NEW LIFE FOR AN OLD OIL FIELD by Doug Tindal

CANADA'S LIFE IN WASHINGTON by William French
JUDY CREEK RENEWED

BY DOUG TINDAL

In today's tough climate, economy and efficiency count more than ever. At an old oil field in northwest Alberta, Esso expertise is leading the way in recovering hard to get at oil. Skilled people. Top technology. Sound economics. The Esso way.

Over the past 20 years, an astonishing number of people have moved through the small town of Swan Hills, Alta., 225 kilometres northwest of Edmonton: oil people, most of them, working the oil fields that stretch along a 60-kilometre length of rugged, pine-clad ridges. As many as 20,000 people have called Swan Hills "home" during the past two decades, even though
the town’s population never actually risen much above 2000. Today’s generation of Swan Hills residents has a rather keenly intense sense of the town, but if you wilt to talk people who lived there 10 years ago, they let out that thing’s probably sum it up in one word: rival.

I can remember when you had to have a four-wheeled drive truck just to go down the main road to the post office,” says one long-time resident. “And you would still get stuck. For a few weeks in the spring, going to work meant getting your car hauled out of the mud by a cattail tractor just about every day.”

But things have changed — and it’s not only because most of the roads are now paved. There’s a new spirit, a sense of pride and optimism among the Swan Hills people. It began, paradoxically, with the recession of the early eighties, which brought the townfolk together in new ways and knitted them into a stronger community. And it is: pruning now at the Judy Creek project. A major enhanced oil recovery project that helped to bring new life to the oil field and the town.

The Judy Creek project, operated by Eros Resources Canada Limited, is one of the company’s largest enhanced oil recovery projects and its first large-scale miscible flooding venture (recall the technical word meaning “able to mix”). Employing some of the most sophisticated technology currently used by the oil industry, the project is expected to allow Eros Resources to recover twice as much of the oil left behind by old oil as would be recovered using traditional recovery methods such as waterflooding. But Eros Resources is not the only company to benefit from the project. Because it is the major stakeholder, a number of associates own an interest in the project. The Judy Creek project is comprised of three elements: the “A” pool, the “B” pool, and the newly built Swan Hills miscible injection plant. Eros Resources has a 20 percent interest in the “A” pool, a 32 percent interest in the “B” pool and a 42 percent interest in the extraction plant.

Yes long after he was appointed president and chief executive officer of Eros Resources in April 1985, Tony Kowalzki was building a base at the Judy Creek project. “What struck me,” he recalls, “was the high level of technology and expertise involved. I believe very strongly that people in a good company is the key to the future of enhanced recovery. It’s a complex process and the key to all of it is skill at the right level. In the recent past, our people have been involved in enhancing recovery of different types of oil. We’re looking at other ways to improve recovery in the future. And we have done a lot of research work on this topic.”

Some of the work is focused on using technology to improve recovery. Enhanced oil recovery projects are helping to develop new technologies for producing more oil from existing wells. The technology is being used to improve recovery in the Judy Creek project. In May 1985, the Judy Creek project was completed at the 138 square kilometer A pool, which is 400,000 square kilometers of underground miscible injection is planned for the B pool, which covers an area of 200 square kilometers and is about 200,000 square meters underground.

The oil in the Judy Creek pools is found in rock formations called reservoir rock and is separated from water. This is not the case with the other oil in the project. In fact, the rock is underground and the water is injected at the right level. The water is injected at the right level and the oil is recovered in the “B” pool. We will get the oil out of the “B” pool and add it to the pool,” says Miklos. “We have to give a new name to the project.”

By 1982, the natural pressure that had caused the oil from the Judy Creek project to surface during the first two years of production had no longer sufficient to do the job. Pressure had to be restored through artificial means — in this case a method called reboiler flooded water was used — so that the oil would continue to flow out of the wells. But even waterflooding cannot sustain effectiveness, and by 1975 oil production at Judy Creek was once again declining.

Then, in 1982, the Alberta government introduced an incentive program to encourage the recovery of such hard to get oil. “Suddenly it was economically to go beyond the waterflooding stage,” says Miklos. “We tested the technique to use requires an intimate knowledge of the reservoir. What is the composition of the rock? How is it? How deep is it? How thick is it? The Judy Creek field, a miscible flooding technique using ultra light oil, has proved to be the most suitable.

The process involves injecting equal volumes of water and ultra light oil-based solvent simultaneously into the reservoir during a six-week cycle. The process continues until the optimum volume of solvent has been injected, which can take anywhere from nine months to 10 years. The solvent removes the oil from the rock and makes it move fluid, enabling water to sweep it toward the wells. But it’s not just a matter of recovering the oil; the solvent itself is quite valuable and is one of the keys to making the project economically successful. It’s recovery is as much as much of the solvent as possible in the next step, therefore, the solvent in the reservoir is recovered by injecting methane gas and water electrolytically into the reservoir. In the final step, water is injected to flush the methane gas — which is also valuable — from the pool. Carbon dioxide could also be injected as a solvent, but its cost is prohibitive. Even if the cost were too expensive, it would still be difficult to make the project economically successful. Therefore, the solvent in the reservoir is recovered by injecting methane gas and water electrolytically into the reservoir. In the final step, water is injected to flush the methane gas — which is also valuable — from the pool.
such as propene and butane — producing marketable natural gas, which is a mixture of methane and ethane. The ethane extraction plant separates the ethane from the methane; ethane is then piped down to the new injection station at the Judy Creek project, where massive 2025 horsepower pumps inject it into the oil field.

Eddie Lui, the operations engineer for the "A" post miscible flood project, describes just a few of the complex processes required to make sure the project operates efficiently. One of the most sophisticated procedures, he says, is the monitoring and controlling of pressure in the reservoir: "The fluid is unique only when its under pressure," he explains. "Ethane and oil don't really mix at all under normal conditions. If the pressure varies by as little as 10 percent, some effectiveness is lost. As well, the oil, water, gas and solvent extracted from the wells are strictly monitored — everything that comes out must be immediately replaced with an equal volume of solvent and water or the pressure will drop.

In fact, a series of monitoring programs is in place at the project. Oil and gas samples are collected periodically and tested to make sure that the solvent is mixing efficiently with the oil. Tracer elements are injected into the reservoir and their progress charted. Are they flowing in the right directions? Are they flowing too slowly? Too quickly? Sometimes, the solvent will try to take the easy way out, and instead of penetrating the oil-bearing rock, it simply squirts over the top of it and escapes through the production wells without achieving anything. Esso Resources engineers have had to experiment with injection patterns and rates to overcome this problem. Says Lui: "I think this is probably the most extensive reservoir surveillance program in the industry."

