

and resulted from an announcement by the Department that the Trade Commission was open. Gallow and Arnold spent the first three months of their posting just acknowledging receipt of the letters, explaining to inquirers that they did not yet have the time to know what firms were even in business in Hong Kong, let alone what their needs were. Mr. Gallow recalls that it was frustrating to "see those mounds and mounds of letters and realize that it would be many months before we could accumulate the information to enable us to provide answers. We could not turn to business organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce because they too were in the process of getting their operations underway. The help provided by Canadian Pacific and the three Canadian insurance companies – Sun Life, Manufacturers' Life and Confederation Life – was very encouraging, but did little to diminish the piles of inquiries".

The housing situation was equally acute. Some 60 percent of the European housing was destroyed, and with the Services needing more accommodation onshore, the Government ordered that all hotel rooms be used as small dormitories. The return of European women and children to the Colony was halted until late 1946, but even with this measure, schools and private houses had to be requisitioned. Elvie Arnold and the Gallows were allotted "bed space" in the Peninsula Hotel where even the corridors served as dormitories. Later the trio moved to the Repulse Bay Hotel, which was further away from the office but afforded some relief from the chaos.

Transportation in the Colony was especially disrupted by the War. In 1941, the Japanese had taken all the private cars and buses to Tokyo, and the Star Ferry had lost all its vessels. Buses were few, only six in Hong Kong, and six in Kowloon. The Armed Services turned over some of their trucks to be used as civilian transport. In spite of this, the Trade Commissioners managed to make the journey from Repulse Bay everyday to their two desks in the Canadian Pacific office, and assume near normal operation.

One of the first tasks that the new Trade Commissioner, Kenneth F. Noble, had to supervise when he succeeded Gallow in 1947, was the re-burial of Canadian war dead at Sai Wan. On Dominion Day, July 1st,

1947, over 300 Canadian soldiers were reburied at Sai Wan cemetery. A few months earlier, the hated Japanese Victory monument on Mount Cameron had been demolished. The Colony was putting the War behind it, looking towards an uncertain future.

Noble was joined by W.E. Jolliffe from the Shanghai office, with the latter becoming Assistant Trade Commissioner. Jolliffe, born in China of missionary parents, had endured an increasingly beleaguered Shanghai in the company of the Far Eastern correspondent, Gordon Sinclair. He left the Trade Commissioner Service to go into private business in the Colony soon after.

To replace him, Ottawa cross-posted T.R.G. Fletcher from Melbourne. He remained with the office from 1949 to 1956. Tom Fletcher was a graduate in Commerce from the University of Toronto, and had joined the Department of Trade after service in the Canadian Army. Milton Blackwood then arrived in 1952, on his first overseas posting.

The office was located on the first floor at the rear of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank Building where its occupants endured the din of construction of the stolid Bank of China building next door. The Trade Commissioner had his own office, the general staff were crowded together in theirs, and there were two small rooms by the main entrance – one for the Assistant Trade Commissioner, and the other for visitors.

By the standards of the day, it was suitable, though austere. There were no curtains or drapes, and no carpets on the linoleum floors. Stout Canadian built furniture, and the inevitable Group of Seven reproductions, made up the whole scene. Fortunately, the building was centrally air-conditioned. Accommodation was still very difficult to obtain. Fletcher at first lived in the Repulse Bay Hotel, and then for more than a year, at the Peninsula. Later as more buildings became available, he was able to rent an apartment in the lower Mid-levels – after a payment of "key money" to the landlord. Although this was in keeping with local custom, the Department of Trade refused to acknowledge it, and he was not reimbursed. No furniture or appliances were provided until 1952, when the purchase of air-conditioners was approved.

There was a perennial water shortage, and vegetables had to be soaked in a solution