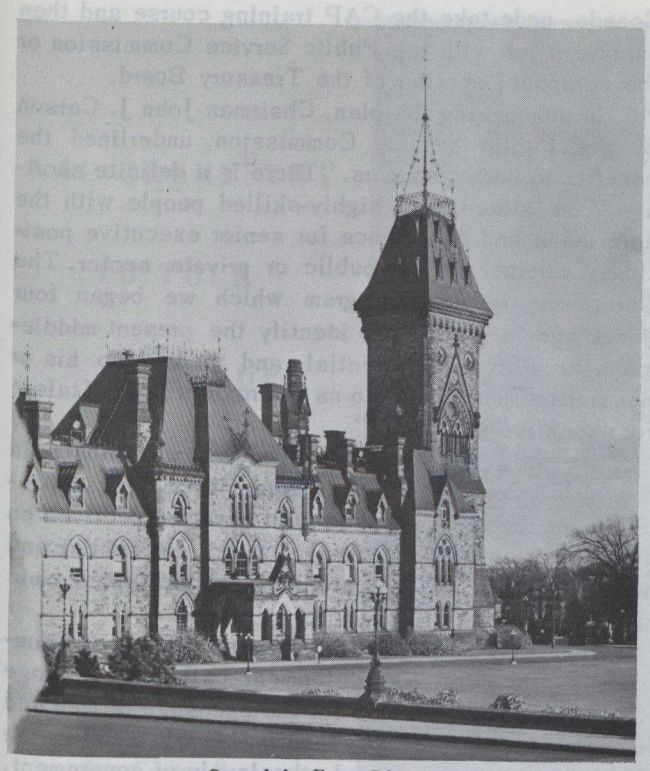

Canada's East Block

EAST BLOCK OPEN TO PUBLIC

The East Block of the Houses of Parliament, one of Canada's oldest buildings, opened its doors to the public on July 1.

The Prime Minister said that the Government's decision to open the building to public view was in response to a request from the Heritage Committee of the National Capital, which is helping the Privy Council Office organize tours of the building – the scene of Government decision-making and headquarters of Government leaders since Confederation.

On Saturdays, Sundays and holidays, to avoid interfering with the conduct of Government business, visitors will be permitted into the Privy Council Chamber, which has been restored to the appearance of its early days, the Privy Council anteroom, the Prime Minister's office, which has been occupied by almost all Canadian Prime Ministers, and the office of the Secretary of State for External Affairs – once the office of Sir John A. Macdonald.

Often called "the most historic building remaining in Canada in a political sense", the East Block had previously only been open to the public for a brief period during centennial year.

INTERVIEW WITH DISCOVERER OF INSULIN

Toward the end of 1921, the persistent interest of a young Canadian surgeon, Frederick Grant Banting, in research on diabetes was finally rewarded. With his younger collaborator, Charles Herbert Best, he isolated insulin in January 1922, and used it successfully in the treatment of patients. One of the greatest and most dramatic discoveries of modern medicine, it completely transformed the outlook for the majority of sufferers from diabetes.

In a recent interview, Dr. C.H. Best, professor and head of the Banting and Best Department of Medical Research, University of Toronto, since 1941, recounted how he had set out to track down the mysterious substance now known as insulin.

"My work – that is, Fred Banting's and mine – began in May 1921," he said. "It was all initiated by an idea which Banting had that if we tied up the pancreatic ducts, the enzyme-producing cells would degenerate and thus permit the extraction of a hypothetical active principle. This idea had been worked on previously; happily we didn't know about it at the time and so the work was started. It was a combination of surgery and chemistry, and we had our disappointments, but looking back on it, we were fortunate in soon being able to get some positive results."

Best was then only 22; he feels that, scientifically, it was the most exciting period of his life.

Talking about the actual genesis of the discovery, Dr. Best said the idea of starting it was really Fred Banting's. "He was preparing a lecture on diabetes and he came across a passage in a clinical article where, although a patient had gallstones blocking the pancreatic duct, he had not become diabetic. So that put the idea in Fred's mind. But he was a surgeon, and so needed somebody else with experience in biochemistry and physiology to help him. I had just graduated with a degree in those two subjects, and I was interested in diabetes. So that was the way the whole thing started."

Thinking about the order of importance of the difficulties which had to be overcome, Dr. Best said:

"Well, I think that previous people who had tried, and some came very near to discovering insulin, were faced with two main difficulties. First, the lack of experience in surgery, and that Banting certainly had; and then the fact that until almost 1921 no micro-methods for determining blood sugar, ketone bodies and other constituents of the blood had been worked out. We were immensely aided by the fact that the chemists had provided us with extremely good tools. Finally, I think a lot of people were also inhibited by previous failures, and you had to be young and uninhibited. I think, to overlook those things and still go ahead with the hope, almost with the expectation of being successful."

Dr. Best was asked if he had felt a major breakthrough was in view.

(Over)