson, had set out to discover a means of permanently recording visual images, using as a starting point the camera obscura, an optical device invented during the Renaissance, which by means of mirrors and a lens could project images onto a plane surface. Widdowson's experiments, and those of several others after him, proved abortive. But his initiative did lead indirectly to the recording of the first

TEXT BY VAL CLERY

PHOTOGRAPHY THE COLLECTION OF WILLIAM McFARLANE
photograph by a French artist, Louis Daguerre, some four decades later.

As Burns was certainly aware, men had always been able to study their reflections and to see themselves projected through the eyes of artists. These opportunities for self-assessment had never reduced appreciably the incidence of human blunders and foolish notions, and it would be rash to claim that photography has done so since its inception. But it can be said that in a little less than a century and a half photography has transformed our vision of ourselves and our world. By happy economic coincidence photography developed at a time when industry and trade were creating in Europe, Britain and North America an affluent and confident middle class, a class that felt the urge to record its air of progress and achievement. In Canada at the time, as elsewhere, photography was practised mainly by enterprising professionals. It was initially a demanding and expensive process, and such early kinds of photograph as the daguerreotype, the ambrotype and the tintype could only be reproduced by photographing the original print. The most notable Canadian pioneers in photography were the Norton family, who established studios in Montreal in 1856 and in Ottawa in 1867, later extending their activities to Halifax, Saint John, Boston and New York. Inevitably their success, and the simplification of photographic techniques, generated a host of competitors, and no city worthy of the title in Canada was without a photographer’s studio.

The photographs shown here, taken in various Canadian studios around the turn of the century, reveal that portrait photographers of the period continued the tradition of flattery established by portrait painters over the centuries. It is clear that sitters regarded their visit to the studio as a serious event. They wanted a record of themselves not as they ordinaril appeared but as they wished to be seen by relatives and friends. And photographers took great pains to provide whatever illusion was demanded. Studios were as well equipped as small repertory theatres, with a selection of panoramic or indoor backdrops and such props as rustic arbors, decorative gateways and elaborate furniture. Clients arrived in their Sunday best, or occasionally in dress establishing a sporting prowess, and they were posed with a formal solemnity befitting so expensive an investment in portraiture. Smiles, if they were allowed at all, were modest in the extreme. In part, the stiff, affected poses were dictated by the need for sitters to remain motionless during the seemingly eternity it took to expose a picture. This may explain why subjects are sometimes posed with chin resting on hand. Many photographers used adjustable brackets to hold sitters’ heads immobile. The brackets would be obliterated later by retouching, before the print was made. At the time, people had a special need for portraits showing them at
what they considered their best. It was a period of intensive migration in Canada. New arrivals wanted portraits to send back to relatives in their homelands that implied a reassuring prosperity and status. And families divided by the magnetic attraction of western Canada needed photographic souvenirs that would bridge absences that might last a decade or a lifetime. In front of the camera, even small children were required to be unnaturally decorous. Distant relatives were left to imagine for themselves the real vivacity and character that lay behind the photographic illusion.

The sizes in which prints were available also reflect the needs of the period. The photographs in this collection are all of what was called "cabinet" size, 10 centimetres by 15 centimetres, convenient, when framed, for display amongst the bric-à-brac that decorated best rooms of the Victorian era. The much smaller carte-de-visite size, intended to grace wallets and purses, was also very popular. Some of these portraits are in the warm sepia tints produced by the albumen used in printing.

During the last decade of the 19th century, the American George Eastman invented the roll film, which was to make photography the family hobby it has remained ever since. One result was the impulsive snapshot, in which a pose of casual cheerfulness is as obligatory as formal solemnity once was.

