

8. REVOLUTIONARIES AND OTHERS IN PRE-WAR OTTAWA, 1936-1959

I would like to present to the readers of this memoir some of the characters whom we knew in Ottawa in the 1930s and 1940s.

They were all in different degrees on the political left. Why do I say that? They favored old age pensions; people who had spent their lives in work that benefited the nation ought to be supported when they reach 65. That did not come to the United States until much later. And also family allowances, in the form of a check addressed to the mother each month, for each child under age 16. It costs money to raise those children, and when they mature those children will support the national economy; the nation should therefore help raise them. That has not yet come to the United States, and very likely never will.

The people I refer to represented as wide a spectrum as youth in the Canadian population itself. On the extreme left was Arthur Saunders, an actuary, working in the office of the Superintendent of Insurance. Then there was Charlie Holmes, a graduate of the University of Toronto in literary studies, and when we knew him an official of the Civil Service Commission that has the function of ensuring that appointments to the civil service be determined by competence and not by political party membership. Surprisingly, it was moderately effective in that assignment; it was uncorrupted by being itself appointed by agreement of the main parties.

Still moving from left to right, there was myself, followed by Ted Fellows, a forester, whose mother, Alice Fellows, was a small and gracious English woman with peppery views on everything, and a wonderful pianist with whom Beatrice, a violinist, used to play duets. I will never forget having her years later in our apartment in Toronto, and Barby, much bigger and sitting high above her on the couch, in a very sponsoring and protective posture, as charmed by her as we were.

Then there was Iz Halperin, who taught mathematics at the University of Toronto, with whom I did not discuss politics, but only technical matters like the effect of prior knowledge on a bet, and who patiently explained other laws of probability to me on our walks.

And never to be forgotten was George Luxton, clearly a better thinker and more knowledgeable than any one of those mentioned, whose advice was sought by the highest levels in the civil service, people like Bob Bryce in the Department of Finance, Alex Skelton in External Affairs, Rasminski and Bob Beattie of the Bank of Canada. Through such people the Civil Service was in contact with the Government and they were much consulted by Ministers. They were high enough that none of our group would have any work contact with them (though I did a Bulletin in 1950 called "Canada at the Mid Century" in close collaboration with Alex Skelton.) and even

less would we meet them socially. But we did have vicarious contact with them through George Luxton.

Alas George Luxton had tuberculosis, before the day when it could be treated with antibiotics, and he died before reaching 30. In his last hours I and others of his friends were admitted into his sickroom one at a time to say good bye. Those five minutes I spent with him were the saddest in my life.

Then the war broke out, and soon after we had the Gouzenko affair. Gouzenko, a renegade Russian, perhaps thinking to curry favor with his new masters, declared that the Soviet Embassy had been in contact with various Ottawa citizens. Included was Iz Halperin. When the RCMP apprehended Iz he clammed up. Whatever they asked he answered "I have nothing to say". Since the authorities were not prepared to refer the matter to the courts they just sent him home.

Quite different was the case of Kathleen Willsher, working in the British Embassy. Lacking the steady nerves of Iz Halperin, when she was approached she was vague enough to give the impression that Gouzenko was right, She got three years in prison for no crime that any reputable person could specify. She suffered a serious miscarriage of justice just for being too soft under interrogation. An example of what war fever can do to justice.

Very much part of our group was Herbert Norman, later to play a tragic role in Canadian history. His biography is given below, and in much more detail in a film made by the Canadian Film Board. (When I last tried to obtain it, it was one of the few NFB films not sold in the United States. Why?)

E. Herbert Norman: The man who might have been, Ottawa, 1910-1956

Herb, another graduate of the University of Toronto, had come to Ottawa at an entrance level of the Department of External Affairs. We got to know him well, along with his charming wife Irene. He had made himself an authority on Japan. Born in Kyoto, son of missionaries, he spoke, read and wrote Japanese well. Our friend Charlie Holmes, who had been in his college class at the University of Toronto, introduced us. (Charlie admired him, just as he disliked Northrop Frye, another classmate and a world famous literary critic.)

