

as any peasant in Europe. Just so I could grow up in a prairie city and be petit bourgeois.

Farmers and small-businessmen and plain, pinch-faced women with many children came into town on Saturdays and, I suppose, in those days Jasper Avenue was just another Main Street only bigger. Ukrainian pensioners hung around the main floor of Eaton's, holding paper shopping bags and wearing black babushkas and rubber golashes. There was one parking garage, a Waffle Shop and one bookstore; the Edmonton Art Gallery was located in an old house. There were Chinese restaurants, an Italian one, a steak house and an espresso coffee joint where the best minds of my generation first learned about their hipster souls. Respectable families, when they did go out for dinner, went to the hotel restaurants, usually the King Edward, but for celebrations to the CPR's McDonald Hotel which, until I left Edmonton and saw San Francisco, represented the epitome of unreachable class. There were no Sunday movies then, and the beer parlours were segregated by sex. The town's entire population of teenagers went as one man, all pubescent ardour and loyalty, to the hockey arena for Fats Domino, Paul Anka, the Everly Brothers. While our parents went to the Exhibition grounds cattle sheds for La Traviata. In those days the university was considered an esoteric community of Communists, homosexuals, pacifists and other perverts in active conspiracy against the God-fearing values of Social Credit, censorship, the Sabbath and gas royalties from Standard Oil. The Edmonton Journal sneered at the NDP* and, in a department store book-stall, they put Socialism under Sociology. Is it any wonder then, that we left when we were twenty?

We did leave, in those days. If not actually, certainly spiritually. Those who left for Ohio and California, Vancouver and Toronto, saying their lives were worth something only when measured against Sin City, left behind them a generation of dream-makers. The painters who dreamed of violence in New York while living on the edge of a river that flows to Hudson's Bay. The writers who dreamed of another Herzog, never knowing the stories of their own father. The filmmakers who dreamed of manipulations and

big money at the CBC while the local TV station played reruns of Bonanza. The incipient bureaucrats who dreamed of glamorous civil service in patrician Ottawa while aldermen speculated in land near Edmonton airport. And, of course, the would-be terrorists, dreaming of conflagrations in Mississippi forgot their high-school dedication to the destruction of fascist Alberta.

Toronto was where the winners were. The losers stayed at home. Of course, what usually happened was you went East and were never heard of again. You simply disappeared into the stew of a super-city and no one ever paused to think that losing in Toronto was twice the disaster and pain of winning in Mundare. You were there and that's all that counted. You could come back but only as a visible success, for no one back home could ever forgive the kid who didn't make it. The one who came home to lick his wounds instead of accepting harmless anonymity in the East. The ones who didn't make it at the National Ballet or McClelland & Stewart or Toronto-Dominion, Head Office, or the CBC, and who came home to teach clumsy children, write book reviews for the local paper, become manager of the Jasper Place branch or make props for the university drama department.

WHEN you come into Peace River, you suddenly drop—from the barley fields, the stations of the Peace River pipeline like so many post-war Canadian stations of the cross, the abandoned Texaco gas pumps, the shabby community halls of community-less towns, the propane tanks in weedy yards, the bright blue houses built in memory of an unseen suburb, the dusty avenue without trees, the diners through which the towns plug into the life of the highways—you drop away from this into the deep, green, smoky rolling valley of the Peace. The people in the town tell us that the water in the river is much lower than it used to be. Not because there hasn't been rain, God knows, but because Bennett+ has dammed it upstream in B.C. As one consequence, the Indians and Metis downstream from the dam have seen their fishing economy and independent culture collapse in front of their faces. In a hotel bar in town, a Metis barman waves the peace sign at us as we go out.

*New Democratic Party.

+Premier W. A. C. Bennett of British Columbia.