



## FORGOTTEN REFUGEES

### The 1956 Palestinian Refugee Movement to Canada: Part 2

by Michael Molloy with Robin Fraser

*The first part of this article on the small 1956 movement of Palestinian refugees to Canada was published in Bulletin 56, September 2009. We pick up the story after a team headed by Paul Fortin, Officer-in-Charge, Immigration Athens, returned from Beirut, Jerusalem and Amman.*

#### An Ill-Fated Scheme

On February 10, 1956, Fortin reported on his mission to G. R. Benoit (G.R.B) Chief, Operations Division. The file copy bears the following handwritten note in the margin:

*The Director [C.E.S.Smith]: For Information. This appears to have been an ill fated scheme.  
G.R.B. 16.2.56.*

Reports from Fortin and the Canadian Legation reveal what happened and why.

Fortin reported that, he, along with Dr. Y. Dupuis and R. Shorey, the "Stage B" Officer, arrived in Beirut on 13 January and met with the Legation's MacCallum and Shenstone, as well as with various UNRWA officials. Fortin praised the cooperativeness of UNRWA and then dropped a bombshell: UNRWA had not done any pre-screening because it was "too politically delicate for them to undertake the responsibility of refusing to accept applications." This explained the "rather mediocre results of the scheme". His report presents the following statistics:

INTERVIEWS	CASES	PEOPLE
Beirut	104	324
Amman	42	116
Jerusalem	44	119
TOTAL	190	599

Of these 190 cases, 134 were single workers and 56 were families.

Fifty-one cases representing 97 people were "pending," awaiting travel documents or background checks. Fifty-two cases (196 people) were rejected on medical grounds, 30 (55 people) failed to meet civil selection criteria and one case (one person) failed the background check. In all, 83 cases representing 252 people were screened out. 21 cases (98 people) were rejected at the pre-interview stage and in 35 cases (121 people) applications were withdrawn. (The target set by the committee on 26 October, 1955, was 100 cases, 300 people.)

The number of rejections on medical grounds was high and the 45-year age limit resulted in more refusals. (The age limit had not been communicated to the Legation or to UNRWA.) Deferentially, Fortin suggested it would have been an "excellent idea" if the instructions sent to him on 15 December had also been sent to the Legation and UNRWA. (Benoit's comment in the margin: "But in any event UNRWA would not pre-screen.")

While the definition of "family" set by Canada had been communicated to UNRWA, there were many cases involving "single persons wishing to bring a whole string of relatives, old parents, older brothers and sisters not coming within the trade criterion and even aunts." As they would not come separately, they were refused; this

caused “ill feelings and ... harsh words”. Some, expecting Canada to provide “furnished house, specific jobs and all the rest,” withdrew their applications when told this would not be the case.

The short advance notice of the team’s arrival meant that few refugees and even fewer potential “self-payers” heard about the mission in time to apply. Consequently, most of those approved were either UNRWA employees or those on UNRWA rations (and therefore eligible to have UNRWA pay their fare). Only 17 pending cases were in a position to pay their own way.

After noting the negative publicity directed at the Canadian scheme (see below), Fortin provided a gloomy assessment of the viability of further Palestinian movements:

*I have no reason to doubt that there are among the Palestinian Refugees well educated men and women, who can speak either English or French; these people, due to their high level of education, have been mostly employed in administrative and clerical work and would hardly be suitable for establishment in Canada. When we reach the class of tradesmen, I may say that except for a few exceptions, the great majority have a much lower level of education and they are far from being fluent in either language. Although they may have learned the language at school, their day-to-day dealings were with their own people, so they had little opportunity to practice the language learned at school...*

In closing, Fortin recommended a minimum of four months preparation time and sending an officer in advance to pre-screen applications if a sequel to this movement was contemplated.

