

Beyond Toronto is the end of the earth

Dear Sir:

Just recently I spent a week in Toronto. During that time, I came across the enclosed article. I thought you might be interested in reading it, and possibly printing it, along with my personal response.

There are truths in both the article and my response, although both are guilty of being one-sided. I would like to make a couple of comments about Mr. Christy's article:

1. Anyone who has spent at least one year in Fredericton knows it has shortcomings; however, Mr. Christy's report is so savage that it lacks credibility. Some of the shortcomings and peculiarities which he enumerates are either in his fuzzy little head, or of no significant consequence.

2. Fully one-third of the article deals with shortcomings of hitch-hikers, rather than Fredericton.

I might add that I would speedily choose Fredericton over Toronto as my home.

The Maritimes Forever!

Dan Horsman

Beyond Toronto Is the end of the earth

(a response to Jim Christy's 'Beyond Fredericton is the end of the earth. Since my literary style is not up to the standards of Mr. Christy, I have borrowed heavily from the style and phrasing of his article.)

I was expecting, hoping rather, to find a large and stimulating community here. A living example of all that is good in big-city life. A sophisticated center of government and education: capital of the province, first or second largest city in Canada, home of the University of Toronto as well as divers other educational institutions - including the revolutionary Rochdale -, numerous museums and art galleries, theatres, and a planetarium.

For a while, at least, three daily newspapers are published here, supplemented by ethnic newspapers, literary publications, and the underground press. I'm sure many famous Canadians have lived here (although I can't name any offhand) and of course the city has made its contribution to Canadian history - most notably, in my mind, the rebellion of Wm. Lyon MacKenzie and the boys, in 1837.

Toronto, however, is not what one might expect. It is the end of the road. A nightmare of a city. It is like the big-city set on a studio lot. What you envision when you hear of pollution, inner-city problems, and too many cars - only more so. Deceptive it is, at first. It looked like my adolescent dream of the great Canadian city - a distillation of the great American way of life with all the objectionable ingredients removed, and British ties maintained. "The very pulsebeat of Canada" is how the folder at the YMCA where I stayed describes it. That city of my imagination I never found. Main Street (i.e. Yonge Street) on a Friday night: loafers sit along the sidewalk, or



mill up and down the street; Krishna devotees roam up and down the street, rattling their instruments and chanting their phrases of Lord Krishna's soothing and uplifting love; beat-up cars screech to sudden stops, then lay rubber in their anxiousness to roar down the street; people of all ages and dress block the sidewalk as they gaze at closed circuit television sets offering free samples of the strip shows inside. For some, drugs are no longer a "mind-expanding experience", but as necessary apart of life as alcohol is for the winos you pass. Panhandlers are so numerous that one sets aside one's charitable inclinations, lest he too will become a panhandler by the end of the week. See the old man in the doorway bent over the three shopping bags which are the sum total of his possessions in this life.

Continue your stroll past countless taverns - one advertiser said it is a gay bar; more chain department stores selling the same things in differently colored packages; record, poster, and clothing stores which supply youth with the basic ingredients of its counter culture. Or take stifling rides on the subways, buses, or street cars - as you beath the exhaust fumes of millions of cars, you wonder if there is any air mixed with them.

The university is the most famous in the country, and you can learn just about anything your little mind wants to know

(or, can cope with). But identify soon with one group or another, be they the campus radicals, speedfreaks, jocks or gay-libbers', for he who hesitates is lost - by buildings, bodies, books, and bull-shit.

Refugees!?! Everyone in Toronto is a refugee - afraid of, victimized, antagonized or criticized by one or more of the many different socioecological groups in the city (surely a sociologists nightmare for classification). Many refugees are imprisoned in the slums, but also in the high-rises which look uglier every time one sees them. Those who can afford it escape to their individual cells in the suburbs.

"One becomes aware of affinities. For the first time togetherness assumes a real meaning. A wacky camaradie develops because you're here and out there is Toronto", the good!

by Dan Horsman

Ed's note:

This letter and enclosures arrived on the Bruns desk recently. I think they make interesting reading, although they both suffer from exaggerations. A few of the places in Fredericton Jim Christy mentions in "Beyond Fredericton is the end of the earth" I am not aware of. Fredericton has many faults but I think the ones that Mr. Christy has chosen are just the things that attract the cultural community here. At any rate it is just that small town atmosphere that many of us like. Mr. Christy's article was previously published in "The Tabloid" of Toronto, the editors of which have graciously allowed us to reprint it.