The Mysterious West

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CANADA

ALBERTA AWAKES

By Myrna Kostash

THE cliches of the prairie landscape are cliches only to those who don't live there. To those who live their lives out on this stupendous land the earth is crawling in colours and contours, textures and subtle energy. It is only an Easterner, say, who would look at the land lying east of Calgary and call it dead, dusty, faded and boring. It is only a remarkable insensitivity to the habits of the earth which sustains the cliche of prairie monotony. In the Cypress Hills, thousands of cactus plants bloom in yellow flowers in July. Near Hinton, there are stands of white poplar, straight, slender, immaculate white trees. In mid-August, the barley fields near Edmonton flow yellow in the bushy tops and golden-green in the stems. Near Peace River the overturned earth is black—not red or brown, black. And everywhere in Alberta in the

summer time are blue fireweed and orange Indian paintbrush and purple Saskatoon berries and wild mustard and goldenrod. There are deserts, farms, grasslands, glaciers, forests and the lines of the land move through gulleys, ravines, mountains, foothills, riverbeds and, yes, flat, flat, unchanging, limitless, inviolate prairie. This is a fantastic place. And, maybe, prophets of God have always moved more easily in the prairie of the West than through the streets of civilized cities in the East because, out here, the sky holds the whole earth close in one vast, blue embrace. A man can leap directly into the lap of God and there is no need of priests.

Men and women deal directly with the character of the earth out here, especially with the changing catastrophes of the seasons. This is a confrontation you can't avoid and a fact of God you can't turn away from. Ice forming in the cells of your lungs because it is that cold. Wipe-out, regeneration, wipe-out on the farms where the rivers flood and the worms eat up everything. Mountain slides destroying whole towns and dinosaurs as the last species that ever lived in the sucking heat of the Badlands. Unlike the affability of West Coast climates or the sullen protection of big cities, the nature of the pairies forces you to prepare for your survival.

I left Edmonton five years ago when it was a big town and I return now to a city. There are those who would build it to Torontonian proportions and, by some evidence, they are having their way. The pattern of development in Edmonton is metropolitan and doesn't everybody love a big skyscraper? And you gotta have a skyline.

So, already too many cars trying to cross seven bridges over a polluted river that once ran clean from the glaciers west of Jasper. High-rise apartments, too expensive for students, going up in the university area and the university itself, once a seat of minor learning and now 20,000 strong, pushes its fat, million-dollar body into what was one of Edmonton's happiest districts. They are pulling apart the wooden homes in Garneau and bulldozing the beautiful trees, tearing up the roots of vegetable gardens, not to mention the roots of a community where kids, Chinese grocers, cleaning ladies and students used to live together.

A CONDITION of exploitation is the co-option of energy. A condition of the cultural exploitation of regions by centralized institutions is the co-option of mental energy. A condition of the exploitation of my generation was the co-option of our political, intellectual and moral energy by the howling priorities of American and Eastern Canada. We spent an incalculable length of days in a mental anguish over the mess in America and in a perpetual ecstasy over the inevitable coming of (somebody else's) revolution. With a lot of our rhetoric and responses based on the analysis of evil and goodness as handed down to us via radicals in Toronto and Montreal.

While all around us, of course, were conditions of oppression, rip-off, despair, anger and revolt that we never noticed. Or noticed only to dismiss as secondary to the "real" struggle; the FLQ,* the Chicago trial, the grape boycott. If their struggles were real and ours were not, where did that leave us as politicians? It left us wandering in a fancied wilderness where the deliberate flooding of a delta, the passing of the family farm and the advent of agri-business, the unchallenged sale and depletion of resources, the expatriation of talent were never taken seriously by us as political events. Because what were our problems, our sense of abuse and grievance, our hayseed's complaints compared with the earth-shaking, soul-searing importance of a busted sit-down strike at the University of Toronto and the imprisonment of a Black Panther? Why, nothing at all. So we continued to root for the triumph of a squabbling, quasi-fascist American underground, the triumph of the French language and the triumph of Canadian ("Because It's Ours") capitalism at the expense of doing some real work right at home.

WHERE most of us come from the West was the pioneer experience. We are farmers' children. Even if we've never seen a cow in our lives, the fact remains that we are who we are, where we are, because our parents or grandparents came to these acres of black soil and farmed them. Uprooted trees, built sod huts, planted potatoes, gave birth to fifteen children and died as beaten, withered, scarred and poor

*Quebec Liberation Front.

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 bookstall, 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.

