

Some trees known and loved

The poet Joyce Kilmer, like Evelyn Waugh the novelist, was a man despite his given name. In each case they were ancestral family surnames. The best known of his 'bad' (i.e. sentimental) but popular (i.e. sentimental) poems began, "I think that I shall never see / A poem lovely as a tree".

In July, 1918 he died in the Second Battle of the Marne, aged 31.

Someone said that a man should hope for three things in his lifetime - to have a son, to plant a tree and to write a book. This writer has fathered two sons, one of whom did not survive the trauma of being born.

I saw him, briefly, only once before taking a small white box to the cemetery. The second boy, now a man, is Kevin. One remembers what Edgar says to King Lear: "Men must endure their going hence even as their coming hither". C.S. Lewis chose those words for his memorial stone.

Now that June is here again and the trees are in full leaf, I think about some that I have known and 'loved'. One knows that, properly speaking, we should love people and merely like things.

But some trees have a definite personality. By the way, I also have two daughters in a "balanced family" in which my son has two daughters and each of my girls has two sons.

At age 13, Kevin helped me select and transplant a one metre tall maple sapling, about which more anon. But first, that matter of writing a book. Although in each of the past 18 years I have written 50,000 words for this paper alone, the writing of a book has thus far eluded me. The average novel has 50,000 words, Tolstol and other Russian authors exceeded.

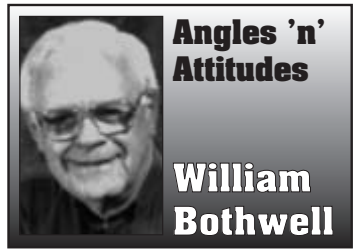
In terms of varied human experience, a lifetime should produce the material for many books but sometimes I feel like one of my students in English who said, "Far from my life suggesting the plot for a novel, up to now it has merely been material for a few magazine articles".

A conservationist might lament that of making many books there is no end and that much publish-

ing means the destruction of too many trees. Those not involved in that kind of deforestation are the legendary and symbolic trees one has known, those in Sherwood Forest and the Forest of Arden and, of course, one's family tree.

In addition, as a schoolboy I wore a blazer on which the crest bore the Latin motto "Velut arbor ita ramus" - "As the tree is, so is the branch".

The implication was something like the admonition that only a good tree produces good fruit.



Angles 'n' Attitudes

William Bothwell

'Fruit' may not be a felicitous word in some contexts although one remembers the priest who reminded us that a church should produce spiritual fruit, not religious nuts.

Those of us who went up to the University of Toronto from the University Schools understood the symbolism encountered there. The U of T armorial crest is surmounted by a tree. The motto is "Velut arbor aevo" - "Like a tree in age", or "As a tree grows with the passing of time". Is that the scope of knowledge or the institutional university that expands with age?

If it is the institution that looks forward to growth and influence, should it foresee the possibility of future disintegration into a pluriversity? If so, what might be the corrective factors?

An academic community in which various faculties have no foundational unity is hardly a university.

Leaving those academic considerations aside takes me back to the time at which my son and I planted the tree that still grows on our old property in the Hockley Valley.

My brother John's garden in Burlington, had a magnificent maple on which the leaves turned as red as those on the flag by Thanksgiving each year. Had Kilmer been a Canadian, he might have seen it as a symbol of

"stand on guard" patriotism, firmly rooted "on Canada's fair domain" in a frontier region that was once bravely defended.

I wished very much to have a similar tree at "Kintore", our 'country place'. Early in October, 1970, Kevin and I found a sturdy tree, its leaves already cardinal red, in a densely wooded part of the valley. A gentle rise in a part of our garden occupied mainly by evergreens was the destined place for it. On Thanksgiving morning in 1970 a twelve year old boy and I did the transplanting. The little tree flourished. In 1991 it became the subject of an as yet unpublished children's story, "The Christmas Maple", written for our grandchildren.

I have since had other trees transplanted to a town garden - two Norway maples and a couple of Japanese lilacs. But the tree I now appreciate most is the one that stands between the street and the wrap-around deck of my corner town house. Through its leafy branches that, as I relax there, screen me from all but birds and passing clouds, I often look up and wish that heaven were still just above that bright blue sky and the clouds that sometimes linger for a time, becalmed in it. There is little for one's comfort in what I now know to be endless space up there.

The tree that shelters the deck was still young when I bought my present house ten years ago. Since then my personal 'arbor in aevo' has grown. Hammond Innes, the prolific British author, travelled and researched six months a year and wrote the other six. He also planted many trees to replace, he said, those consumed by the books he read and wrote.

If writing books is not 'my thing', buying them certainly is. Why do so many of us have books about birds and flowers but so few about the largest living things on earth - trees?

Should Canadians not know that a Douglas fir is not a fir tree at all but a species of hemlock? Trees beautify the landscape, shelter songbirds and cleanse the air we breathe. Joyce Kilmer made a good point in that 'bad' poem.