### **The Legation’s Perspective**

The Immigration team departed Beirut on February 1, 1956 and by February 6 the energetic staff of the Legation had prepared three dispatches for MacCallum’s signature. Dispatch 35 analyzed the operation, Dispatch 33 provided External Affairs (and future historians) with a chronological summary of “how the enterprise has been carried out so far,” and Dispatch 34 dealt with media and official reaction in the Levant. The Legation’s Dispatch 35 provided more analysis and rolled up the statistics as follows:

	Preselected by UNRWA		Tentatively Accepted by Canada	
	Applications	People	Applications	People
Beirut	103	332	36	64
Amman	42	116	12	24
Jerusalem	43	127	5	10
TOTAL	188	575	53	98

The Legation’s take on the outcome was that it “was not uncreditable” in view of:

- *the experimental nature of the operation, which meant that instructions to UNRWA officials had to be supplemented on several occasions after the programme was launched,*
- *the reduction which proved to be necessary in the length of the period allowed for the operation, and*
- *the unfortunate circumstances that general disturbances relating to discussions of the Baghdad Pact which broke out in Jordan a little more than a fortnight after the Canadian Immigration scheme was announced and were renewed about a fortnight before the Immigration team arrived in Amman.*

Despite very tight time frames the number of cases generated in Beirut met expectations. Disruptions in Amman meant it produced 85 cases instead of the expected 200. With more time the full target, or more, could have been achieved.

Of the 53 accepted cases, 40 were single. This was a disappointment to UNRWA, which had hoped that more families would be accepted and therefore reduce their welfare rolls. The age limit for heads of family (45 years) accounted for 72% of rejections. Medical refusal removed others - one medically failed person disqualified the whole family.

Those accepted included welders, diesel and automotive mechanics, house painters and typists, with a scattering of other occupations, but no engineers, nurses, tailors, masons or housekeeping service workers. Many were UNRWA employees. The group also included many Christian Arabs, twice-uprooted Armenians and “fortunately” some Muslim Arabs as well.

The “invidious position” in which UNRWA found itself with regard to publicizing the program reduced the number of refugees who heard about the program, despite the Legation issuing two press releases.

*... news of the Canadian project was slow in reaching the refugees, many of whom do not see the newspapers. ...moreover, the refugees needed time to consider the implications of suddenly emigrating to a country whose doors had hitherto been closed against them and to find out how safe it would be for them to disregard accusations of treachery to the cause of refugee repatriation to which they knew they would be liable if they applied for emigration to Canada.*

The short interval between the announcement of the scheme and the arrival of the team, two weeks sooner than anticipated, created difficulties. The result was that the team departed just as “real momentum” was being established. An additional week would have made a large difference, especially in Jordan.

The time factor played out in other ways. December was taken up in communications between the mission and Ottawa on medical procedures, which delayed medical screening until early January.

Failure to pre-communicate the 45-year age limit meant UNRWA was unable to discourage over-aged applicants or those who presented their sons as the wage earners. UNRWA doctors did an excellent job but would not take responsibility for “refusing” the applicants: this resulted in re-examinations in some cases.

In Beirut, junior Palestinian UNRWA employees discouraged people from applying until this problem was noticed and corrected. The Legation felt UNRWA officials in Jordan outperformed their counterparts in Beirut in part because they had an extra ten days at their disposal.

## **Local Reaction**

***Dangerous Western Plot to Expatriate Refugees and Bury Them in Oblivion in Canada - Alef-Ba Newspaper, Damascus. December 3, 1955***

***New effort to stop refugees from thinking of returning to occupied sector of Palestine – Canada welcomes refugees to its territory – Lebanon demands repatriation to refugees’ country of origin – Ash-Shaab Newspaper, Beirut. December 6 1955.***

These are some of the more “arresting” headlines reported in the Legation’s Dispatch 34 of February 6, 1956.