It seems that those who come from the cities to live in Peace River are people who grew up here and moved away. Another kind of newcomer is the American expatriate: some ex-schoolteachers from the States live now on a communal farm near Dixonville They are reportedly doing fine. At least, they survived last winter. There's a businessman in town who organizes the local theatre group and writes some of their plays. Slapstick comedy stuff. The RCMP headquarters for the region are in Peace River and smoking dope is still the worst thing you can do. If only the cops could find where the stuff if stashed. In the meantime, most of the busts are for illegal possession of booze.

Only a couple of miles out of Edmonton, on the road to Jasper, and you are already smack in the middle of the woody hills that press around the edges of the city. A kind of war at a standstill between the chaotic grassland and the civilized bankers with the soil-tillers caught in the middle. This is a region of the small family farm that the NDP and NFU* want to save from the clutches of big business, from the idea of farming as a corporate industry and not, as it is held to be by city kids, an art. What the farmers themselves believe their lives to be is more mysterious in the sense that they have never been asked. Just another one of those stories of a regional history superseded by the needs of a nation-state. All that I had to go on, speeding along Highway 16, was that, as the original wooden frame farmhouses collapsed unpainted, unfixed and still mortgaged, the families moved a few feet away into a new stucco house with a shingle roof. Stubbornly insisting that by anybody's definition a farmer lives on his land and works it.

Not much farther into the hills are the gas flames and the "donkeys" doggedly pumping up pure gold. Underneath the starving farms runs a billion dollars in oil and who is getting rich?

THE Coal Branch of Alberta lies south-west of Hinton along the tracks of ghost towns. Once they took millions of tons out of the belly of the Rocky Mountains and life in the coal towns, aside from the hours underground and the coal dust diseases, was all right. There was a theatre and music lessons and a skating rink, good neighbours and a steady job, for when would the world run out of coal? Then the railroads switched to diesel engines and one by one the towns closed down with everybody scattering for better jobs in bigger towns.

Hinton is a company town. North West Pulp and Power. One hundred per cent American owned. Leasing 3,000 square miles plus reserve. There is a stench in the air that you eventually get used to. Some students say that the mill isn't a polluting agent. It's gas stations which dump oil and grease and it's Jasper, upstream, which dumps untreated sewage. In any case, it isn't the mill; and the Youth Action group's ecology projects are to pick up litter from the ditches by the highway, to clean up the woods after hunters and to organize a coffee house in a bowling alley. Someone wants to "blow this town apart" with theatre imported from Edmonton. Well, anything to get the kids into something more than drinking, trashing and walking the highway.

When I mentioned nationalization of North West Pulp, all the kids laughed. Everybody's job and/or security depends on the mill. "Listen, the mill isn't even talked about here. It's been around so long no one even notices it. Even the town council, if it isn't satisfied with pollution controls, can't do much. The company would say they've already spent 10 or 12 millions and, anyway, they are well within the guidelines set by the provincial government. They'd need a bigger threat than the town council to get them to do anything." "If you want to live well, you work at the mill." "If the union said to the mill, you've got to clean up the pollution or we'll strike, the company would close the mill and tell them to go to hell. There are hundreds to replace the workers here."

WESTERN separatism may or may not be the political wave of the future and, anyway, its future isn't nearly so interesting as its present. It is instructive to note that Maclean's+ thinks the West is girding itself for battle ("The West is Ready to Revolt"), Kildare Dobbs is amused by the idea and Donald Peacock, writing from Calgary, is worried that somebody Down East may take separatists seriously. It is instructive

*National Farmers Union.

+A national magazine published in Toronto.

Photographic Surveys

that Easterners sensationalize or, conversely, ridicule the issue while the Westerner feels nervous. The one patronizes by inflating or deflating, the other acquiesces by apologizing for the notion that Confederation is an inequitable arrangement. French-speaking Marxist rebels are one thing, assimilated sons and daughters of grateful refugees living off the fatted calf of Standard Oil are something else. Both Easterner and Westerner operate within a colonial relationship by equally rejecting the credibility of the complaint.

There are some offices above CHED radio station just south of Jasper Avenue. Everything is painted grisly green, there are a few desks and chairs, papers are stacked along the wall, Right On posters hang here and there and outside on the street families in Klondike Days dress wander disconsolately in the drizzle. This is the Task Force on Urbanization and the Future. Peter Boothroyd, director.

Boothroyd wrote an essay in the recent collection of reports, The Unfinished Revolt (McClelland & Stewart), which outlines some of the West's unfinished busines in Confederation. He is the only contributor to have pointed out that decentralization of federal institutions doesn't mean very much if power itself is not also decentralized. The individual isn't necessarily any better off under the local elite than under a national one. In all the cloudy fuss about oppression from the East, where are the men and women from the Liberation Front? The equivalent, in the West, of rebels who know that the only fight worth conducting against federal authority is the revolution for cultural autonomy and social justice?