Anything that happens within the reservoir — any change in temperature or pressure, any movement of the radioactive tracers, any drop in the level of solvent injected or oil produced — is monitored precisely and the results fed electronically into a single, integrated computerized management system. Within the project's control centre, on a single screen, an operator can call up any piece of information and make immediate adjustments. "The technology at Judy Creek is outstanding," says Roy Miller, "but it's the people who are making the project a success.

The people..."
seven B.C. centres in 1983, and two years later, two Vancouver carpenters, Leo Eutsler and Chrysie Gibson, went to Nicaragua to help establish a six-month training school in Esteli. "We literally showed some students how to hold a hammer," Eutsler says. "Chrysie and I hardly spoke any Spanish as we relied on sign-language to get our points across." The Vancouver carpenters lived in dormitories at the educational centre where the school was located and, with $300 a month in wages, subsisted on a diet that was mainly rice and beans. Thirty people, aged 15 to 54, came from a half-dozen isolated villages to participate in the project. "They were ideal students because they were extremely eager to learn new skills," Eutsler says. Eutsler and Gibson showed the Nicaraguans how to construct toolboxes and workbenches before teaching them basic housebuilding methods. After they returned to Vancouver, the carpenter's union agreed to send $500 in cash and a shipment of tools worth $900 to the Central American country every year. "The main idea behind the linkups is to bring two groups with similar interests together," says Ken Shipkey, deputy manager of CUOSs overseas operations. "It is a real grass roots system."

Another aspect of CUOS's changing focus concerns the recruitment of experienced people from the Canadian business sector. In the past five years the agency has gradually moved away from accepting applicants who have been completely desk-bound. Frances Gorbet, a CUOS coordinator in Toronto, says she is constantly seeking candidates with impressive business skills and a proven aptitude for community work. "Men and women who have built their own small companies from the grass roots up and who have been active in community development are the kind of business people we are looking for." Business volunteers have helped set up a printer's co-op in Zambia, a craft industry in Jamaica and a credit union in St. Lucia. Walt Platts, an employee of Euro Resources Canada Limited in Calgary, didn't run his own small company, but he did have the business acumen the Papua New Guinea government wanted. A corporate secretary at Euro Resources, Platts took a three-year leave of absence in 1985 to become the town manager of two equatorial rain-forest communities, Wau and Bukiki. While he administers the towns' finances, his wife, Edna, teaches English, French and math at a local high school.

Like most CUOS volunteers, the Platts are given free accommodation and the same salary as local residents would receive for doing those jobs. Volunteers have found themselves living in everything from cook-equipped three-bedroom houses to thatched-roof jungle huts where freckled crocodiles was a regular part of their diet. Wendy Dobson, president of the C.D. Howe Institute in Toronto, was a CUOS worker in northern India during the late 1960s. A trained nurse, Dobson spent her time promoting birth-control methods at remote hospitals. Travelling second-class on trains, she usually carried much of her own food, including canned goods and powdered milk, in a valise, and she wore saris to alleviate the oppressive heat. "The positive reception I encountered from doctors and hospital administrators made the heat and food problems unimportant," says Dobson. "When my time was up in India, I came home feeling that I had made a few worthwhile changes in the lives of the village women who used the hospitals."

CUOS postings are generally for two years and volunteers completing their term receive a $6000 resettlement allowance (about 10 percent less to adjust to their foreign surroundings and fly home within the first year). Past workers have included David Godfrey, a B.C. novelist, Barbara Angel, chairperson of the Manitoba Arts Council, Penny Williams, editor of Your Money magazine, and Gordon Cressey, president of United Way of Greater Toronto. "Our methods may be changing but our fundamental goal hasn't wavered over the years," says Chris Bryant. "We want to promote self-reliance - to enhance the ability of local people to learn new skills that will enable them to look after themselves."

CUOS draws 85 percent of its annual funds from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), a federal-government organization, which finances them taking an active role in CUOS's day-to-day operation. The other 15 percent is made up of contributions from charitable groups, such as the Max Bell and Muttart foundations, and private donations that range from $50 to $10,000. The $20 million budget may not seem too much, considering the far-flung network CUOS maintains, but it is an impressive amount compared with the slender sum the agency had during its first year. Originally called the Canadian University Service Overseas (the name was officially changed to CUOS in 1981; the group is no longer restricted to university graduates), the organization traces its roots to a student group formed in 1960, Canadian Overseas Volunteers (COV). Fred Simson, a Toronto lawyer, and Keith Spieser, editor of the Ottawa Citizen and Canada's first commissioner of official languages, were the spark plugs behind COV. A graduate student at the time of the organizations founding, Spieser had gone to southeast Asia to collect material for his doctoral thesis on the Colombo Plan. While there, he became acutely aware not only of the need for financial aid but for expertise and training. He recalls that he was moved by a book written by Donald K. Fair, a United Church minister, To Rough with Hope. In the book," says Spieser, "Fair had a line referring to the value of creating a group of young people with technical skills for humanitarian service. That single line was enough to get me going." Back in Canada he met Simson, who was then a Conservative member of Parliament and a strong advocate for improved foreign aid, of the week-long Cochrane Conference, an annual gathering near Ottawa, Ont., at which politics, economics and other pertinent topics are discussed. When

Penney Williams, editor of Your Money magazine: one of more than 9000 people who have worked with CUOS since its inception 25 years ago

Spieser told him how badly the Third World needed teachers, nurses and technicians. Simson agreed to give him in the creation of a non-governmental student organization. Says Simson: "We were plotting to save the
world in seven days.

"Yes and I've cut off a rough blueprint for COV, sitting on the lawn between formal Courishing sessions," recalled Bivins.

"When we returned to the Toronto, we took on the task of raising money.

The two went to the three daily newspapers, which doused $2000 each to get the group going. They eventually raised $36,000 from financial institutions, church groups, rotary clubs and private citizens. We had to try selling the idea to Ottawa, but it didn't work. I had a great deal of luck," added Bivins, "so I pumped up my courage and went to see John Diefenbaker, who was then the prime minister. I was only 25. He was great. When I went abroad to organize projects the volunteers could work on in developing countries — in India, Pakistan and Colombia — work had already preceded me from John Diefenbaker, saying he supported our idea. 

"Billboard" notes posted at the University of Toronto and York University in Quebec City yielded 15 students, whom COV trained in native languages and culture and then sent to Asia in August 1961.

At the same time, Dr. James E. McEwen, then in charge of arts and sciences at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, was considering organizing a similar venture.

