

# Two Americans say:

## Some professors serve as proconsuls

**EXCALIBUR:** What do you think brings most teaching Americans to Canada?

**PROFESSOR A (political science):** I'm not sure what brings most Americans; there is probably a complex of reasons. There are large numbers of people who come something like the proconsuls of Empire. Some of us, among whom I include myself, come as sort of refugees and will never go back. And there are some people who come because they sort of view Canada as a kind of branch plant of the U.S. From my perspective, it is a more complex phenomena than "why do Americans come up here". I think the question is "what kind of Americans?"

**EXCALIBUR:** You speak of Americans coming over as proconsuls of the Empire — do they manifest themselves at York?

**A:** Sure. They come to show the virtues of American political science — to show the truths of "behavioralism". How does that show up in what they teach?

Well, I think there is a problem with the whole picture of Canadian content. I've observed some of these people and the problem is not just simply to use Canada data, because a lot of people are doing that now. However, they're using it as if it were data collected in the U.S. They're forcing a U.S. model on us...

**EXCALIBUR:** Do you think it would make a great deal of difference if we said, for example, "no more American appointments?"

**A:** Quite clearly, I would be opposed to no more American appointments. I could agree with no more proconsuls, no more branch plant types.

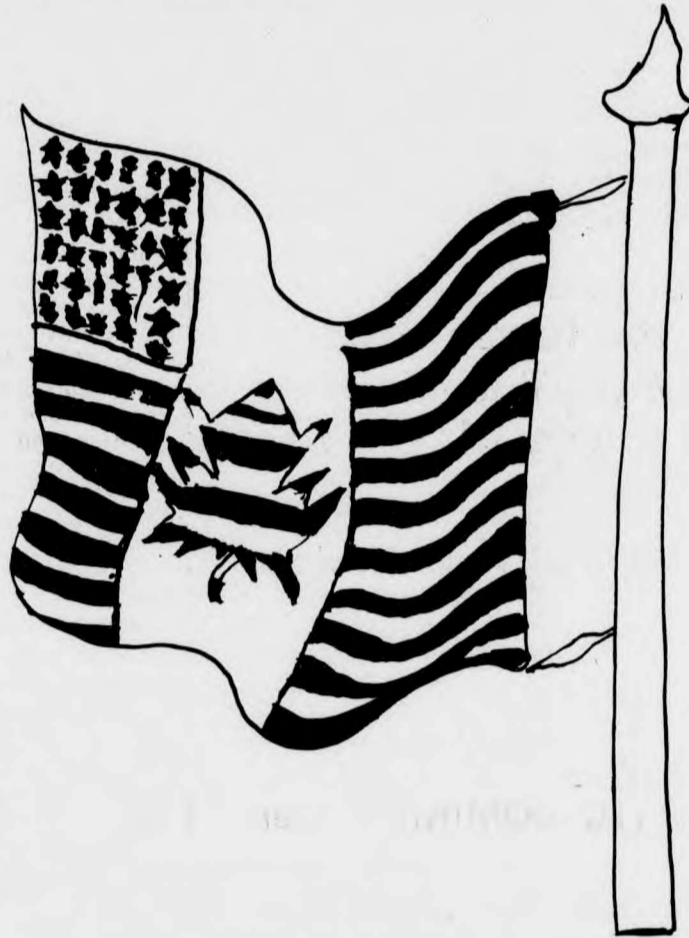
**EXCALIBUR:** But how do you stop this?

**A:** I don't know. I think you could, if you wanted to be in some ways repressive. Not to be would be tolerant of something which is intolerable. How has the U.S. gotten such a foothold in Canada? Through nice old liberals who say that nationalism is a bad thing and that we've got to not be provincial — provincialism has to be broken down.

"All of these nice old liberal slogans which are ideally suited for the absorption of a smaller country into a bigger one, whereas in the U.S., obviously, nationalism is not being broken down and provincialism has been elevated to a world view, and is trying simply to become the world. The small "I" liberal slogans have to be re-examined

and if you are going to be hiring people who are not Canadians, unless it is a visiting appointment of some distinguished scholar for a year or two, then simply insist that people make a commitment to this country.