As Boothroyd says, Alberta is an even more logical place for such a revolution than is Quebec, given its political history. "There have been radical analyses and aspirations in the past. Starting with Riel and going through the Progressives, the UFA*, CCF+ and Social Credit, you see

* United Farmers of Alberta.

\+ Cooperative Commonwealth Federation.

a combined interest in shaking off Eastern domination and in administering social justice in the territories." Aside from all the economic and political grievances, sheer distance between the centre and the regions is probably the single most sensational factor in the Westerner's complaint of alienation from Ottawa. All the other forms of alienation may be only functions of geographic distance. "When all the decisions are made 'out there' with no effective way existing to control the decision, when these decisions seem to be taken invariably in favour of big-city interests way past Winnipeg, the oppression seems real enough." And, of course, the quality of the decision is modified negatively by the fact that the institution is thousands of miles from the specific human situation.

John Hart, director of Canadian Studies at the Grant McEwan Community College in Edmonton, is one of the people assembling the True History of the West: he's in a position to know. Born in Settler, educated in Alberta, he specialized in Western Canadian history at the University of Calgary (and learned about job opportunities there through the London Times). The story of the West, not as told by civil servants in the Colonial Office, nor by pundits at Eastern universities, nor even by "colourful characters" in Western saloons. But by Westerners armed with a radical critique and a sense of timeliness.

On the farms and in the small towns, right-wing radicalism links up with what Hart calls "nativism": the close identification with the land, with the setting of experience. It is impossible for strangers to identify with this and so you don't trust them. This is my home. This is my land, because I homesteaded it. I own it. The stranger, even if he is only from Ontario, has only a temporary or ulterior interest in the land. At best, the stranger is indifferent.

Which explains, somewhat, why Americans are not seen as strangers here but Easterners and Quebeckers are. "We have a lot of Americans in Alberta who are very appealing people. Open and friendly. All the more since they tend to come from the West and mid-West. We understand each other, we share experiences. Whereas we are never sure if Easterners think of us in any way besides as hillbillies. As for French Canadians, they are equated with the FLQ and the FLQ is equated with the Third World revolution. Violence, bloodshed, treachery." The paradox is that Westerners should be able to identify with Quebec separatism, experiencing as they do the same kind of political, industrial and cultural imperialism from the East. Intellectually, the Westerner does accept the identification. But at gut-level, you've got to be born under the sign of the Big Sky and in God's Own Acre to understand the desperate beauty of the West.

It occurs to me that if more people were to go back home, landscapes like that of Alberta would perforce contribute more to a collective Canadian fantasy. A fantasy which would look less like the view from the Royal York and more like the crooked trail of the Metis in their flight from the RCMP.

Abridged from Through the Mysteries of Western Resentment by Myrna Kostash and reprinted by courtesy of the author and Saturday Night.

Pipeline Research near Inuvik **National Film Board of Canada**

Here is an excerpt from Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau's address to a public meeting in Edmonton on April 28, 1972. The subject was the development of the Far North.

THE North has relied to this date primarily on air and water transportation links. Some roads exist, as in the case of the Dempster Highway in the Yukon, but much more has to be done in order to meet the desires of the Indian population and to ensure the rational impact of development. The obvious primary need is for an all-weather highway along the full length of the Mackenzie Valley.

This road has been a dream until now. Its length—some 1,050 miles north of 60 degrees, and its cost—between 70 and 100 million dollars, have appeared as overwhelming obstacles. The benefits to be gained are now so obvious, however, and the prospects so encouraging, that I am able to announce tonight that the Government will begin building this highway this summer.