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AN ACT OF FAITH

There's no place like home

BY JAMES DINGWALL

Children, it has always seemed to me, are wishful for the future. Too young to look back, they can only look forward, dreaming of things to come. And so it is in later, grown-up years, when they set out to fulfill a dream, like buying a home, they draw on visions of the future they had long ago.

I considered myself lucky as a child to belong to a family that moved quite often. Every four or five years I would get a sense of a different part of Ontario — first Kenora, then Chatham and Windsor and finally Toronto. Each region had its influence on my tastes. When I wander through the house my wife, Laima, and I bought a few years ago, I realize my taste in homes developed in Chatham. It was there I acquired architectural preferences, a fondness for porches and shutters, a love of spirea bushes — all part of an ineffable sense of what kind of house makes a home.

Our house in Chatham was always referred to as the "Nauno" place. It had secret hiding spots and was the only house I ever lived in that was big enough to allow my brother and me to have separate rooms. In the basement there was a window that led to a crawl space under an addition to the house; my brother and I would periodically bring home stray cats that would retreat
Charity to the 20th century. But while
my health undoubtedly improved, I was
more afraid of being noticed by anyone.
As I wandered down streets I was searching for some-thing
couldn't put into words. "I'll
tell you what I was" the way I
thinking,

It was a demoralizing period because
everything was too expensive and I
realized that it was time. We could rent
no longer.

With the arrival of our second child,
Katie, our previously spacious Toronto
apartment was stretching at the seams.
The two bedrooms were used by Laima
and me as sleeping quarters and a study.
Katie's nursery was in what we had
earlier called the sewing room. It was
our daughter's arrival — too big to be
closed off too small for much but a
bathroom or a sewing machine. Mean-
while, Christopher, our one-year-old
son, bunked down in what should have
been a breakfast room off the kitchen.
Fortunately, there were signs of per-
sonal economic prosperity as my in-
come started to exceed our expenses
and first and then two zeros began
appearing after the large single digit in
my savings account. Surely this was the
makings of a down payment, I thought
to myself.

Of course, we are not going to rush
into anything, we told ourselves sensi-
ably. But soon, the urge to own a home
struck with the force of a debut —
home where our children could spread
their delights and their mischief from
their own backyard right up through
their own bedrooms and the only people
who would get upset would be their par-
ter, a house where I could sit on the
front porch with a drink, chatting
with neighbors and watching the passing
world.

It was 1963, and we were not alone in
our dreams. The recession was ending,
and I later discovered, much to my sur-
prise, that there were 50,000 of us buy-
ing homes that year in Toronto, and
when the year was over we had spent
more than $3 billion dollars to
become homeowners. Many things
about life may have changed through
the years but what hasn't changed is the
desire to own a place of one's own: for
me, buying a home seems to be part of
passage into the serious, adult world of
financial commitments and contractual
obligations.

It was in this somewhat serious
spirit that I took periodic jogs through
the neighborhoods near our apartment.
I was running up and down streets with
names like Durie, Windermere, At-
dar, Dungannon and Biersead, rec-
alling British history from the Magna

One morning in August

I saw a house

with a wide front porch

Settling down, raising children and turning a house into a home

as round as his when dealing with the
problems that come with owning a house.
It was about 6:30 in the morning. Laima
called up to me, "I think there's some-
thing going on behind the fence.
A sheet of water cascaded down the kitch-
en wall onto the floor before splashing
like a fountain in the living room and
into the basement. A pipe had burst. That
much was clear. But where? Somewhere
in the backyard. I should call a plumber
first thing I thought. But how? I decided
the best thing to do was call a plumber —
there are 14 pages of plumbers in the Toronto telephone
directory. Needless to say, the plumbing
got fixed. And a few weeks later the chum-
ney was seen from a vantage point.

Two years had passed. I had no
imagination to the size of our house
would be — though I did think I could
build a larger one on our land. The old
house, in the end, would simply be a
second home. So I thought, "I'll start
out small, then I can afford to build
larger in the future."

The neighborhood had dappled with
sunlight and shadows streaked through the
maples and oaks that flanked the street.
There were few people actually visible,
but there was a suggestion of activity
temporarily suspended: a wet sidewalk
and a garden hose beside a shiny car.

The house, as we approached, stood on a
tiny hill with a large maple tree beside it.

The house was a "For Sale" sign.

The house was quite modest, no marks of con-
temporary renovation: no large brass
numbers; no cedar eight with eight inches
in diameter that sticks out in a cunny
landscape.

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The Canadians

Our life and times in Washington

By William French

It's possible to simulate a tour of the world in the District of Columbia telephone directory. Look under "Embassies," and travel from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe without losing a single piece of luggage. The listings, more than 100 of them, coexisting peacefully, conceal a complex web of relationships. But the embassies have one thing in common: their senior staff spend much of their time clamoring for the attention of the world's most powerful democracy.

Here's Canada, located, in defiance of conventional geography, between Bolivia and Cape Verde — 1746 Massachusetts Avenue. Search out the location; see the Canadian flag flying bravely over the portal and our ambassador's 1982 Buick parked in the curving driveway with its diplomatic license plates. Many other ambassadors in Washington favor the stretched Cadillac limo, but we're a middle power, after all, not given to ostentatious display.

Ambassador Alan Gotlieb's chauffeur is in the driver's seat, waiting to whisk him off to another strategic meeting at which he'll be called on to defend his country's interests in free trade, acid rain, lumber import restrictions, hog quotas or any of the other 50 or so issues that currently prickle Canadian-American relations. The ambassador and his advisers work in a fine old building, built in 1909 in the beaux arts style of Louis XV. Its original owner, Clarence Moore, had the good sense to marry into the Swift meat-packing family but the bad luck to be on the Titanic. His widow sold the mansion to the Canadian government in 1927 for $375,000, plus another $100,000 for some of the antique furnishings. Vincent Massey's wife, Alice, discovered the building and insisted it be purchased despite strong opposition in Ottawa to such extravagance. She and Vincent — the first of 15 diplomats who have represented Canada in Washington so far — moved out of their temporary

Canada's embassy in Washington
quarters in the Mayflower Hotel and into the presidential suite in which they were accustomed.

A good deal of our diplomatic history revolves around the various embassies and consulates, and old timers will permit a nostalgic sigh when the new embassy, now under construction, is completed in 1985. Ambassador and his family actually lived at the embassy — Lester Pearson and his family — until 1967, when they needed the help for more office space forced them out. Since then, our ambassadors have lived in various hotels, including the Willard, in Washington, D.C. Their next address is the capital, in a splendid Georgian Hotel at 2825 Rock Creek Drive Northwest, five kilometers from the embassies.