Herb rose in the Department of External Affairs, and after some lesser experience abroad, was appointed Canadian Ambassador to Egypt. When the United States, with the phobia then prevalent, declared him a Communist, the Canadian Government asked the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to investigate. The RCMP (never accused of being soft on Communism) investigated thoroughly and gave Herb a clean bill of political health. He was not a Communist though he knew some Communists as did most liberals, and was totally trustworthy. The RCMP,

like the FBI a national police force, were as suspicious of Communism as anyone in Washington and on such a matter were above suspicion of bias.

It was 1956, and negotiations were going on between Israel and Egypt, with the United States hoping to arrange a peace. But Herb Norman had established excellent relations with the Egyptian President, Gamal Abdal Nasser, whom he convinced of the advantages of Canadian peace-keeping troops in the Sinai. It was at that point that the spectre of Herb's totally imaginary communism was dragged up in Congress. Herb was sensitive enough that the charges demoralized him and on April 4, 1957 he committed suicide by jumping from a rooftop. He was 47 years of age. His ashes are laid to rest next to the tomb of the poet Shelley in the Protestant cemetery in Rome. The reasons why he committed suicide are still being debated.

The NFB movie has him speaking through an actor: "I am too tired of it all. The forces against me are too formidable, even for an innocent man. And it is better to go now than to be forever pelted with mud."

And after his death his best friend, Moryuama Masao wrote: "If Herbert Norman, who so loved the good in men, and who had such faith in the power of reason to persuade men, has ended his short life in the midst of fanaticism and prejudice and intolerance, what should we do--we who remain behind?"

The State Department had its way and could do its work with no risk of being put in the shadow of the Canadian Embassy.

Herbert Norman was a Canadian diplomat in the best British tradition, in which representatives of the nation abroad are professional diplomats--with university training in history or languages or other relevant discipline, knowing or capable of quickly learning, the history, culture and language of the country to which they are accredited.

The British tradition of democracy includes a neutral public service, working for whatever party is in power. This is not the American way. As a Canadian I was surprised and shocked when I learned that the head of the U.S. Bureau of the Census need know nothing of statistics, but did need to have done service to the party in power.

The Canadian Film Board, a distinctively Canadian institution, held great attraction for us. Its offices were a block away from the DBS, and we came to have close friends in the CFB. They included Margaret-Ann Adamson (by subsequent marriage Lady Elton), Guy Glover, and Norman MacLaren, the latter a highly original maker of films directly drawn on the celluloid, and at an evening party in Margaret-Ann's apartment I even met John Grierson, guru of documentary film, visiting from England.

During the war Enid Charles, wife of Lancelot Hogben, came to Canada with her son David Hogben and many other seekers of refuge from England. R.H. Coats, who knew her book "The Twilight of Parenthood," found a spot for her in the DBS. She was cordially disliked by the old-timers in the Bureau, who had worked up to wherever they were, partly because she stepped in at a fairly high rank, partly because she was a graduate of Cambridge, partly because she smoked a great deal and with a long cigarette holder, partly because they saw her attitude as supercilious. She was actually not English but Welsh, though by a scholarship to Cambridge she had learned to speak like any other Cambridge graduate. Few if any miner's daughters in Wales had accomplished such a thing. . Yet in a sense her heart remained in Wales-I remember her telling me how she wept on watching "How Green was my Valley", even though by the time she came to Canada she had an eminent career as demographer and publicist behind her.

I did see Enid from time to time over the succeeding 30 or more years. Once was when I was in London I took a train to Birmingham where I was to have dinner with her and Lancelot Hogben. I was there at the appointed time, but there was no Lancelot. After a time we sat down to eat and were nearly finished when he came in, more than a little cheered by drink. He immediately turned to me and attacked my work as using the fallacious ideas of R.A. Fisher. I had no chance to clear myself of the charge. And then some years later I saw her in Calcutta. And in between we kept up a correspondence.

One of the people she introduced us to was Robert Herdman Pender, an Irish Catholic with a lovely brogue, and a way of clasping and unclasping his hands as he talked, also here for the war, and a Captain in the Intelligence Branch of the Army. He spoke accent-free German and excellent French. The War of 1914-8 had caught him in Germany as a student, and he was taken prisoner. The imprisonment was far from harsh; he was allowed to have books, and even heard lectures from older prisoners who were academics, then could write the examinations of the University of London. The site of the imprisonment was the Berlin race track, and the shelters, the former stables, now cleaned up, surrounding the track. When it began to get cold in the autumn of 1914 and no provision having been made for heating, those responsible found a disused locomotive, and they put a pipe from its boiler through the stalls that formed a circle around the track, ending back at the locomotive.