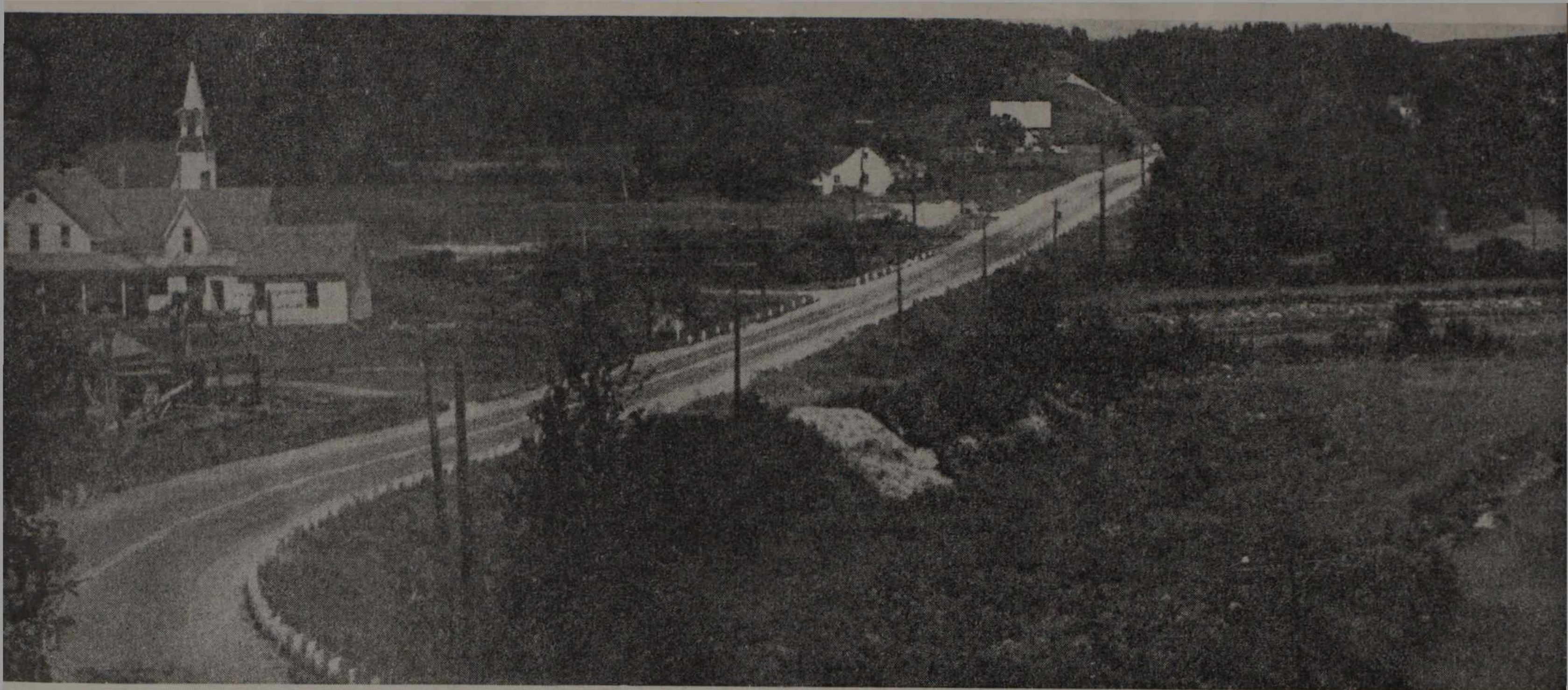
Work will commence simultaneously at both the southern and northern ends—at Inuvik and Fort Simpson—and proceed towards the middle. Survey work to fix the whole route will get underway shortly, and be finished before the end of this year. When completed, this highway will stretch from the Alberta border north to the Arctic Ocean at Tuktoyaktuk. It will bring to an end the isolation for much of the year of the communities along the river and will meet the expressed desires of many of the Indian people who live there. It will improve the economic opportunities for the residents of these communities and will place them in a better position to benefit from other activity and developments.

The route will be carefully selected so that it will be of use should oil or gas pipelines be built along the Mackenzie Valley. It will be built ahead of any pipelines and will therefore offer considerable cost savings to them during the construction period. For this reason, the Government intends to recover some of the highway construction costs from the pipeline companies.

Well within this decade, Edmontonians, who have long regarded this city as the southern terminal of the Alaska Highway, will be able to drive on an all-weather, all-Canadian highway from here to the Arctic Ocean, and to choose from two different routes.

The economic benefits of these transportation links can as yet only be imagined. That they will be immense, no one doubts. The roads will also assist Canadians to visit the majestic new national parks created earlier this year for the preservation of huge areas of northern splendour.

Canada's northern communication system, already the most extensive and sophisticated in the world—indeed the only one to make use of a domestic communications satellite—will soon be matched by a northern transportation system more elaborate than that in any other country of equivalent area and climate. And in the process the need for goods and services will increase dramatically. Projects of the magnitude of the Mackenzie Highway will create economic opportunities of considerable proportions to add to the already well-stimulated business climate of this part of Canada. The demand for technically trained and skilled workers in the North will rise and continue to rise. □



National Film Board of Canada

HARTLAND, N.B.

By Wilhelmine Thomas

IN the middle of New Brunswick, there's a small farm. It forms the centre of a star. The star's points are the villages of Lakeville, Centreville, Hartland (and Premier Richard), Waterville, Woodstock and Florenceville, home of McCain Foods. Crowning this land is a white house with many windows. My father sits reading on the sun porch. He is a World War I veteran, 80 years old and 50 years married. He is a rarity. The last of the pioneers. The independent farmer.