Embassy business has long since spilled out of the original building at 1746 Massachusetts Avenue. The public affairs division, tour section and the embassy library are in an office building around the corner from the embassy. Further up Massachusetts Avenue, near Sheridan Circle, is another office building — owned by the Canadian government — occupied for the most part, by the defence liaison staff.

The three separate offices will be brought under one roof when the new embassy is opened. The new building, designed by Arthur Erickson, will not be on Embassy Row, as the style of the old one is, as a gesture of friendship, it is the first official site on Pennsylvania Avenue, the historic thoroughfare that links Capitol Hill and the White House. No other embassies will be located on the street. Erickson's strikingly designed building, to cost (U.S.) $40 million for the White House (the land was another (U.S.) $5 million), will be across the street from the National Gallery and next door to the U.S. District Court House. The new embassy is almost within shouting distance of Capitol Hill — not that a well-trained diplomat would think of shouting.

The location is a neat building is rich with symbolic resonances. For one thing, it's proximity to Capitol Hill symbolizes the tradition of the Canadian embassy in Washington — power is no longer concentrated in the White House but has shifted significantly to Congress. The days of the imperial presidency are gone, thanks in part to Watergate and Vietnam. A newer style of diplomacy is in — using Americans' own techniques. And the embassy's prestigious location on Pennsylvania Avenue emphasizes the special relationship between the United States and Canada that has been the basis of our dealings with Washington.

That special relationship has been tested at times, but the phrase is more than politicians' rhetoric. Viewed down the long perspective of history, especially European history, the conduct of affairs between Canada and the United States during the past century has generated remarkably little rancor. Differences, when they arise, are more likely to be mutual respect and understanding. As the prime minister Robert Ford observed, "Good fences make good neighbors" — but, he might have added, having good neighbors helps.

The new embassy will be an elegant symbol of our progress from colony to nation. Vincent Massey, as our first representative in 1927, had a staff of four; Ambassador Goffe, sitting in the same chair, has doubled that number.

After Massey presented his letters of credence to President Calvin Coolidge in the White House — "the ceremony struck me as having stiffness instead of dignity," Massey wrote later — and his small staff set to work. One of their first problems resulted from Prohibition; a Canadian rum-running ship, the Almone, had been intercepted and sunk by the U.S. Coast Guard, and one of the crewmen had been killed. Massey arranged for the case to be arbitrated, and the U.S. government later paid a substantial amount in damages.

But our relations were relatively untroubled in those simpler times. Lester Pearson, appointed ambassador in 1944, gives a good idea of the cordial state of affairs between the two countries in his description of the baseball games between the embassy's relations with the media, agrees that Canadians posted to Washington are concerned about how little Americans, even educated Americans, know about Canada. Fieldhouse and his immediate superior, Bruce Phillips, who heads the embassy's public affairs division, are exploring ways of improving the Americans' appreciation of Canada's importance to them. Phillips, a former head of CTV's Ottawa bureau, is well aware of the complex interrelationship between the media and politics.

In the past, Canadian ambassadors in Washington were, generally speaking, content to deal with the state department, the White House and other components of the administration; many thought it to be in bad taste for diplomats to go to the other

Left to right: A report intervies an official outside the embassy; Ambassador Allan Goffe

with members of his staff; the official residence of Canada's ambassador to the United States; and Ambassador Goffe in his embassy office.

Various ambassadors is the problem of household staff. Pearson's butler, who had references from aristocratic English employers, made his boss feel inferior, especially in the midst of Prime Minister John Diefenbaker and President John Kennedy, and Richie was caught in the crossfire. He sensed that Kennedy was distinctly cool when he presented his letters of credence. A comic incident occurred during that occasion, as Richie described in his diary: "The conversation was routine and with long pauses. During one of these the president half rose from the rocking chair in which he was sitting, stretched out his arms, and said, 'Shoo, shoo.' For a moment I was frozen in my place. The thought passed through my mind that I might be the first ambassador in history to be shoed out of the White House. I didn't see that better the way the thing I was sitting on. Now I was coming through the French windows out of the garden, was his young daughter, the little girl Caroline, leading her pet pony."

After Kennedy's assassination, Richie had to deal with the Texas blast of Lyndon Johnson. He describes in his diaries the consequences of Prime Minister Pearson's speech in which he advocated a pacific, non-interventionist in the American bombing of North Vietnam. Johnson was furious and took Pearson to Camp David to give him a tongue-lashing. Ritchie, who was there at the affair, Johnson was about to pick up the prime minister by the lapels and shake him. A recurring theme in the accounts of Coolidge asked Massey. The most recent example of the need for education in that area occurred during Prime Minister Mulroney's visit to Washington in March. Canadian media repeatedly described his meeting with President Reagan as a "summit," but nowhere was that description used in the United States; for Americans, a summit means something of a different order of magnitude. The New York Times put the matter in perspective with its headline, "Reagan, with Canadian, Backs Two-Nation Report on Acid Rain." Perhaps even more moving was the repeated reference by one U.S. senator to "Prime Minister Mulroney."

John Fieldhouse, who is responsible for end of Pennsylvania Avenue and mix it up with the senators and representatives in Congress. This discreet diplomacy was in keeping with the background of our ambassadors, most were career diplomats rather than political appointees. A surprising number, including Ambassador Allan Goffe, have had degrees from Oxford University.

But quiet diplomacy is no longer good enough. Now, says Goffe, any Canadian ambassador who doesn't devote as much time to Congress as to the administration would not be effective. Goffe, a keen student of the American constitution and its balance of powers, cites two main reasons for the increased attention to
The power of Congress was strengthened, and that of the president weakened, after the misadventures of Watergate and Vietnam. The new reality was forcibly brought home to Canada in 1979, when an East Coast fisheries treaty, painstakingly negotiated with the administration, was defeated in the Senate.

The other change resulted from a reform of congressional procedures, resulting in the elimination of the old seniority system under which the chairmen of powerful committees were selected according to length of service. Under this hierarchical system, there were only a handful of key players, with whom discussion had to take place. Now, the system is decentralized and fragmented, and access to a wide range of politicians on Capitol Hill is essential. An issue that affects Canada can be dealt with by a dozen different committees, and we have to reach out to all of them," says Cotte.

"But why entertainment is important, to bring these people together. Access is the most important thing here."

Of the 50 or so issues that currently need resolution, the majority involve trade. Canada and the United States are by far each other's best customers. 75 percent of Canadian exports, amounting to one-quarter of our gross national product, go to the United States. And between two million and three million jobs in the United States depend on goods and services that we import from us.