Chargé d’Affaires MacCallum played down the media reaction stating it “aroused much less political opposition than we had expected in view of the friendly warning given to us by... the Secretary-General of the Lebanese Foreign Ministry”. While former Grand Mufti, Haj Amin al-Husseini, called on refugees to refuse resettlement, she noted he waited until the team had finished its work before issuing his comment. She remarked “In reporting this blast The Arab World described Husseini as being the person held responsible by many for some of the worst features of the Arab defeat of 1948.”

McCallum noted the lack of protest from Arab League headquarters (it would come later) and observed there were more protests in Syria where the Canadian program did not operate. She wrote that:

*...the Arab governments and refugee organizations, though firm enough on the principle of repatriation itself, are far from being vindictive toward individual refugees who have placed their own personal security above the general interest in repatriation for the displaced Arab population as a whole, although the danger of violence is never completely absent. In this the Arabs seem to be more lenient than were Jewish Committee agents towards those DP's (Displaced Persons) in European camps who accepted offers of resettlement in North America and were made to suffer for having broken the solid front organized for political purposes instead of demanding transfer to Palestine as the only form of resettlement they would accept.*

The chronology in Dispatch 33 fills in a few gaps. Conversations with UNRWA regarding refugee resettlement in Canada started in May 1955. The Legation had attempted to have the Immigration team's visit postponed and this resulted in a one-week delay (January 14th instead of January 6th). A two or three-week additional delay would have brought substantial results as UNRWA in Jordan believed it could have generated 1000 potential candidates.

The final word from the Legation (Numbered Letter 135, April 9, 1956) reports that the pool of refugees heading to Canada had declined to 39 heads of families and 37 dependants. The first group left Beirut by ship on the S.S. Adana on April 6. Shenstone saw them off, and delivered a "short homily wishing them luck but emphasizing that their future in Canada will depend from the first strictly on their own efforts". The refugees were "hard working respectable people who will give no trouble". It noted the refugees were worried about reuniting with relatives and observed that by regulation they would have less opportunity to sponsor relatives than Lebanese immigrants.

The trail of the first group was picked up in an April 23, 1956 memo from Immigration's Chief of Operations to "All District Superintendents" advising that the first of the Palestinians had transferred from the S.S. Adana to the S.S. Saturnia in Naples on April 14<sup>th</sup> and would arrive in Halifax on April 24<sup>th</sup>. The memo assigned destinations to the arriving immigrants and urged the Officer-in-Charge at the port of entry to ensure *that these people are extended every courtesy and consideration in order that their first impressions of Canada may be favourable... A special effort is to be made ... to welcome this first settlement of Palestinian refugees outside the Arabic Continent and every precaution should be taken to prevent the occurrence of untoward incidents.*

Their geography might have been shaky but Immigration wanted to do well by this group.

The Palestinians trickled into Canada over the summer and, as far as the historical record is concerned, and as the Syrian newspaper predicted, into oblivion.

Well perhaps not quite. While serving in Jordan in the late 1990s, I met a Mr. Ptolemy who reported acting as interpreter for a Canadian team selecting Palestinian refugees while working in the 50s at the UK Legation in Amman. Glubb Pasha of the Arab Legion had been involved in the process. Ptolemy recalled visiting the refugees from Jordan in Toronto in the 60s. We agreed to tape his recollections but he passed away shortly thereafter.

## **And Then?**

The Legation assumed this experiment might lead to further movements and assured Ottawa that the subsequent efforts would be more fruitful. Global events that the disturbances in Amman presaged precluded this.

On July 26, 1956, just before the August 5 arrival in Canada of the last of the refugees, Egypt's President Nasser announced the nationalization of the Suez Canal. The UK froze Egyptian assets and the crisis quickly grew; by November 5, Egypt had been attacked by Israel, Britain and France. As these events were unfolding, however, the Hungarian population rose up against the communist regime. Russian tanks rolled into Budapest

on November 4, and tens of thousands of Hungarians poured into Western Europe. The resulting major resettlement operation was soon to bring 37,000 Hungarians to Canada.