The farm is his, scratched out between crop failures, fires, stock losses and the changing times. He built the big white house from the ground up. He built it large to accommodate his children and theirs; the children who have grown and long since left for the cities. The house is empty except for him and my mother. Five years have elapsed since the farm was harvested. He's had an offer to sell the land, but not the homestead.

There are 10 deserted farmhouses between my father's farm and Centreville. The Kirkbride house is vacant and black; the Giberson house sweeps the ground; the Prosser house, lacking windows and doors, leans into the swamp; the Purrinton house, lifeless as an addict's face—and so on up the road. These deserted houses, empty as barren windows, teeter in the middle of prosperous land, rich in green potato fields and yellow grain.

Where have all the farmers gone? Well, eternity takes care of the older ones Their families have moved to Ontario. The rest have sold out and work for McCains, men, women and children. They work for "the man."

Why? If the small farmer is lucky enough to harvest a good crop, he may or may not make a profit. There are no effective marketing controls to protect him. Prices vary drastically, daily. One summer hailstorm can ruin a field of wheat in half an hour, that same field he's been ploughing and harrowing and raking and sowing and fertilizing and spraying since the frost came out of the ground.

Bankers won't take a risk on the small farmer. The government doesn't appear to give a damn. But McCains are able to get substantial government grants, and they can afford to take the kind of risk a small farmer can't.

A farmer used to be able to depend on his sons to help him on the farm. Today those sons work a 45-hour week for McCains, while the farmer, if he's serious about farming, works a 72-hour week. And that doesn't count the times his farm animals decide to bear their young in the middle of the night. The farmer has to go out and milk the cows before breakfast and again after supper. The McCains worker is through when his shift ends, whether the work is finished or not. A farmer can't even take a Sunday off. He can't have his cows each carrying two pails of milk on the day of rest.

Florenceville is no longer a village but a booming town, could be an affluent suburb of Toronto, swimming pools and rockgardens. Here McCain Foods operates a frozen packaging and dehydration plant. Materially, it would seem the people who work for McCains are better off. They have car payments and TV payments, and every house, trailer and shack boasts a snowmobile. But money as well as land has shifted hands. Progress has poked its nose into New Brunswick.

Progress has brought some great innovations, and possibly the end to a style of life. Nobody talks any more. Gone are the community gatherings, the barn raisings, the Sunday night community "sings," the large house parties with the local musical talent, rich in color and romance. Now everybody watches Bonanza, though the Baptists won't admit it.

The Baptist Church has lost its long buggy shelter, where the starlings used to nest and the husbands smoked their pipes through seven verses of The Old Rugged Cross.

Once in a while, there's a religious revival, and a band of preachers comes to town, and everybody gets saved for a week or two. People stop smoking, give up bootlegged liquor, stop swearing and wearing lipstick—and another crop of babies arrives next year.

Gone are the general stores which smelled of smoked meat and floor oil. Gone are the sheep shearing, the carding and washing of wool. Gone are the quilting parties and the Red Cross. Gone are thrashing machines and butter churns. Gone are the salmon pools and fishing tales. Gone is the swimming hole; in its place pollution.

Progress has brought in the Beechwood Power Dam, but Island Park is flooded over. There are electric lights and running water, but no maple honey season. No more sap cans or bobsledding in the woods. The Hydro cut a swath through the maple grove.

The Trans-Canada Highway chops up the province, ripping the guts out of some of the best land in the country, and diesel tractor trailers whine through. To accommodate the highway they dug up homes and set them back in the fields on new foundations, where they stand in a silly pose. Even the inhabited houses have a temporary look, as if the owners were about to move to Ontario. And the house trailers, banked and sunporched, remain mobile homes, rootless, landless imposters.

The one-room schoolhouses have been torn down, sold or left to rot. Now they have regional high schools, pot and hash. The high schools close for three weeks in the fall to allow the youngsters to pick potatoes.

Progress has brought in welfare. Old-age pensions. Progress has made old people's homes available. There is an old folks home in Woodstock where they separate the husbands and wives, a cruel gesture in the name of morality. Progress has brought in children's allowances. And beer bellies. Motorcycles, contraception and summer holidays. One family, I see, doesn't go for that contraception bit. There are seven rows of diapers flapping in the wind in front of their shack.

But, with all this progress, do you know that you can still hear a June bug's whirr on a summer night? And in the dead of winter the Northern Lights still roar like a waterfall from the Big Dipper. And even with all the McCain processed food, you can still find fiddleheads* along the river banks and wild strawberries up on the ridge.

Reprinted by courtesy of the author and Maclean's

*Young curled up fern favoured by gourmets.