Pender was a pianist of a kind, and he and Beatrice played duets. While his playing gave only mild pleasure to the audience (ourselves) it put Pender into a state of positive bliss.

In the same way that Pender thought of himself as a pianist he thought of himself as a philosopher. While very much of Catholic religion (though not observing) he put an extra twist on Christianity, decidedly unofficial. For him God was a name for the society as a whole. Whenever the Bible spoke of God it was really referred to the spirit of the society in question-

whether Catholic, Jewish, or Muslim. And a second proposition: without a name nothing could exist as a social object. For me at the time this was very sophisticated reasoning, the height of intellectual life.

When we got back to Ottawa after 10 months away, our friends hardly knew us, nor we them. Pender was clearly neither a pianist nor a philosopher, though still a very nice guy. And we dared to argue with our Marxist friends along lines that were quite unacceptable.

But on to study at the University of Chicago that changed me so drastically.

Study at the University of Chicago, Chicago, 1942-3

One day in 1941 as I was walking down the hall in the old DBS I met Dr. John Robbins, head of Education Statistics, a quiet-spoken man whom I admired from my very first meeting with him. He was well connected in foundation circles, knew who was who in that (to me mysterious) world where vast sums of money are dispensed for educational purposes. We stopped for a moment to talk, and then he said in his low flat voice that it might be useful for me to get a doctorate. He had been talking to Professor William Ogburn, head of the Sociology Department at the University of Chicago, and there was a fellowship going. He suggested that I write a letter introducing myself to Ogburn, and see what happened. I wrote a page or two, and almost immediately received a letter awarding me the fellowship, funded by the Carnegie Foundation, that would pay me \$2,500 for a year of study towards the doctorate.

So on May 30, 1942, Beatrice and I got off the Ottawa-Toronto-Detroit-Chicago train at Dearborn Station, having sat up all night, intending to go out to the University about 15 miles west of the loop and register. But it turned out to be a holiday, Memorial Day, unknown in Canada, and everything was closed.

We found a hotel and walked around the Loop, found the Field Museum, slept some and so passed the day. The following day we went out to the campus, met Professor Ogburn, scion of an old cotton planting family in Georgia, truly an aristocrat. I saw much of him in later months, and could never talk to him without thinking of the different social levels of our respective ancestors, something that I am sure never entered his mind. He will reappear later in these notes.

Among my teachers was Herbert Blumer, social psychologist, student of George Herbert Mead, a pragmatist philosopher, and himself as much philosopher as sociologist. Also Louis Wirth, student of German sociology, and author of a celebrated book on the manner of life of the immigrant Jewish community of Chicago. His ancestry must have been about the same as mine, and we did not get along at all well, mostly because I was quantitative and mathematical, and he

was on the side of descriptive sociology. His book, *The Ghetto*, about the Jewish quarter of Chicago, is still in print.

Abortion as big business

Then there was Ernest Burgess, a workmanlike scholar with good connections with the police. He transferred to me the records of an abortionist that the police had just closed up, and asked me to do a term paper on this data.

The data were an eye-opener. At that time abortion was strictly against the law--there was a sentence of 10 years in the penitentiary for doing one. Yet on the sixth floor of the State Lake building, mostly occupied by respectable businesses, was a large enterprise, founded and operated by Dr. Josephine Gabler, doing thousands of abortions year by year. The details of its working fascinated me. It did not get an appreciable amount of business from the passing trade within the Building. But it had a large number of agents, who visited beauty parlors and other establishments--any place where a woman was likely to say to her operator "I am in trouble..." and the operator would be able to say "Just take this card down to the address shown." It was the calling card of Dr. Gabler, and on its reverse side the beauty parlor operator or other, would write a code for what she guessed was the income of the woman in trouble. When the woman looked in at the suite on the 6th floor, the receptionist would take the card, turn it over, and say an amount that could be as high as \$300 or as low as \$25; the money would be turned over, the receptionist would anesthetize the woman and wheel her into a cubicle. No receipt was given, and she never saw the doctor who performed the abortion.