Simultaneously thousands of Brits, disgusted by the Suez debacle, decided to leave for better prospects elsewhere. In 1957, 108,989 British immigrants joined the Hungarians heading for Canada and total immigration hit 282,000, the highest number since before the First World War. Within the year the Liberal Government fell, the economy tanked and the little band of Palestinians receded from official memory.

## **Observations**

When I first read this file I was struck by how some things had not changed since 1956. The hostility of Arab governments and Palestinian society and institutions towards resettling people to places like Canada remains as staunch today as when MacCallum and Shenstone were approached in May, 1955. When Canadian Foreign Minister John Manley visited Israel and Palestine early in 2001 and mentioned Canada's willingness to resettle refugees, if and when there was need within a comprehensive solution, he was burned in effigy. Ironically, scant weeks later young Palestinians from the miserable camps of Lebanon started showing up at Blackpool Quebec Port of Entry seeking refugee status.

The second thing evident was how little the fundamentals of planning and delivering a resettlement program have changed since that group of civil servants met at the Woods Building on October 26, 1955. All the elements that generations of refugee policy planners would recognize are there: the appeal from an international agency, the assessment by Canadian officials in the field, the request for political guidance, the setting of quotas, definitions, selection criteria, family, health and security issues, assigning of tasks to those who will select the refugees and those who will receive them, sorting out who does what with international partners, travel documents, travel costs, travel arrangements, initial reception, destination arrangements and anxiety about public reactions.

Still, values, perceptions and practices have changed profoundly. In 1955/6 most Canadians still believed in the policies laid down by the Mackenzie King government in 1949 which affirmed, to put it bluntly, that Canada's racial composition would not change. It was definitely a "man's world" and a Canada where the notion of multiculturalism, born in the findings of the Bilingualism and Bicultural Commission in the 1960s, had not emerged; where the "universal" immigration policy was years away and provisions for refugees in our immigration legislation was decades off.

The decision to scatter the tiny group from Quebec City to Port Arthur was a product of an "assimilation" model of immigrant settlement. It would be decades before the desirability of clustering new arrivals or the utility of scooping up entire multi-generational refugee families would be recognized and practiced.

On the Canadian side, three factors impinged on the program. First was the short time between the project's announcement on December 2, 1955, and the team's arrival in Beirut on January 13, 1956. This reflected the desire to ensure arrival in Canada in the spring in keeping with the sensible practice of getting immigrants settled before winter. Unhappily, this left insufficient time for word of the Canadian program to reach the very community of self-supporting Palestinian refugees the Legation had identified as the most promising potential immigrants.

Second, a month was wasted communicating the medical screening requirements to UNRWA. This is hard to explain as the standard package of tests had been in place for years, and differed little, if at all, from what is required to this day.

Third, Immigration HQ's failure to ensure that the Legation and UNRWA knew of the 45-year age limit for heads of family undercut the otherwise admirable planning of the operation. This could have been accomplished easily if the Chief of Operations' message to Athens of December 15 had been copied to the Legation, especially as direct communications between the Legation and Immigration H.Q. had been authorized. This was a deadly error. In the cultural context of the times the Immigration officials were not able

to accommodate family configurations that were not "normal" in Canadian terms, even though the prevalence of multi-generational families had been flagged by the Legation. This seriously reduced the pool of eligible candidates

A fourth factor, outside Canadian control, was the anti-Baghdad Pact riots in Jordan that disrupted UNRWA's planning and foreshadowed major events that would push Palestinian resettlement off the table. Subsequent generations of Canadian officials would learn to count on the unexpected when planning activities in the Middle East.

Fifth, while UNRWA threw the necessary resources and energy into the scheme, it either miscommunicated or failed to appreciate the constraints that would preclude the pre-screening the Canadians were counting on.