TOO MANY HAVE DIED

By Heward Grafftey

IT WAS Sunday on Friday, August 21, 1964, when I left my Ottawa apartment about 7 a.m. to board an eastbound Canadian Pacific train for Montreal. About the same time as the train pulled out of Ottawa's Union Station, Basil Czopyk was driving his truck, full of gravel, towards Leonard, Ontario, a small village on the CP rail line between Ottawa and Montreal. Czopyk usually stopped for coffee at Leonard. From time to time he boasted how he raced and beat the early morning train over the rail intersection in the middle of this quiet hamlet. This particular Friday morning, he wasn't going to made it. My train picked up speed as it left the outskirts of Ottawa. Twenty minutes after departure we were hitting around 70 mph. I had taken a chair in the dining car to eat breakfast and read the newspaper. Then it happened.

The car began to pitch and lunge. People and furniture were thrown everywhere. Orange and yellow flames enveloped the windows. I was thrown the length of the car with other diners. Finally it, came to a crashing halt at an acute angle. I scrambled out and jumped onto the gravel rail bed. It was hard, at first, to understand just what had happened. In front of me was the wreckage of a ruck amid a pile of gravel. Czopyk had driven into the middle of the train. He was killed instantly. The engine and front cars continued on. The car he hit left the tracks and turned end over end before falling on its side in a nearby field. Those in the dining car, including myself, and in another car at the rear of the train were fortunate. Automatic brakes went on and while many were shaken up as these two cars ripped up 100 yards of track, many injuries were prevented and lives saved. But the car that was hit lay on its side near an old farm shed. I could hear screams and moans.

Sliding down the embankment to the scene, I could see what had happened. As the car spun in mid-air, many people were tossed through broken windows, then the car rolled over and crushed them. It was difficult to tell who was dead and who was injured. A stunned trainman attempted to set up communications with some equipment which he attached to the tracks. I ran to a nearby farm-house and on an old crank phone told the operator of the accident, asking for ambulances. Forty minutes later, a country doctor arrived. Helicopters from the news media hov-

ered over the scene. Finally, more than one hour after the accident, one privately owned ambulance appeared.

I don't know when the last victim was removed, but many seriously injured passengers still lay in the field more than two hours after the crash. And we were not in some isolated wilderness, but only twenty minutes from our nation's capital. The final toll: eight dead and more than 20 seriously injured.

IN mid-winter of 1970, Arnold Deacon and his 20-year-old daughter, Monica, heard a loud boom. Monica looked out the window of the kitchen in her Waterville, Que., home near the Quebec-Vermont border. A bus had crashed off a nearby bridge. After spotting the mangled wreckage of the bus and people strewn in the snow on the river bed, the Deacons called the police, then immediately took several blankets to comfort the injured while awaiting the ambulances. Arnold Deacon later said that he and his daughter called the police three times before ambulances arrived on the scene. The police told him they couldn't help because it wasn't in their area of coverage. Arnold Deacon added, "The cops seem to play dipsydoodle in a case like this, and take no serious thought that lives need immediate medical attention. Believe me, this sort of thing has happened here before. It's not the first time and certainly won't be the last." Twenty-two of the passengers had been injured, seven critically. When help finally arrived, it was too late for 17-year-old Carol Dupuis of Beebe, Que. She was already dead.

In the rural area of Quebec, a traffic victim lay in the snow in mid-winter. The investigating police officer wasn't certain in which ambulance region the accident had taken place, so he called two ambulances to make sure—one from each adjacent area. Forty minutes later, one ambulance arrived, but before the operator could load the victim aboard, the second ambulance was at the scene. The police officer soon had to rule over the ugly argument which arose between the operators, both of whom claimed a right to the victim.

The vast majority of North America's community ambulance services are hit-and-miss affairs, based on a "haul for hire" operation. Both in our urban and rural areas, funeral directors often run the local ambulance service. Reports indicate that the majority of them would like to get out of the ambulance business simply because they lose money in it. Many continue the work reluctantly, only because there would be a howl of public indignation if they pulled out of this much-needed community emergency service. It is also true that, in certain instances, private ambulance operators have refused to transport accident victims or the seriously ill until payment has been guaranteed. Some justify this

MONTREAL provides one of the most imaginative ambulance services in the world, probably because not too long ago it had one of the worst. Media and public indignation became so vociferous that city hall was shamed into action.

I remember witnessing a car hit a tree in mid-town Montreal when I was in high school. Three people received severe multiple injuries. They writhed in agony before my eyes. It took over 45 minutes for a private ambulance to arrive. The emergency ward of one of the city's largest hospitals, the Royal Victoria, was no more than a five-minute walk away from the accident. I remember the anger and despair I felt at that scene.