**EXCALIBUR:** You look at the list of who has been hired in the last two years and there are seven Americans and only one Canadian in your department. Would you like to comment on recruiting?



**A:** Right. It's not simply the policy of the political science department. It's an American myth that you hire the "best man". This automatically works against any hope of not seeing the ratio slide lower. More and more Americanization would come with simply taking the conventional behavioural criteria of competence; i.e. picking "the best man".

Now the department has taken the decision that before it looks at any Americans or, in fact, any non-Canadians, it will go through all Canadian applications. . . if there is someone who is acceptable, fine, even though there might be Americans in another pile somewhere who might even be more "acceptable". . .

**EXCALIBUR:** How would you react to a charge that was made in a Windsor student newspaper that "Americans are coming up here like parasites to live off Canada until the Vietnam situation and the domestic crisis in the U.S. has toned down?"

**A:** Don't you want to make a distinction between an exile community or a refugee community on the one side, and a group of immigrants on the other?

**EXCALIBUR:** Yeh, I think there is a great distinction. . . but does this statement have any truth in it? Are we getting lots of opportunists?

**A:** Sure. I think there are people who deal with it halfway. For myself, and I don't want to sound pure and pristine, I even refuse to go back to the U.S. to visit, although I can. I personally view that (U.S.) as a part of my life that I am in the process of recovering from. I don't view it as simply a question of when Vietnam is over, we'll all go back to the new groovy U.S. — because its not going to be new or groovy. What's it going to be like — the U.S. of the fifties?

**EXCALIBUR:** What sorts of courses would you give a priority to if you were trying to develop a school with a Canadian emphasis in political science?

**A:** There would be more courses on the things which make Canada different from, as opposed to similar to, the U.S. I think you've pretty well got to get through the notion that there is this phenomenon known as American Imperialism, because at York you even find you have a rough time convincing people that there is this phenomenon. . .

## Many students are hooked on U.S. data

**EXCALIBUR:** How did you find out about the opening of a position at York?

**PROFESSOR B (sociology):** I went to graduate school at X (American) University and another fellow who is now in the department here also was going to graduate school there. He left graduate school a year before me and came to York. Before he left, I talked with him and he said he was coming here.

At that point I didn't know York from any other school. So, after he was up here for a year, he came down to do his oral exam for his thesis and I asked him how he was getting along, how he liked where he was and so forth and he said York was a good place to be and that he really liked it a lot. We talked for a while and from his description it sounded like the kind of a place that I wanted to go to. It was new and not nearly so rigid as a lot of other schools.

**EXCALIBUR:** How did it go from there?

**B:** I expressed an interest to him in coming up and looking at York and seeing what sort of a place it was. Arrangements were made for a visit and I came up, looked it over and talked with people on the faculty. I rather liked what I saw and I suppose they liked me too 'cause here I am.

**EXCALIBUR:** Did it surprise you very much the number of your fellow countrymen in the department?

**B:** Yeh, especially initially, because I hadn't thought much about it. I hadn't given much consideration to the notion that there would be many Americans. I expected that there would be mostly Canadians. So, I got here and found a whole bunch of Americans and I had a few chuckles out of it...it seemed a little incongruous. I asked some people about it, thought about it a little bit, and then it became a little more reasonable to me.

**EXCALIBUR:** What are the reasons, as you perceive them, for this imbalance?

**B:** I don't think that there are a sufficient number of people with PhDs or post MA graduate work in the field of sociology who are Canadians to fill the vacancies. I think that it is imperative that people who are not Canadians be brought into Canadian universities if the people who run them want to have the size of student enrolments and the faculty-student ratios that they seem to want to have.

**EXCALIBUR:** Would you accept the premise that sociology as it exists in the United States is a reflection of the culture and the prevailing ideology in the United States?

**B:** Yes.

**EXCALIBUR:** So then, don't you think that we should be worried that what we are getting in the social sciences is filtered-down American ideology?

**B:** Yeh, I think that is a legitimate objective concern. One of the things that puzzles me about that whole problem is the question of what sort of American sociologist comes to Canada.

We might expect that they are not like in all respects American sociologists who remain in America. There is something about them that operates—or some series of things that operate—as selection criteria.