It is not obvious why the government directed the civil service to proceed with this initiative. The argument that taking a hundred cases out of a refugee population of 900,000 would ease the donors' financial burden or reduce regional instability is very thin indeed, although the officials and politicians hoped that Canadian leadership might encourage others to participate. (The file in fact records a query by the New Zealanders, who were not impressed.) Canada was looking for skilled workers, but officials, worried about the refugees' skills, anticipated difficulty placing them in employment.

It is important to recall that in Lester Pearson, Canada had an External Affairs Minister who had been deeply involved in shaping the post-war world and who knew the Middle East file and Canada's efforts in helping to clear the refugee camps in Europe intimately. In addition, Jack Pickersgill was an exceptionally proactive Immigration Minister. Pearson and MacCallum had been colleagues in External Affairs and had worked on various post-war issues. It is impossible to know how much her credibility with Pearson weighed in the balance, given her stature as one of Canada's few Middle East experts.

Once the political decision was made, officials acted with skill, purposeful coordination and alacrity, but a little patience would not have been amiss. One can only wonder at the outcome had Ottawa accepted the Legation's recommendation to delay the operation until late January, 1956.

Still, it is not clear that a follow-up program would have been possible. Over time, local opposition to resettlement programs for Palestinian refugees hardened. Dispatch 126 from the Legation in April, 1956, notes that the Canadian resettlement program would be discussed (and presumably denounced) at a meeting of the Arab League that week: events in Algeria drove it from the top of the agenda. Among the final attachments on the file are clippings from the early 1960s, reporting opposition at the national and Arab League levels to Australian recruitment of Palestinians from the Gulf countries. When Canada and Lebanon decided to upgrade their Legations to Embassies in the mid 1960s Lebanon insisted that articles of agreement include a section forbidding Canada from resettling further refugees from Lebanon. When Palestinians began to qualify as Independent Immigrants under the universal 1967 Canadian Immigration Regulations, protests were received. And ignored.



## **Ottawa Landmark - Nate's Deli - closes end of May, 2010**

Armies march on their stomachs and so do immigration services. For all the years that Immigration Headquarters was in the Bourque Building at the corner of Rideau and King Edward in Ottawa, Nate's, just across the street, was a favourite lunch and coffee stop. The connection stuck long after Immigration moved on and it has kept a special link to the Historical Society. Its offspring, "The Place Next Door," has hosted many CIHS dinners and Nate's

itself has been the home of a long-running retirees' breakfast meeting. In April this year the CIHS Board held its monthly meeting at Nate's to mark the connection and savour its famous hot smoked meat sandwiches for the last time. The group photo was taken by Nate's congenial host, Dave Smith.



## Contact with Members

Since the last Bulletin we've heard from a number of our members. **Jim Cross** sent a note asking whether the offer of a second life membership would guarantee as many years as he got out of the original membership – we'll do our best Jim but don't give up on the golf. His complaint? The Bulletin could do with fewer obituaries; not the editor's fault, of course, but that of Old Father Time.

**Caroline Melis** liked the tone of Bulletin 57 and got a good laugh out of several of the articles.

**Susan Burrows** in far Hong Kong writes that she loved the "Get a Second Life" membership idea and is pleased that CIHS is continuing to make a contribution to Canadian History.

We heard from our oldest member, **Harry Tobin** in Victoria, who is 98.

We've also heard from **Ahmed Bhaloo**, **Rick Chappell (Bahamas)**, **Bruce Gundison (Delhi)**, and **Stan Pollin**.

While in Jerusalem recently, Mike Molloy made contact with **George Varnai** at his home in the West Bank where he has resided since retiring.

We've also been in touch with **Clare Scatchard** and were pleased to learn he is working on his memoirs.

**Wilf Greaves** reports he has returned to his home town of Sault St. Marie and is residing in a condo that was once Sault St. Marie Collegiate, which he attended in 1934.