Today, a fleet of more than 30 police ambulances gives the city round-the-clock coverage seven days a week. The service takes care of people who are sick or injured on the street or in public places. Exceptions are made for extreme home cases or for the urgent need of oxygen. The police ambulance service has station wagon-type vehicles which are completely equipped. Constables assigned to ambulances receive special advanced first-aid training, and while cruising throughout the city in these station wagon ambulances, they also attend to their police duties.

In 1963, a statistical and efficiency review of the Montreal service was established. Findings showed that the average time for an ambulance to reach an accident scene after a call was received at the police emergency communications centre amounted to 2.4 minutes, as compared to an average 9.6 minutes for private ambulances.

by saying that they collect only about 40 per cent of their bills (interestingly enough, only a very few public or private medical plans cover ambulance costs). And there are further problems. Because of poor communications equipment and organization, or none at all, most of these privately owned vehicles arrive at the scene of accidents, or to pick up the seriously ill, too late.

THIS is only part of the story. Far too often the personnel operating ambulance vehicles are in no way trained to handle or deal with the sick or injured. Also, the vehicles, in many instances hearses hurriedly converted to ambulance service, are in no way designed or equipped to play their proper part in transporting and treating the people.

It is unrealistic to lay sole blame on the private ambulance operators and attendants in Canada and the United States. Basically, the public is not aware of the situation—the system takes care of that. Different levels of government disclaim all financial or moral responsibility.

With a few notable exceptions, we find no public standards relating to emergency treatment personnel, communications, and the reorganization, staffing, and equipping of emergency units in hospitals. The medical profession has persistently avoided contact with ambulance services. Thus, private services rarely, if ever, obtained training to upgrade their treatment facilities. Even if they had, it is questionable whether the jealousy of the medical profession would have allowed ambulance attendants to "practise doctoring" by even applying splints or stopping bleeding.

The emergency health services division of the Ontario Hospital Service Commission recently started training casualty care attendants, thus initiating a new para-merical discipline. Tragically but predictably, the medical profession for the most part has not only rejected this new concept, but has publicly berated the emergency health service representative for instigating this progressive change in medical tradition.

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FOR THE RECORD

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr, Mitchell Sharp, made a statement in the Canadian House of Commons on May 24, 1972, on the latest developments in Rhodesia. Text follows:

IN my statement to the House of Commons of December 1, 1971, I noted that the proposed terms of a settlement for Rhodesia agreed to by British and Rhodesian representatives in Salisbury were being submitted for the consideration of the Rhodesian people as a whole by means of the Pearce Commission. Despite some of the reservations which I noted at that time, the Canadian Government did not attempt to anticipate the decision which only the people of Rhodesia, and particularly the majority of Rhodesian Africans, were qualified to make in this matter: whether the proposals represented a sufficient hope for the future democratic development to compensate for the continued denial of majority government.

The Pearce Commission completed its task of seeking the views of the people of Rhodesia and has now reported that it found the proposals were not acceptable to the Rhodesian people as a whole.

It would be easy now to say that the whole Rhodesian question goes back to where it was before this exercise got under way, but in fact the clock cannot be turned back. A new political awareness has now been created among Rhodesia's Africans. The ruling white minority has been made conscious of the strength and extent of black opposition to continued minority rule. At the same time the confidence of outside observers in the integrity and thoroughness of the Pearce Commission has been upheld. The Canadian position of waiting upon the considered views of the Rhodesian people themselves has been vindicated.

The course of events from this point on is naturally difficult to predict. The British Government, given its continuing responsibilities for Rhodesia, has made clear its intention to keep open the way for further efforts at a settlement and its hope that those concerned both inside and outside Rhodesia will not take steps which would make a settlement more difficult to achieve. I need hardly stress that any solution which is now proposed must be one which can engage the confidence of the African people of Rhodesia.

So far as Canada is concerned, we will continue to support the aim of democratic majority rule for Rhodesia. We will continue to refuse recognition to the illegal regime ruling Rhodesia. We will continue to uphold our United Nations obligation and will maintain in effect the existing economic sanctions. □