I don't know how many of them are people somewhat like myself who come because of a distaste for that American ideology and how many of them come for reasons other than that and who carry with them their American points of view in a fairly unanalysed and uncritical way...

**EXCALIBUR:** Certainly, it is true that in the last couple of years there have been a lot of people come up for what could be classified as political reasons. Do you think that because of this such people are encouraged to branch out into Canadian society and find out if it is any different or are they more directed towards doing critiques of American culture?

**B:** I don't know. I would guess that there is an awful lot of critiquing of American culture going on...I find myself tending to do this sometimes and when I see myself doing it I try to pull back from it and say that's really not the major problem.

**EXCALIBUR:** Do you ever get tripped up by your students?

**B:** No. On the other hand it seems to me that the students, and this is something that pisses me off time and time again, are the worst offenders. I assigned to my second year students an essay paper on something or other that they would define as a social problem.

O.K., and there are lots of different problems that people choose and they run from alienation to juvenile delinquency...and some of those papers you wouldn't know that they hadn't been written in Columbus, Ohio, because they use purely

American data, purely American examples.

When they refer to American data, they talk about the percentage of illegitimacy in "our" society is such and such, and they give the United States Census Volume as the reference. That really came as a surprise to me—paper after paper did not treat the problem as it exists in Canadian society.

**EXCALIBUR:** What do you think are the reasons?

**B:** I don't know. One of the more obvious things is that so much of the source material that they have access to is American material.

**EXCALIBUR:** Is there no Canadian material?

**B:** There is Canadian material, but there is surely not as much of it as there is of American material. For every Canadian book on delinquency there are 20 American books on delinquency.

**EXCALIBUR:** Given the urgency of producing Canadian source material do you think that the department as a whole should take responsibility for seeing that work is done in this area? Guidelines to individual faculty members need not be rigid but the spirit of the department becomes one in which such work is viewed as essential.

**B:** If you could get agreement on that, it would be very nice.

**EXCALIBUR:** You don't think you could.

**B:** No. Not in this sociology department. Christ, we can't get agreement on what color couches to have in the lounge, or whether even to have a lounge or not—let alone what people are going to be devoting years of their lives to. I don't think that kind of consensus exists. I think a lot of the people would fight against that in this department.

**EXCALIBUR:** Why?

**B:** Because it would be seen as a constraint on their freedom and I don't think they would tolerate that. I think, for example, that one of the major reasons that people have come to York is because of the freedom thing. If constraints were placed on that, people would really get upset.

Some other people, I believe, would think it was a good idea. And some other people might argue that it doesn't make a damn bit of difference, and I might end up

in this category myself—the major thing that a sociologist ought to be doing is trying to arrest the seemingly wholesale fawning of Canadians on the United States. This idea that has been in the newspapers that Canadians are selling their country to Americans both economically and culturally—this is the big problem.

It's a problem which is sufficiently salient at this very moment that it's the problem that ought to be dealt with. But to go around doing research on Canadian society, when that society may be in the process of being coopted into the larger American society, is to be doing research on something that is rapidly becoming only of historical interest.

**EXCALIBUR:** That's very interesting.

**B:** I'm very much worried about that very thing. I came up here to get away from a lot of the things that were happening in the States and it seems to me that people up here, like the students I mentioned, are all too willing to fall into the American role.

**EXCALIBUR:** That incident must have disturbed you very much.

**B:** It did. I made some comments in the lecture about it to the students. I told them that if people want to do research on an American topic or use American data, that's O.K. I mean, America does exist. But Jesus Christ, don't act like you are an American studying it. Surely you've got a Canadian point of view.

**EXCALIBUR:** Are you familiar at all with the first year social science courses?

**B:** I teach in one of them.

**EXCALIBUR:** Do you think that the situation which you describe has anything to do with the fact that in these first year courses the States is stressed because the materials are easily passed out and easily bought...here students get into the habit of thinking along American patterns and by the time they reach fourth year they are perfectly conditioned "American" students.

**B:** I don't know. I'm trying to think about the course that I am now involved in in first year. There is an awful lot of American stuff being used there. Rubinoff's book (The Pornography of Power) is the only non-American thing I can think of...Yeh, I think this kind of thing probably starts in the first year but it may well be that it starts long before that. It may be happening in the high schools...