"Public opinion polls show The Wall Street Journal in 1980 revealed just how imperfectly understood this situation is: only 16 percent of Americans polled identified Canada as the biggest trading partner of the United States. The majority thought it was Japan. Trade questions take up much of the energy of the time. Today's priority is the recent attempts in Congress to restrict lumber imports from British Columbia. But there is no shortage of other issues -- acid rain and related pollution controversies, such as toxic wastes in the Valdosta and St. Clair river, nuclear waste near the Canadian border, Arctic sovereignty, energy questions, pharmaceutical prices, border broadcasting restrictions and water levels in the Great Lakes to name a few examples."

"A key approach to the visit of Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau on his trip to the United States is the way we deal with the Russians. His job is to ensure that the ambassador seizes and is seen by the right people on Capitol Hill. Ludicrous is on a first-name basis with many key people in the United States. Congressmen are looking for a strong man to deal with in his negotiations."

"An aggressive stance on behalf of the key figures on the Hill. Ludicrous and his staff are responsible for sounding the alarm when any of the 100 senators or 335 representatives introduce a bill that might affect Canadians in some way. When I spoke to him recently there were more than 200 such bills before Congress. Their progress through the 267 committees and subcommittees is tracked by computer, in addition, there is a cross-check every five years on the Congressional Record every day."

"The value of Ludicrous's thorough approach was more vivid in recent months as Canada's dialogue with the United States became more vigorous than it has been for a long time: issues of free trade, subsidies and the role of consultant Michael Deezer pushed their way onto front pages in both countries. There must have been moments when some old hands in the external affairs department wondered if the old days were the good days when we were taken for granted, at least we weren't controversial."

"Canada has also been promoted by the counsellor for cultural affairs, René Picard. He has succeeded in making the promotion of Canadian culture in Washington a top priority. In the first three months of this year, for example, the Stratford Shakespearean Company, the Montreal Symphony and the Festival of Canadian Films drew good crowds and positive reviews in the U.S. capital. And huette proposed a historic day of media interviews when she promoted her most recent novel, The Handmaid's Tale."

"My impression is that the visit of pianist Louis Lortie when no local agent was interested in booking the relatively unknown Canadian musician. He hired the hall, paid Lortie's fee, looked after publicity, and got a capacity audience."

"Ambassador Gallant is one of the busiest men in a busy city, but he thrives on work. In addition to his demanding Washington schedule, he makes about 25 to 30 speeches a year throughout the United States. Then there's the job of running the embassy itself -- an operation that costs Canadian taxpayers $4 million a year. A couple of times a week he gets together with the heads of the five divisions -- economic, political, public affairs, administration and defence. The Washington embassy staff is the largest of any Canadian diplomatic post, and its organization reflects its complexity. In descending order of rank under the ambassador the embassy consists of a diplomatic side, three ministers, two minister-counsellors, 23 counselors, nine first secretaries, two second secretaries, one third secretary and six attachés. The military side, the ambassador enjoys the support of a defence attaché (a major general) with a staff of 11. At least the ambassador doesn't have responsibility for the 10 Canadian consulates in various American cities. They have a good deal of autonomy and report directly to Ottawa."

"In the old days it was possible to monitor the volume of commercial traffic between the embassy and Ottawa, but that's impossible now. The link is provided by bulk-purchase long-distance lines, which are in constant use."

"But the old etiquette of daily diplomacy still persists. Every Thursday, a courier flies from Ottawa to Washington, taking classified and other urgent documents to be cabled or sent over the wire for approval. He returns to Ottawa the same day."

"Ambassadors and senior staff members are normally appointed to major posts like Washington for four years. Ambassasador Gallant, appointed late in 1981, has exceeded that term. He is a hard act to follow. When I saw him recently, I asked him what he thought of Charles Michalski's memo that there are old diplomats and bold diplomats, but no old, bold diplomats. Gallant, who was 68, smiled and said, "I may change that."

"Vincent Massey, who would have been comfortable with the Congress of Vienna in 1814, would probably disapprove of such brashness. But the decorous era of straight diplomacy, which served Canada well in Washington in the past, now exists only as a ghostly presence at 1785 Massachusetts Avenue, flickering through the stately halls in the dark of night. The new flamboyant style may appeal to traditionalists, but it works. It is entirely appropriate that Canadians are setting the pace for the rest of Washington's diplomatic community; after all, we have the most at stake -- our future."

"The Mackenzie King Estate -- or Kingsmere as it is more often called, after the area in which it lies -- straddles along the southern boundary of the Gatineau Park, across the Ottawa River from the capital. Like the man who acquired it, Kingsmere is a puzzling combination of many things. The 253-hectare estate includes a mansion, and a boat house on the shore of a modest lake, two comfortably respectable country residences (Mountside and The Farm), farmland, rolling lawns, formal gardens, and a picturesque landscape featuring a 126-acre lake.

"The zoning of the property for official use in 1959, and the purchase of the estate by King in 1960, were the two major events in Kingsmere's history."

"The estate was originally the summer residence of the late Sir William Meredith, a former Canadian ambassador to Japan. After Meredith's death in 1931, his widow rented the property to various government departments, but in 1959 it was acquired by the federal government for official use."

"Kingsmere is not a showplace. The house was built in 1914 on a design by Edward Maxwell, and contains many fine pieces of furniture and art works. The property is maintained by the Department of National Resources, but it is open to the public on a limited basis."

"The house is furnished with many original pieces of furniture, including a desk belonging to King himself. There are also many original works of art, including a painting by Sir Winston Churchill, and a portrait of the King by the Canadian artist George Mullen."

"The estate is open to the public on a limited basis, and is a popular destination for tourists and locals alike. It is a place of relaxation and beauty, a true gem of Ottawa's rural landscape. Kingsmere is a testament to the legacy of Mackenzie King, and a reminder of the importance of preserving the natural beauty of our country.
MOORSIDE: acquired by Mackenzie King in 1926, it served as his summer residence for the following decade.

THE FARM: here King died in 1950; today it is the official residence of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

flower beds, paths probing through manicured woods to the Gatineau forests and evocative ruins that bring back distant times and places. All of this was, for King, a summer retreat, an escape from the crowded life of the capital, 20 minutes' drive away. And so it is today for those who come to explore the estate and the mind of the man who created it.

King's love affair with the Gatineau Hills began on Thanksgiving Day, 1900, when he was 26 years old. He and his inseparable friend Albert Harper bicycled there from Ottawa, through Hull and the lowlands, along undulating gravel roads to the village of Chelsea. Was it a name that led them there? King

Mountain or the district of Kingsmere, perhaps — named for reasons now obscure, long before this other King had ever thought of fame.

For King, this encounter with the Gatineau Hills was love at first sight. He and Harper spent much of the next summer there living at "Mrs. Mitou's" boarding house in the village of Kingsmere, just a few kilometres from Chelsea. In those days, a passenger train ran regularly between Ottawa and Chelsea, so the two young men were able to travel daily to their jobs at the department of labor in Ottawa.