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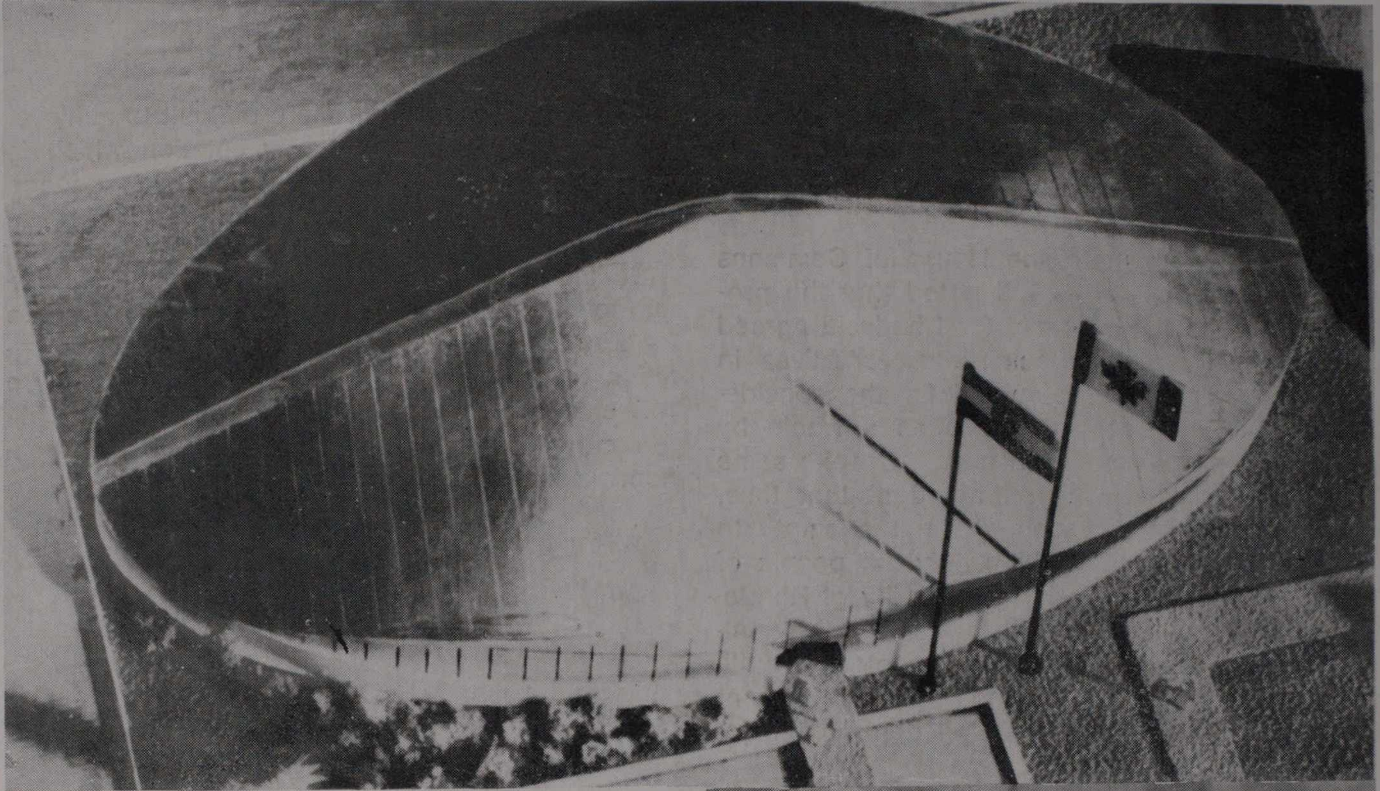
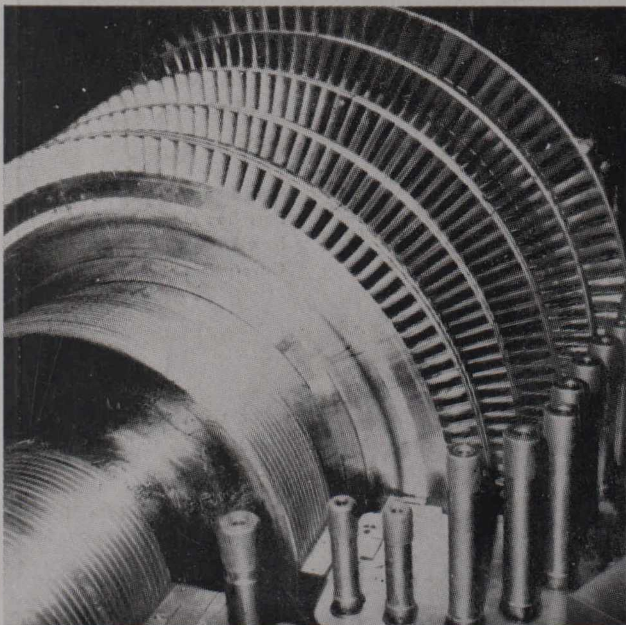


A model (above) of the Canadian pavilion now under construction at the site of the Third Asian International Trade Fair. The Canadian High Commissioner, Mr. James George (below, right) trowels the first concrete into place as work on the project gets underway. Work is nearing completion (below, left) on the high-pressure turbine at the Canadian-aided Rajasthan Atomic Power Project nuclear power station due to be commissioned shortly.



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