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A double standard even by political practices

Reality check. The U.S. deficit represents 13.6 per cent of that country's gross domestic product (GDP); Japan's deficit, 9.9; Britain 9.8; France, 6.2; and Germany, 4.7 per cent.

So just how bad is Finance Minister Jim Flaherty's unwelcome news that Canada's deficit has flared to \$50 billion?

Bad enough, apparently, that Liberal Leader Michael Ignatieff wants Flaherty fired - as does NDP Leader Jack Layton - and is threatening to bring down the Tory government and plunge us into a federal election.

So - once again - just how bad is it? Well, that \$50 billion, admittedly a pile of money, represents a meagre 3.3 per cent of Canada's GDP, roughly one-quarter of the deficit currently being chalked up by U.S. President Barack Obama, apparently - to some at least - the greatest political leader in the history of the world if not the universe.

In other words, the opposition blather over the deficit is just that - much partisan blather signifying nothing.

It gets worse. Just a few months ago, the Liberals, NDP and Bloc Quebecois were on the verge of overturning the election results and forming an unholy coalition. Why? Because - wait for it - Prime Minister Stephen Harper was refusing to spend ENOUGH money to bail out all those Canadians caught in the current economic downturn. Throw the bum out, they screamed!

Then, when Harper unveiled his budget - and, to be fair, Flaherty didn't exactly come clean on his deficit predictions at the time - these same politicians yelled that the Tories were spending too much of your money and couldn't be counted on to run the economy. Off with their heads, they shouted! Ever since, the opposition parties - outraged at the lack of Tory spending - have continued to hammer the Tories for the apparent sin - and no, I'm not making this up - of not spending even more on a whole series of programs which the opposition thinks are necessary.

This is a double standard even by political practices. Of particular note here is Ignatieff's ongoing, coast-to-coast campaign to force the Tories into pouring untold hundreds of millions into Employment Insurance, an issue so vital - according to Ignatieff - that it too could spark a later summer or early fall election.

But wait. Doesn't that mean even more spending

and, with government revenues dropping because of the current economic situation - not to mention the billion-dollar-plus bailouts of the auto industry - wouldn't that mean even higher deficits?

Not so, says Ignatieff. Why not, you may ask? Because Ignatieff says his EI plan is only temporary, not permanent, just until the economy gets up and rolling again.

Even if that were true - and what politician would beef up EI only to cut it down the road - the fact is that for whatever period it covered, given the size of the expense, it would mean even higher deficits. There's no getting away from that. None.

This is not to argue that the Tories are faultless in their handling of the economy. For me, it's a huge mistake to attempt to buy our way out of an economic mess. It never works. It just prolongs the pain.

But given the difficulties of trying to keep a minority government afloat - and Harper's penchant for big-time spending to boot - it was simply inevitable that Flaherty would have to listen to opposition threats and spend more of your dollars than he would like to spend.

Critics will say that the Tories are also at fault for cutting taxes before the recession, particularly cutting two percentage points off the GST. Nonsense. You can look it up. It may strike you as counter-intuitive, but cutting personal taxes historically means more government revenue, not less.

People have more money in their pockets so they spend it and governments reap the benefits. That's not what brought government revenue down. It's things like the precipitous collapse of major industries. That's something that no government could stop.

As for Ignatieff's increasingly hysterical threats about changing the EI structure, well, he must know that the current system - which has different standards for different parts of the country, depending upon their historical employment rates - was not the brainchild of a Tory government.

No, no. It was written and adapted by a previous Liberal government.

So while Ignatieff whines about negative Tory ads - and refuses to comment on just why, during his decades of working in the U.S. he constantly referred to his fellow Americans as "we" instead of "they" - he continues to attack the government for a) profligate spending and b) miserly spending.

And they wonder why people shake their collective heads at politicians.



National Affairs

Claire Hoy

Feeding nine billion people

A feature in the National Geographic is aptly named "The End of Plenty". (The Global Food Crisis, June 2009). Much has been written about global warming which is in lock-step with a rapidly increasing population. A principle concern is how this planet will be able to support a projected 9 billion people by the year 2030 with loss in agricultural productivity due to reduction in farm productivity due to drought conditions, deterioration of soil organics and urban expansion.

The 'Green Revolution' is credited with providing food for the survival of close to a billion people in the mid 1950s. Never-the-less, the current rate of climate change guarantees hotter conditions and water scarcity impacting on food production for a hungry world. Another green revolution is needed to again double current food production.

We are living in a prosperous age, a good news/bad news scenario. People in the third world, and particularly heavily populated China and India, are enjoying a better standard of life. For example annual per capita consumption of pork (protein!) in China increased from 33 to 72 lbs in a decade. It is estimated that pork production requires over 5 times the weight of grain compared to a pound of meat. Grain fattened beef in the States requires ten times the weight of grain. Current national policies emphasize production of grain for ethanol compensating for an expected loss of oil capacity as fossil fuels run out. The resulting escalation in loss of agricultural land is the bad news.