That was the only summer Harper was to spend at Kingsmere. In December 1901 he was drowned while trying to save a girl who had fallen through the ice on the Ottawa River during a skating party. The disconsolate King returned to Kingsmere the next summer; there he plunged his roots deep into the Gatineau Hills.

In 1905 he bought from Sir John Bourinot, a writer and historian, the first of a number of pieces of property that would form his estate. On it he built a charming clapboard cottage he called Kingswood; it was so small that when he had a guest to stay he would sleep in a tent. Over the years he expanded Kingswood substantially, and in 1922 he bought a neighboring cottage, which he used as guest accommodation. Two years later he acquired, for $3800, a further three-and-a-half hectares of land and the summer home he named Moorside. Then, in 1927, he became the owner of the old homestead he called The Farm and another summer home, Shady Hill, which was demolished in 1970. Throughout this period, King lived at Kingswood each summer, devoting his spare time to the meticulous development of his estate. He added rockeries and fountains, bridges and paths, carefully cultivated lawns and tended flower beds. Though he bought no more buildings, he continued to buy small parcels of land for the next few years, and in 1935 he began to collect the stone ruins that would find a permanent resting place at Kingsmere.

King began his collection quite by chance. One day in 1935 he happened to pass an Ottawa house that was being demolished. Impressed by a semicircular stone window, he offered the developer $50 for it on the spot. The developer then offered to provide, with out charge, enough stone to allow King to construct a building to house the window. King's fancy took flight and he made plans to build "something in the nature of a chapel or library or hall or all combined — a combination of the Parthenon at Athens with a cathedral or abbey." The Gatineau Hills would never have been the same again had the idea not gained the soil.

The next year he acquired the doorway and windows from the demolished Bank of North America in Ottawa. He then turned his attention to relics from the burned Centre Block of Canada's Parliament Buildings and pieces of the British Houses of Parliament that had been removed during routine repairs.

King had less success with his agricultural endeavors than he did in collect ing ruins. He had always had an idyllic view of country life and when he acquired the old homestead in 1927 he decided to maintain it as a farm. He grew vegetables and kept a cow, some horses, chickens, peacocks and bees, as well as a small flock of sheep. Unfortunately, the person King hired to tend the farm knew little about sheep and they didn't flourish. And though his farm never prospered, he maintained it throughout his life.

The homestead dwelling itself — The Farm — underwent extensive modernization during the crucial election campaign of 1935 and seemed to occupy the prime minister's thoughts as much as the prospect of returning to political power — the telegraphic traffic from his campaign train abounded with trivial instructions to the workmen back at Kingsmere.

From 1925 to 1939, King lived at Moorside while at Kingsmere, but once the modernization of The Farm had been completed he made it his Gatineau home, using Moorside only for formal entertaining. He loved Moorside, as he loved all his estate, but The Farm was more comfortable. It was here that he died in 1950. Today, The Farm serves as the official residence of the Speaker of the House of Commons and is open to the public.

In some ways King's affair with the Gatineau Hills was a paradox. He was enchanted by their rugged wilderness yet was not content to leave them as they were — he strove to improve on nature by importing not just his own civilization but the shadows of past cultures. He planted acres from the old royal oaks of Windsor Great Park and walnuts from George Washington's estate in Virginia. For the most part, however, the roots he sank into the hard rock of the Gatineau Hills were, like his own roots, British. If King wasn't obsessed with that country he was certainly passionate about it — he loved its culture, history and, perhaps most of all, its pastoral landscapes. That love is clearly visible at Kingsmere. The rolling fields and the meticulously tended lawns were the embodiment of Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard."

"Nothing could be more beautiful than Kingsmere is just now," King wrote in 1933, "Lovelier far than anything at Southampton."

With this love for the soft landscape of the English countryside, why did he choose to build his estate in the rugged Gatineau Hills? He could have sought his ancestral resurrection in the gentle pastures of the Rideau Valley or even along the Ottawa River. They were almost as convenient to reach, and both had known much longer: the civilization of the land of man. Perhaps it was the isolation that appealed to him — his mark would be clearly visible, which seemed important to King. As early as 1926, he wrote in his diary, "It will make a wonderful park to give to the nation some day, a true memorial."

But as much as King wanted to be remembered, he wanted this land to be
preserved. In early 1935, while still leader of the opposition, he raised in the House of Commons the future of what we know today as the Gatineau Park. He spoke forcefully, if never eloquently, in favor of government intervention to preserve the Gatineau area. To his diary he confided that if he were a wealthy man, he would buy the forests outright. In May of that year he attended the inaugural meeting of the Federal Woodlands Preservation League, of which he, like R.B. Bennett, prime minister from 1930 to 1935, became honorary president.

King worked unflaggingly to move the provincial government to plant trees in the Gatineau region and stock its parks with fish. He convinced the Canadian Pacific Railway to route its track in such a way as to avoid damaging the Gatineau forests and often directed the reforestation of the hills himself. In fact, many a sapling was held in King's stubby fingers while a surprised workman dug a hole for it. When King regained power in 1935 his dream trials took form. The Federal District Commission, a group created for the purpose of improving the capital and its vicinity, was by that time empowered to acquire land in Quebec as well as Ontario. By 1939 it owned 6,500 of the 32,000 hectares of land that today form the Gatineau Park.

Not even the Second World War moved King from his self-appointed task of building a park for the people of Canada. He continued to invest his time and energies at Kingsmere. Late one night in 1941, when Europe was in flames, a cable reached Lester Pearson, then the superintendant of Canada House in London, summoning him to return to Canada to attend to a "secret and most immediate" mission. But instead of a task that might turn the fortunes of war, he received a request from his prime minister for some stones from the Houses of Parliament in London, which had just been bombed. Though, as Pearson notes in his memoirs, the office of works was overwhelmed with repairs vital to the very life of London, it patiently complied with the request.

"This heavy and historic freight," he wrote, "was shipped through the sub-marines to add a new distinction to Mr. King's ruined at Kingsmere." Unfortunately these relics never emerged from storage at Kingsmere.

Although it is unlikely that King was ever struck by the enormity of that request, for some reason he never added another relic to his collection. For a while he thought of building a towering war memorial — larger than the one at Vimy Ridge in France — that would stretch for 300 metres along the side of King Mount and be visible from Parliament Hill. He eventually dropped the grandiose plan, and the embellishments that King added to his estate during his declining years were small and personal.