Whatever misgivings we may have about photography's overwhelming role in our society through television and cinema, its part in chronicling family life must seem entirely beneficial. Almost every family in the developed world cherishes a photographic archive of its own, which keeps alive recollections of long-lost forebears and parents, of absent children, and of arrivals and departures and reunions, vacations and celebrations. And even if, solemn or smiling, stiffly posed or relaxed, they fail to show us exactly as others see us, they do tell us subtly about the aspirations and attitudes and styles adopted by individuals and generations, insights into the human story that are always worth preserving.
In Closing

Any day now, I expect that the men and women who give us the news and weather on the radio will announce the first fall of snow over Toronto in a way that will make it all seem something of a crisis. One morning a few years ago when we had an early snow — one that most of us out where I live greeted as an expected visitor — one station actually set up what it called a "snow desk." so that as the fields around our house grew white and beautiful the voices on the air were urgent with announcements: "Stay tuned for further bulletins from the snow desk."

Listening to those announcers, who assumed so naturally that snow is always bad. I was reminded that, as with many other things, it all depends on how you look at it. I've done my share of complaining about snow in the city, but as I grow older I've come to a more comfortable conviction that, given the right turn of mind, snow is not a calamity at all but a gift — to the land, to the eye and, on certain days I'll always remember, to the spirit.

Once, just a couple of years ago, I went to New Brunswick on business, several times during winter. I'll always be glad I did, for I was staying in the town of Sackville, which is set on the Tantramar marshes, and there is nowhere in Canada I've ever been where the hotel and noticing how the sun, moving over the snow, softened its dazzling white, I heard the train, I went outside, and from the back of the Marshalls Inn I could look across backyards and empty lots to it coming. And in the chamber of sound that the snow had created, I could hear the train and the voices of the men waiting for it as if I were standing beside the track. Later, the artist and I drove around the town beyond it to look at the marshes, and he, who had never been in New Brunswick before, spoke about the sky and the light and how both affected the stretching fields of snow.

Perhaps those visits to Sackville in early winter just a couple of years ago meant much to me because they were, in a sense, a homecoming. I had spent other winters not far from Sackville in the late fifties, after I had finished university and was sent to begin my work in a tiny village called Riverside, a few hours drive from Sackville, not far from Fundy National Park. There, in 1958, my wife and I moved into a large white house that seemed to be almost waiting for us, with a dark, wooded study off the main hall, where I could look down to the marshy land and, when winter came, hear the first whispers of snow falling like sand on the leaves of November.

The people in that part of New Brunswick lived mostly from the land, the farms and the forests, and I think all of them had an appreciation of snow, a gratitude for what it was, a form of nourishment for fields and woods. They did not hate snow. In fact, when December came and it began to fall in earnest, dusting the marshes and slowing, steadily filling yards and drifting in banks against the several sheds and outbuildings that were attached to the back of our house, everyone seemed to breathe easier and a spirit of restfulness settled over the village.

Often the snow came at night, so that by morning we could look out to see it rising toward the lower branches of our trees and the ledge of my study window. I would light a fire in the grate, put a record on in the living room and then sit at my study desk, the brilliant light of the snow beside my window. It was noon before we heard the first sounds of the day, the distant murren of the plow, the scrape of a shovel. I would go outside and there, standing in front of the house, listen as my neighbor, a fine old man who loved winter, would tell me that the snow was nothing like it used to be. "But there's more on the way," he'd say, his voice quiet but delighted. "Should be here tonight. Tomorrow for sure. Maine's snowed under."

Almost every afternoon, if the roads were passable at all, I would start out, often driving a long way from home, to make the calls that were part of my work. Some days, after a snow so heavy that the roads were blocked, especially those that went across the marsh or down through the back fields, the snowplow driver would go out of his way to help me get through, breaking a path, my car up close behind him. Once, in the middle of December, we had a fall of snow so heavy that the plow, trying to push its way across the marsh in front of me, got stuck. Someone took a picture of it, the plow overcome by the snow, my car dwarfed by banks over twice its height, so that today, whenever my children see it, they find it amazing that there was ever so much snow or that it could be so brilliantly white.

On certain days, usually about this time of year, I begin to hope that someday, before too long, I might see that village again in winter. But even if I never do, it will always beckon. It will beckon as long as there are November afternoons with the smell of snow in the air, as long as there are windless mornings in the depth of winter, when the only sound is the sound of stillness.