High technology is the answer proposed by scientists. There is a great deal in the news about genetic engineering with industrial emphasis on monopoly control of food production, hence making billions of dollars for chemical com-

panies, defined by many as greed, holding the rest of the world to ransom. Some companies require farmers to contract the purchase of high yielding seed from them annually while prohibiting the saving of seed for subsequent production. This includes the necessity for buying large quantities of fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides, products of fossil fuels, from the same producers.

The article reports on vastly increased grain production in Africa, 'The Malawi Miracle'. This is based on purchase of genetically engineered seed, pesticides, herbicides and synthetic fertilizers, accompanied by a reliance on irrigation. Undoubtedly adherence to the party line ensures extending the green revolution to Africa from its successful development in Asian countries. This also includes a "legacy of tainted soil and depleted aquifers" as well as greater dependence on fossil fuels used in production of soil additives.

Alternative and more natural measures are proposed by a well known Indian ecologist. This is a "paradigm shift toward more sustainable and ecologically friendly practices".

Dr. Vandana Shiva has written several texts condemning development of commercial practices dependant on fossil fuels and particularly patent laws ensuring monoculture production of company products, "Monoculture of the mind!" Composting helps sequester soil carbon while holding moisture. Use of legumes, nitrogen-fixing species, increases crop yields while reducing reliance on imported fertilizers.

Similarly many natural processes in Canada have great potential for reduced costs, soil enhancement and increased yields. Many in the agricultural field are practicing no till farming which lessens production costs, reduces organic



From the Global Classroom

Doug Skeates

breakdown in the soil and minimizes the need for dependence on applications of water and imported chemical additives. Establishment of forest cover in the form of shelterbelts and intercrop species have the added advantage of reducing evaporation and wind erosion. Roadside plantings also reduce ploughing needed due to snow buildup on the highways while extending groundwater replenishment during the period of spring melting.

Shiva has also emphasized crop diversity in India where local knowledge is employed in sowing mixtures of cultivars extending periods of harvesting.

The practice is labour intensive even involving transplanting of later producing cultivars to ensure greater continuity of crop yields hence food availability during the growing season.

Many of our farming practices are based on minimizing effort. Crops are sown and harvested mechanically necessitating large scale monocultures to simplify operating schedules. The name of the game has become maximum economic gain whereas society's real need is maximization of food productivity if our future needs are to be met.

Your Weekly Chuckle . . .

By KEITH HUNTER

"What was the hardest part of preparing Thanksgiving dinner in prehistoric times?"
"I don't know. Tell me."
"Stuffing the brontosaurus."

Dipping Into the Past

Local mother, daughter were removed to insane asylum in Hamilton

difficulty. Ada went quietly enough and assisted the officer. The three Johnston men have given little trouble, and have much improved under the kind but strict discipline of Governor Bowles. They talk for the most part rationally enough, and blame their mother's actions for any evidence of insanity they have exhibited. What disposition will be made of them by the authorities is unknown. They are undoubtedly weak-minded, but capable of doing a large amount of manual labour under proper supervision.

Melanchton Station: Our popular mechanic, T. K. Slack, is reshin-



gling the town hall, which will add much to the appearance of the building and was much needed.

Shelburne council has approved the purchase for \$450 of a gasoline engine to pump water for the village's waterworks system. The tender, from a Brantford firm, was the lowest of four submitted.

75 YEARS AGO

Wednesday, June 8, 1934
Nominations for the coming Provincial Election will be held Tuesday next, June 12th. The election will take place Tuesday, June 19th, with the polls open from 6 a.m. to 7

p.m. Since 1905, the Conservatives have won all but one election, the exception being 1919 when the United Farmers of Ontario formed a minority government with 44 of the 112 seats.

Mulmur Council has instructed its Clerk to write the Department of Forestry asking that fires of recent date be investigated, as such fires are believed to be on incendiary nature.

The STAR WEEKLY magazine says there should be state health insurance in Canada which would include sickness benefits to tide families over such periods of misfortune.

50 YEARS AGO

Wednesday, June 3, 1959
Robert Wales, a tobacco farmer from Everett, has been named Liberal candidate for the riding of Dufferin-Simcoe in the June 11 provincial election. The only other candidate will be Rev. A. W. Downer, Progressive Conservative.

In the riding of Wellington-Dufferin, John Root, Progressive

Conservative and Bert Holtom, Liberal, will be the only names on the ballots.

Shelburne Council has passed a new Subdivision Control Bylaw.

25 YEARS AGO

Wednesday, June 6, 1984
Orangeville Council has given approval to construction of a new separate school on a site west of the Blind Line. St. Peter School currently has about 13 portables and the Dufferin-Peel Roman Catholic Separate School Board is being pressured to build a second school in Orangeville.

A contract has been awarded to Fermap Paving Ltd. of Rexdale for resurfacing Highway 10 between Caledon Village and Orangeville. Work is to begin this month with completion set for late summer.

Perrin Beatty has been re-elected by acclamation as Progressive Conservative candidate in the federal riding of Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe.