



George James

—Photo by Karsh.

NAME IN THE NEWS

One of the Leading Squires in the Garden of Canadian Journalism

By COROLYN COX

"THROUGH his efforts the weekly editor has left his community better off than he found it." This, according to George James, editor of Bowmanville's famous weekly, *The Canadian Statesman*, is the finest obituary hoped for by the 700 editors of rural weekly newspapers dotted across Canada. Certainly these men play a personal, close-to-the-soil part in the growth and development of Canada that is entirely different from the roaring editorial might of the metropolitan daily. The weekly publisher, James points out, when selling space to national advertisers emphasizes "intense human reader interest in preference to the cold, calculating mathematical mass production monstrosity called milline rate." (Milline" being the technical advertiser's term for "per million readers.")

James is certainly a master of this technique and both in himself and what he has done with his paper typical of an era of Canadian history that is rather quickly passing.

Born on a Weekly

George James was born into the *Canadian Statesman*. The James family have owned and edited it for over sixty of its ninety-one years of existence. Most of these small town weeklies were founded as an offshoot to a printing plant, owned and edited by printers. George's father, M. A. James, was a school teacher, acquired the *Statesman* in order to have an organ through which to express his views, and an instrument with which to accomplish things he felt should be done in education and in the community. This objective probably accounts for the early rise of the paper to a position of considerable editorial importance beyond the scope of many weeklies.

Mr. James still owns the house in which he was born in 1886. As he came up through Bowmanville public and high schools, he inhabited an atmosphere of Methodist repression that we often forget has so widely

influenced Canadian men of affairs. George was given a good thrashing during his teens for just going down to the Town Hall to look at a dance. Home, school and church were the limits of respectability, the preoccupation of the paper.

Fenced-in

George was a quick-brained, thrusting youth and they "fenced him in." He played football and hockey hard, thought he might go in for medicine and registered at Toronto University. Meantime he tried out a short business course in Toronto, took a job with J. J. Gibbons Advertising Agency checking department, spent two years contacting newspapers, never returned to the University project. George had learned to set type at the age of eleven. One summer holiday in his late teens he set up and dished the type as well as operated an old Washington press for a neighboring editor in Newcastle, received \$15 a week for the job and spent the spoils to go to the World's Series at Detroit in 1909. Finding himself "bust", he did a thriving trade "scalping" tickets to the games at fifty cents, reselling them at three dollars. He made \$90 on his operations, blew it all on a trip to Toronto and Rochester, N.Y.

From that time on he pursued a post-graduate course in "life" through three or four trips a year to New York where kindly married sisters saved him living expenses and always came across with a loan when he was too broke to get home. He took in everything, from Lefty Louis's Cafe to the Horse Shows and the Metropolitan Opera—but he never told his father why it was so interesting to visit his sisters!

Years rolled on, George had a short session with military duty during the last war, got as far as England, held the rank of Captain and Quartermaster of his Battalion. The *Statesman*, under James ownership, either absorbed or saw go out of business

seven competitors, became and remained the sole advertising newspaper medium for the Bowmanville purchasing area.

When James senior decided to retire and turn over the *Statesman* to his two sons, George settled down on the paper for life. His brother was the mechanical man of the team and also the contact with the public, went to all the funerals and community gatherings. People didn't know George. He began by trying to ape his father's editorial writing of "The Editor Talks" column, in which James senior had been the pontificating school teacher. Finally someone persuaded him to relax and be himself.

After his brother died in 1929, George had also to come out into public affairs. He wished he'd gone through the chairs as a Mason, to learn to talk on his feet. However, he plunged in, bore the miseries of cold perspiration every time he had to second a motion in meeting, made Rotary his hobby, developed into one of the best after-dinner speakers "the boys" hear over a wide territory. He has never, however, lost his dread of having to speak in public.

A Public Figure

James took a hand in local politics, first as Reeve, and sat in the Council for ten years. He was elected Mayor of Bowmanville twice just 25 years after his father received the same recognition by his fellow citizens. He was Treasurer of his church for fourteen years, only recently resigned.

For twenty-six years now the Canadian Weekly Newspapers Association has registered the growing self-consciousness of the weeklies all over Canada. They number over 700, as against 90-odd dailies. Together the weeklies reach over two and a half million readers. They are now fully aware of themselves as a force in public affairs, move the annual meetings of their Association from one corner of Canada to another as a policy aimed at national unity. George James has played an important part in the development of this organization, has been a Director for ten years, was chosen its President in 1938. He developed an important project during his term of office. He canvassed 50 leaders in education, business, politics, asking what service to Canada the weeklies could perform. Out of the 47 replies received he built a series of articles that received wide attention in the weekly press, as well as favorable editorial comment in the dailies. He was also that year President of Rotary and has a perfect attendance of nearly 17 years.

At age of 34 George James married Sarah Woods of Owen Sound. Of their children one son, Bill, is a Major in the Calgary Tanks, having entered the war as a buck private, and reached his present rank at the record age of 23; and a daughter, Ruth, is training in Toronto General Hospital, one more recruit for the serious nurse shortage in Canada; the second son, John, is ten years of age.

Wartime Labors

James has plugged away steadily at newspaper editors' special war jobs. He served time in Montreal on the Ration Administration's Public Relations and Publicity. He is a member of the War Finance Publishers Committee. Every day of the year he, like all the 700 other weekly editors, works on local projects and overall general war effort publicity.

Recently service clubs have given young men of these weekly communities the experience in group activity formerly found in fraternal societies. Now apparently more and more of this is being done in farm forums, public affairs councils, adult education organizations, and other groups of men and women acting together.