Inside the cubicle was a young beginning doctor (in the depression there were plenty of doctors willing to increase their income by a stint of a few hours doing abortions). Through much practice at the curetting used they became highly skilled, and there were not many casualties among their patients.

But now and again an angry husband or brother would call up and threaten the law on Josephine Gabler, the owner of the enterprise. For these cases a special private hospital was maintained on the edge of the city that sent an ambulance to pick up the woman and after treatment sent her home cured.

But there were a few cases in which the worst came to the worst and the woman died. For those a death certificate would be made out by a respectable doctor, and the woman would be provided with a funeral and burial.

Notwithstanding the rare mishap the place was recognized by respectable doctors as high quality, and they often referred their patients to Dr. Gabler's clinic.

Since everyone knew about this business--it required publicity to keep the supply of women coming--there had to be payoffs--to everyone from the cop on the beat all the way up to the state attorney's office.

As a young student from Ottawa I could only think "How well these Americans are organized."

What brought the whole enterprise to an end was a policeman at the low end of the payoff hierarchy. Thinking he was not getting his cut; he went to the Gabler apartment, and in the altercation with her drew his service revolver and fired it. By a sheer accident it hit and killed Gabler's daughter.

That was too much for the public, even in Chicago, and the outcry was such that the police regretfully closed the establishment and so through Professor Burgess I got my data.

Not the least of the educational advantages of the (uncertain) year in graduate school were our living arrangements. We spent a month or two in apartments with spiders and cockroaches, and then there was relief. I let Beatrice tell the story of

Concord House

Our introduction to life in a students' co-op came about through a fellow student of Nathan's named Barbara Weiss. We had arrived in Chicago on Columbus Day 1942, and found through the University of Chicago's Housing Office a small apartment in a large building on Ellis Avenue. It was furnished minimally but adequately, and was reasonably clean except for a heavy infestation, mainly in the bathroom, of some small insects thitherto unfamiliar to me.

Cockroaches I knew from early days at 369 Bank and was happy enough not to find them in our new home. Each morning we flushed them down the bathtub drain before taking a shower. (Our fellow tenants, a few dozen of them, seemed to spend much of their time sitting on the sidewalk in front of the building listening to the World Series games on the radio. No TV in those lovely far-off days.)

Barbara, a delightful girl with a strong New York accent, took pity on our age and decrepitude (youth had not yet acquired its mistrust of anyone over 30--an age we were rapidly approaching)--and urged us to consider a move to Concord House, a students' co-op on Hyde Park Boulevard where she lived.

Everything she told us about it was attractive including the expense, which I seem to remember as about \$100 per month meals included. We accepted her invitation to dine there and see how we liked it.

We liked it enough to move in within a few days. Concord House, the name the students had given it, was actually a double house, half of it built late in the 19th century by a stockbroker who had built or bought it as a single for his bride and later had a mirror image of it attached for their only child, a daughter, when she married some years later. I think they had all three completed their lives at 5200 Hyde Park Blvd. If they had left any descendants we never found out. The houses were scheduled to be torn down to make room for a high rise apartment building, plans that were held in abeyance because of the war. Meanwhile the building was rented for enough to cover the taxes, and a small group of enterprising graduate students, was in possession. Their leading spirit was a young widow, Virginia Satterlee (Ginny), of an old Quaker family. One who became prominent in later life as an economist and social scientist was Bert Hoselitz, a wartime refugee from Austria. Most were graduate students at the University of Chicago, a few were young working people.

At this distance I no longer recall many details of how the house was run. There was a small governing board, chiefly consisting of Ginny who was no longer a student, Ellis Jump (always called Jay), in his last year in the School of Dentistry, Bob Overstreet, a non-student who was produce manager of a co-op supermarket grocery, and John and Miriam (Micky) Brush, who in later life became well-known geographers at Rutgers. . All in all, the inhabitants were about 27. Their names now echo faintly in my memory, though once I could have named them all: Lois Lacroix, Hal Holbrook, Faith Frampton, Edna something, Helen Mary Forbush, Gunhild Gustafson, Berthold Hoselitz. There was another Canadian, a girl from Nova Scotia. Oh, and Susie Mize with dark brown curly hair, who came from a town in the Deep South called Macedonia. Where are they now?