Though a very private man, King seemed to take great pleasure in the enjoyment of the Gatineau Park by the thousands of people who came to share it. And although he wasn't an athletic man himself, he welcomed skiers on his own land and liked to see hikers using the trails he had meticulously laid out with his long-suffering staff. Perhaps most of all he rejoiced in seeing young cyclists discovering Kingsmere as two young men had done in the spring of their lives, back when the century was new.

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After the war, my wife and I were two such visitors. Unlettered, we wandered the lawns of Moosonee, trying to understand this prime minister of ours who rejoiced in the ruins of civilization in these primeval hills.

One afternoon we took pictures as the titter sun filtered uncertainly through the old stone arches. We gave them to the prime minister, who seemed deeply moved. Out of them grew an unlikely friendship for we were, he said, the first to understand his ruins.

My wife and I shared with King a

friend, Joan Pattison. She was, perhaps, King's closest female friend and acted as his official hostess for many state functions. She and her family lived at Kingsmere in Shady Hill, which they rented from King.

It was she who introduced us to Kingsmere's remarkable telephone system. King had a telephone installed at Moosonee in 1929 but the trunk for separate lines seemed far too high to him. He therefore ran extensions from his phone at Moosonee to The Farm and Shady Hill. Thus, when I innocently phoned our friends to arrange a visit, a man's voice bade me hang up and call again — he knew the call wasn't for him and would leave it for the Pattisons to answer. It was the prime minister of Canada saving 5% a month.

Our final meeting with King took place on a perfect Saturday afternoon in July 1946. Truly Kingsmere looked "farther far than anything at Southampton..." As we strode from Shady Hill to Moosonee, we could see his short, unimposing figure watching us from the steps of the verandah at Moosonee. He greeted us with warmth and apparent enthusiasm. We were two very young people whom he had briefly befriended, perhaps because we asked nothing, perhaps because he needed no defences with us. He invited us into Moosonee, proudly showing us the rooms and numerous articles, mostly gifts from foreign statesmen, which he cherished as personal tributes. We took tea informally, drifting with him, cups in hand, from the porch to the entrance steps where we sat together. I was young enough to be overwhelmed by the casualness of our chat with the prime minister of Canada, sharing a wooden step with him. "Mr. and Mrs. Phillips," we can hear him say with an effervescence that heralded some surprise in the East Block, where I worked as a foreign-service officer. I was always, in the custom of the time, just "Phillips." I have something to show you.

He opened an envelope and unfolded a dispatch from the Canadian ambassador in Greece, reporting that the Greek government had decided to rename a street in Athens after him. "Isn't it wonderful," King exploded with delight. "And here you can see a map he has enclosed. Here, Mrs. Phillips, do come closer. Can you see?" His thumb had slipped from the top of the plan to follow a route that ran across the map. "It really is a very important street, I think. You can see how close it goes to the Acropolis. Can you see?" Together we held the map and for a moment shared a small triumph.

I don't know how much time slipped by before our protests, we took our leave. The prime minister strolled along with us, stout walking stick in hand, past way back to the Pattisons' home. We parted at the fence with pressing invitations to return. When we reached our destination, we looked back for the last time and saw the enigmatic figure of the perfect English countryside that had been wrested from the primeval hills of the Gatineau.
HALF A CENTURY OF HOCKEY
Imperial and hockey celebrate a golden anniversary
BY VICTOR PADDY
ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM MCNEELY

It began, simply enough, with the voice of announcer Charles Jennings: "Your Imperial Oil hockey broadcast—bring ing you Foster Hewitt." Then, with more than one million people listening in Canada alone, the clear, compelling voice of Foster Hewitt crackled through a 26-station radio network. "Hello—Canada and hockey fans in the United States and Newfoundland." Yes, Newfoundland. It was, after all, only 1936, and Newfoundland was 13 years away from becoming Canada's tenth province. In 1936, North Americans were still reeling from the Great Depression; Rudy Vallee was the year's star attraction at the Canadian National Exhibition; Grade A White Imperial gas sold for 12½ cents a gallon — plus tax; Edward VIII had just abdicated for true love; and an oil company was beginning a courtship of its own.

Fifty years later, in a marketing marriage unparalleled on this continent, Imperial is about to enter its second half-century arm in arm with the game that has come to symbolize Canada for much of the world. Like any marriage, there have been changes, headaches, even separation — when Imperial dropped its sponsorship of Hockey Night in Canada from 1976 to 1982. But even in those troubled years, new bonds were developing between the game and the company well beyond professional hockey. And today, while Imperial (through its marketing arm, Esso Petroleum Canada) is once again a major sponsor of Hockey Night in Canada, it has also become the largest corporate sponsor of amateur hockey in the country. 

Add a coast-to-coast network of dealers and agents coaching and sponsoring community hockey from peewee to old timers, and it's clear the union not only endures, it's on a second honeymoon.

Still, it might never have begun had it not been for two unilateral business decisions, one made by an American, the other by a Canadian. General Motors Products of Canada, Limited, had sponsored Hockey Night in Canada from its beginning in 1931 until 1936. That year, however, an American sales director, newly arrived in Canada, decided hockey wasn't right for General Motors and ended the relationship. Waiting in the wings, contract in hand, was the Canadian, Frank Prendergast, assistant to the president of Imperial. The actual courtship was brief and, according to Prendergast's son Walter, was consummated over the phone: "My father had a friend, Pas Passmore, at the advertising agency. He told Passmore to call if the hockey sponsorship ever came loose. Well, Passmore called the summer of '36 and said, 'Frank, she's boozin. General Motors is dropping out.'"

"Sold," my father said. Then he went to Imperial's board and said, "I just bought the hockey broadcasts.""

And the board's reaction? "Well," says Walter Prendergast, "if you were on the board and a fellow had just spent your money without telling you, you'd want to give him a little kick, but if you knew it was a damned good thing, you wouldn't want to kick too hard."

Frank Prendergast not only brought
hockey to Imperial, he gave Hockey Night in Canada one of its great traditions —
the flying空气质量. At the end of every game, an idea born from a desire to bring Imperial’s 3 Star Grand Prize winning beer to Canadians’ growing legions of listeners. By the close of the 1930s, the broadcast's Saturday-night show was listened to by an estimated million Canadians. They gathered in groups on cold winter evenings, huddled close to the radio, trying to get some warmth and as much space as possible in their overcrowded houses. This was especially true in the northern parts of the country, where the winter months were long and cold. 

Imperial had been calling NHL games under the banner of "Hockey Night in Canada: Imperial Oil". In 1955, they decided to broaden their reach and introduced "Hockey Night in Canada: Imperial Oil and Foster Hewitt". This move allowed them to reach a broader audience, as Foster Hewitt was a well-known and respected personality in Canadian sports broadcasting. His voice and his reputation helped to boost the popularity of the show. 

Foster Hewitt was the voice of the game, known for his descriptive and entertaining commentary. His voice was the soundtrack to the game, providing listeners with a vivid and detailed picture of the action on the ice. He was also known for his vibrant and engaging personality, which helped to create a sense of excitement and anticipation for the upcoming games.

The show began with a humorous introduction, often featuring a picture of Foster Hewitt as a cartoon character. This helped to set the tone for the show and engage the audience. The commentary was followed by the game itself, which was broadcast live from various locations across Canada. Foster Hewitt's voice was the primary way that fans could follow the game, and his descriptions and insights helped to make the experience more enjoyable for everyone.

It was a time when families gathered around the radio to listen to the games. The shows were broadcast from a variety of locations, including stadiums, arenas, and even private homes, providing fans with a unique and exciting perspective on the games. The show was known for its ability to engage and entertain fans of all ages, and it quickly became one of the most popular and beloved shows on the air.

The popularity of Hockey Night in Canada continued to grow throughout the 1950s and 1960s, and it remains a beloved tradition in Canadian sports broadcasting today. It is a testament to Foster Hewitt's skill as a commentator and his ability to captivate and engage his audience that the show has endured for so many years. The legacy of Hockey Night in Canada lives on, as it continues to bring fans together and provide them with a unique perspective on the game of hockey. It is a true Canadian institution, and it will be remembered for generations to come.
In Closing

There are times when I think that the age of courtesy is in such steep decline that any man caught being well mannered, no matter how well intentioned, runs the danger of being handed before the tribunal of what is in and what is out, where he may well be told to mend his style or risk being publically named a sissy.

Yesterday, for example, while I was on a streetcar, a man stood up to give his seat to someone needing it, and he seemed to feel so awkward — as if he had done something demanding immediate explanation — that he started mumbling to the man next to him that, after all, he was getting out at the next stop. What we have come to call common courtesy, if not altogether rejected, seems to have been pushed to the edge of life — a custom practised by people unable to shake the past with its Victorian values, so many of which are no longer worthwhile.

Often when the subject of courtesy comes up, someone begins decrying the young, something I’m sure has been going on for most of this century, as each generation finds fault with the next. But it is not the young — not just the young anyway. Consider, for instance, the streets, which, given the attitude of innumerable people — motorists, cyclists, motorcyclists and pedestrians — have become almost a stage on which discourtesy is a regular performance. A man I know, who is head of the traffic department in the country’s largest police department, claims that no single group is responsible for the discourteousness of the street, which have virtually taken the pleasure out of driving or hiking and, worst of all, strolling. “It’s business people who are late for a meeting,” he was saying the other day. “It’s realtors trying to close one more sale. It’s young people, middle-aged people and most people in between. I think it’s partly the fact that life is putting more pressure on people. It has speeded up. But at the heart of it is the fact that we don’t seem to think of the other person, whether we are at the wheel or on foot.”

I thought a bit about the last part of his idea, that ordinary thoughtlessness is at the heart of street discourtesy. It seems to me he is right, not just about street discourtesy but the broad universe of bad manners in general. In fact, if it were somehow possible to bring about a rebirth of thoughtfulness, we might have a badly needed guide to just what constitutes good manners in the modern world. It is not as simple as it once was. The emphasis on using the correct fork seems a bit silly to some people, and opening doors for women strikes more and more of them as subby sexist. But the notion that out of ordinary thoughtfulness, a person, male or female, should offer a seat to someone who needs it — an elderly person, a handicapped person — seems an appropriate principle for everyone.

There are probably as many reasons for the decline of thoughtfulness as there are flavors of ice cream: the legacy of the sixties with its slogan,

“Do your own thing”; the influence of the seventies in which self-centredness seemed to become a way of life; the effect of a lot of television, which often portrays discourtesy, especially on the telephone, as glamorous; the growth of the city in Canada, where we are all strangers and are therefore less accountable for our rudeness. But for all of this, it may well be that the true seed of thoughtlessness is our ever-widening acceptance of aggression. There was a time when if you spoke of people as aggressive you meant that they were good performers — pursuing new sales for the company or new members for the association. I don’t mean aggressive in that sense; I mean the kind of aggression that causes people, or indeed groups of people, to ride rudely over others while wearing disdain for them as a badge. Not long ago, a woman I know who was taking driving lessons in a nearby city was rebuffed by her instructor for not being aggressive enough, even though she was driving close to the speed limit. “You’ve got to get out there,” he kept saying. “Get out there and let them know who’s in charge.” When she mentioned this to me I tried to remember the last time I had heard someone in a position of public influence speak of defensive driving. If it’s a phrase I rarely hear anymore. It seems to have laded as a new driving style has emerged, one that is more aggressive, more thoughtless and more offensive.

All of this reminds me of the old maxim: “Take what you want,” said God, “take it and pay for it.” In short, there is a cost for our discourtesy, and it is exacted from every one of us, not just those who practice discourtesy or endure it, but society at large, which is coarsened and diminished by it. This seems especially true of institutions. In the last few years, more and more people who care about Parliament, some on the floor of the House of Commons, some in the galleries, have become seriously worried that the rudeness of some exchanges is endangering not just the stature of Parliament, but its effectiveness as a forum for enlightened and constructive discussion. Civilized debate depends upon civilized language, which in turn calls for men and women who understand that simple courtesy is still a virtue.

The fact is, courtesy is not a decoration like icing on a cake. And it is not simply etiquette, like protocol at a state dinner. Courtesy goes beneath the surface of life and is as crucial to our lives together as oil is to a smoothly running engine. It keeps the various parts of a society moving in harmony and in the best interests of all. It seems to me that the decline of courtesy is a sign of something far more serious: the decline of the things that reveal the better side of our nature — the capacity for caring, not just about one another but about the state of things in general. It is a sign of lives on the edge of resignation.

Perhaps that is why it matters so much that we do not give in to the prevailing tendency, that we remain like a woman I reached on the telephone a few days ago in a large corporation when I was trying, without much luck, to reach a man I wanted to speak with. I’m sure she was as busy, hurried and, for all I know, worried as many other people in today’s world, but in her voice and in her manner were the old courtesies that many of us remember, which have a way of making disappointments easier to bear and difficulty easier to surmount. She said there was surely something she could do to help, and as she said it I could tell she was not merely putting up a false front but was probably already thinking of ways to solve the problem. When she asked where I could be reached that afternoon and did it matter if the gentleman called that evening, I felt that the age of courtesy was not dead and that she and perhaps countless others were still doing what they could not just to make our days and tasks more pleasant but society more worthwhile for us all.