Of the weekly newspapers' pastures, the *Christian Science Monitor* has said, "turning from the city newspapers to the small town press exchanges that come to the editor's desk is like stepping from the slums, full of vice, into an old-fashioned garden sweet with lavender and thyme, and the scent of perennial flowers."

DEAR MR. EDITOR

Are a Man's Opinions His Own or The Boss's? Salary by Sex

Editor, SATURDAY NIGHT:

A REMARKABLE letter appeared in your issue of February 3. In it Mr. David Lewis pointed out that Mr. M. S. Nestor, the well-known New Zealand economist and journalist, who wrote so brilliantly on New Zealand conditions in an earlier issue, was Research Director at the national office of the New Zealand National Party.

The comment may be quite fair but it does not constitute an answer to the arguments of Mr. Nestor. I doubt if Mr. Lewis considers that it does.

In his concluding paragraph Mr. Lewis writes:

"I think that your readers are entitled to know who Mr. Nestor is in order that they may better judge the extent to which they may rely on his objectivity and disinterestedness."

Is he asking that in reading his own statements we should apply this test? Should we not rather consider that they reflect the real views of Mr. Lewis, and that the same faith may be placed in Mr. Nestor.

Ottawa, Ont.

R. J. DEACMAN

A Matter of Smearing

Editor, SATURDAY NIGHT:

IT WAS surprising and discouraging to read an editorial headed "Smearing Britain" in your issue of February 10. SATURDAY NIGHT has a reputation for trying to be fair to its opponents, but on that occasion it seemed to be a bit forgetful of its own good name.

Of all papers, SATURDAY NIGHT should be the last to take a hand in "smearing" free expression of opinion, especially when that opinion is honest, loyal, and well-informed. No person of sound intelligence who has listened to Mr. Elmore Philpott of Vancouver and Mr. George Ferguson of Winnipeg can really believe that they are guilty of "smearing Britain," or of "malignancy," or of "marplotting," or of "sinister suspicions." It is true that you may reasonably disagree with them when they find grave faults in the political policies of the British Government and of Mr. Churchill. But their views have been expressed moderately and in good faith, they have not been ill-informed, and they have been supported, as you must know, by some of the most careful journals and critics on both sides of the water. Perhaps there are circles in Toronto who no longer respect the Atlantic Charter even as a "guide."

Vancouver, B.C.

G. G. SEDGWICK

Sex and Salaries

Editor, SATURDAY NIGHT:

MR. GULSTON'S article (on Feb. 17) "The Fallacy of Equal Pay for Equal Work" raises a number of interesting questions.

If Mr. Gulston is speaking of pay for work, and if his logic is correct and his arguments are sound, the principle should be capable of wider application than merely teachers' salaries.

A canvas by a woman artist, for instance, should be cheaper than a comparable one by a male painter; women doctors and lawyers should be compelled by law to charge lower fees than men in these professions (Mr. Gulston would probably dispose of this point by forbidding women the professions of law and medicine); editors should pay less for stories and articles by women writers; actresses and sopranos should certainly come cheaper than actors and tenors; and if poets starve in garrets, no doubt the hedgerow would be a more suitable locale for the demise of a poetess.

But perhaps Mr. Gulston does not really mean pay for work, but living allowance.

In that case, why not say so? Why wax so eloquent about the plight of the married man, his wife and children forced to live on the pay of an unmarried person, and say nothing at all about the wife with an invalid husband, the widow and her children,

the daughter and her dependent parents, all equally obliged to live on the pay of an unmarried person, a woman's pay at that?

Under the present system of higher pay for men simply because they are males, the greatest beneficiary is the bachelor, who in any economy is the least useful member of the community; while the most discriminated against is the widow, or the unmarried woman with dependents, the most self-sacrificing members of the community.

Is this the system which Mr. Gulston and the Male Secondary School Teachers of Ontario are doing their best to uphold and perpetuate?

MARY ELIZABETH COLMAN
Vancouver, B.C.

A Correction

Editor, SATURDAY NIGHT:

ALTHOUGH I have no special information regarding the situation at Dalhousie referred to in your issue of February 24, and should not wish to enter into discussion regarding it, I feel that I must call attention to an inaccuracy in the article.

Sir Arthur Currie was Principal of McGill from August 1, 1920, until his death on November 30, 1933. Dr. Carleton Stanley was appointed Assistant to the Principal on December 1, 1930, and formally tendered his resignation from this position on July 10, 1931, in order that he might accept the appointment at Dalhousie. In view of the fact that he was Assistant to the Principal for no more than eight months out of Currie's thirteen years of office it seems an unwarranted reflection upon Sir Arthur to say that "without Stanley the famous soldier could scarcely have carried on as successfully as he did".

Also I do not find in the records anything to indicate that after Currie's death the Board of Governors at McGill University sought the release of Dr. Stanley from Dalhousie in order that he might become Sir Arthur's successor.

I hope that you will understand that I call attention to these misstatements, not as an implied criticism of Dr. Stanley. He would I am sure contradict them on his own account if they came to his attention. SATURDAY NIGHT is a publication which might well in some future time be taken as historic source material, and I would not want so erroneous a reflection upon the memory of Sir Arthur to remain uncorrected.

F. CYRIL JAMES
McGill University, Montreal

SATURDAY NIGHT

THE CANADIAN WEEKLY

Established 1887

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Printed and published by

CONSOLIDATED PRESS LIMITED

73 Richmond Street W., Toronto 1, Ont.

Vol. 60, No. 27

Whole No. 2712