With our introductory dinner, for which we were charged \$2 for the two of us and which we found acceptable if not brilliant, we had apparently passed some kind of admittance test and were invited to move in. The idea of the board was that there should be a married couple in each house, chaperons with no precise supervisory duties, occupying the one large double bedroom that had a bathroom attached. Otherwise there was one more bathroom on each side with some rules for use which I have forgotten. It was considered very bad form indeed to take an unauthorized bath in someone else's time without permission.

One reason we were so quickly approved for membership seems to have been that the married couple in residence in our half of the house had been called away for reasons military or otherwise, so that the right-hand house lacked whatever supervision it should have had. A difficulty immediately arose. The right-side room and bath was officially unoccupied, but another member, a sad girl named Edna, had moved into it. I have forgotten, but I think her fiancé who had once expected to share it with her, was a war casualty. We were therefore lodged temporarily in a largish bedroom in the left-hand house while the board proposed to fight it out

with Edna who did not want to move. Part of her argument was that there was a leak in the cold water tap of the bathtub so that she invariably finished her weekly bath sitting in three inches of cold water. We knew nothing of this rannygazoo when we moved in, and as soon as we found out we refused to dislodge that poor sad girl and said we were satisfied with such bathing facilities as were available to us. There was a considerable flap about which we were kept in the dark, but we stood firm, our main ground being that there were victims of the Nazi invasion of Poland who were living in hollow trees in the snow, and having to share a bathroom with ten or so other people didn't seem all that desperate.

There was a lot of work to be done, and each of us contributed a nominal five hours a week. Beatrice made the Sunday dinner, our paid cook being free on Sunday. Nathan, Canadian and hence practiced in tending furnaces, looked after the furnaces in the two houses. To economize we used soft coal, dirty but all we could afford. And very bulky: on a cold night I reckon I shoveled half a ton into the two furnaces.

The house also looked to the entertainment of its members. We had Saturday night parties, with dancing to a piano. Never will I forget the performance by Bert Hoselitz, brought up in Vienna and a friend of his, also Viennese, as they danced a Strauss waltz around our spacious living room that had been cleared of furniture.

All in all it was a delight to live as a member of this community, inevitable gossip and all. We invited the august Professor Herbert Blumer, who was one of my sociology teachers, to have dinner with us one night so that he could see the Concord House model of collective living.

Quite outside of Concord house I learned much from fellow students. One was Reinhold Bendix, who studied and taught the work of Max Weber, building on it his own creative additions. There was Patty Peck, a girl of poor family from the South, but very very smart, Tony Weinlein, who maintained himself at school working as a pharmacist, but who ultimately dropped out: he had no real taste for academic work. And Annabelle Bender, whom we visited in Milwaukee where her family generously put us up. She subsequently did have an academic career, and I have been intermittently in touch with her.

One of our student friends was a man named Harry Walker, a black, with whom we more than once went out drinking beer. On one occasion we with our wives went into a bar on 63rd Street, sat down at a glass-topped table and ordered; four well-filled beer glasses were placed in front of us.

On the first sip it was plain to all four of us that liquid soap had been added to the beer. "This is in my honor," said Harry sadly, almost apologetically. I happened to have in my pocket some cardboard coasters, and it was a simple matter to place one on top of a glass, and holding it

tightly turn it over on the table, then slip out the coaster. Then we left, without visible hurry, but without delay. Outside Harry burst out laughing--he was the one of us who most appreciated the joke, and the picture of the beer spilling over that impudent waitress.

On the way to a solid academic career was Robert Reed, son of a distinguished academic at Johns Hopkins University. We visited Bob's apartment one evening, and were treated to a brilliant series of bird pictures, projected onto a screen from 2" x 2" slides. He had made them by rigging a camera in a tree frequented by birds of a number of species. When a bird lighted on the right branch it ignited a flash bulb, and the surprised bird, eyes wide open, was caught on the film. I could imagine the ingenuity required to set up the system, and the patience to operate it. Bob's career brought him ultimately to the Harvard School of Public Health, as did mine, and we dined together more than once in the course of the 1970s.

During my year in Chicago I attended lectures by world renowned scholars, but of all my memories none is as sharp as our life in Concord House.