We had a friendly chat with **Bert Cheffins** who started his career on the Peace Bridge in the days when the navy blue Immigration uniform included a

double row of brass buttons. Bert reports he coated his with clear nail polish to avoid frequent polishing. (See Bulletin 9 for some of the lore that the brass buttons generated.) Bert and Les Tickner trained the illustrious group of 1963 that included our Treasurer Raph Girard.

**Fran Psutka** wrote to draw attention to a fine exhibition at the McCord Museum until October 2010, called "Being Irish O'Quebec". Check it out at [www.mccord-museum.pq.ca](http://www.mccord-museum.pq.ca).

Through the kindness of **June Coxon** we have been able to make copies of fascinating video interviews made by June and her late husband for the CIHS in 1994, with Bill Burton, Al Gunn, Jack Manion, Al Troy, Vigi Ring and Edna Whinny. We hope to make these available to members when the new web site comes on line this summer and, resources permitting, we will resume the interview series in the years ahead.

**Darrell Mecheau** was in Ottawa in April and breakfast with him at Nate's provided an opportunity for Mike Molloy and **Jacques Beaulne** to catch up on current goings-on, as well as on some early days in the service.

Finally, **John Hunter** wrote to top up his life membership (much appreciated). We strongly recommend that our members check out John's wonderful weekly blog, "Letter from Virgil" at [www.letterfromvirgil.blogspot.com](http://www.letterfromvirgil.blogspot.com). In particular, take a look at postings #63 and #65, and especially #66, of 4 April 2010. Does anyone who was in London in the 60s remember "Joe" who used to come to the Immigration film shows?

## In Memoriam

### Robert Keyserlingk, Historian, Past President of the CIHS

We are sorry to report the passing on December 9, 2009, of Robert Keyserlingk, retired professor of History (University of Ottawa), who played a pivotal role in the development of the CIHS. Bob is survived by his wife Michaela and four children and seven grandchildren.

Bob Keyserlingk joined the Immigration Foreign Service in 1958, part of the second group of Foreign Service Officers recruited among University graduates. He was posted to Cologne, Germany, at the beginning of 1960, and cross-posted to London in 1961 where he spent a year before leaving to start his Ph D studies.

From the earliest days of the CIHS, Bob was our resident historian, starting as Chair of the Research and Publications Committee in 1988. He became Vice president the following year, and was the moving spirit behind the CIHS' successful symposium, "Breaking Ground: the 1956 Hungarian Refugee Movement to Canada," held at the University of Ottawa April 29, 1990.

Under Bob's editorship the proceedings of the symposium were turned into a book of the same name, launched on March 24, 1993, which remains to this day the most important study of that precedent-setting refugee movement. Bob served as president of the Society in 1991.

When the CIHS sponsored its second symposium, "The Journey of Hope," which brought together, in October 1994, officials and refugees from the 1972 Uganda Refugee Movement, Bob provided a masterly summary at the end of that emotional conference and assisted in editing the video of the event. The same year, in cooperation with Edna Whinny, Canada's first female Immigration Officer, Bob contributed an article to the Bulletin titled "The Empire's Main Man, Colonel J. Obed Smith", about the man who ran the Canadian Immigration operation in London from 1908 to 1924.

As our editor from 1995 to 1998, Bob issued Bulletins 22 to 27, and under the title "Back Space", enlivened the publication with quirky illustrations. Terry Sheehan, who worked with Bob in Cologne, remembers him as a fine colleague, a man who approached his job with professionalism and commitment but always with a sense of humour and an ability to see the lighter side of our work.

### Robert Puddester Honoured

The CIHS is proud to note that life-member Robert Puddester was honoured in August, 2009 by the Royal Canadian Numismatic Society with its highest award for his many papers and books on the numismatics of India. Normally awarded to someone working on Canadian coins and medals, the RCNS, in awarding Robert the J. Douglas Ferguson Award for distinguished service to Canadian numismatics stated:

*The depth of your research into the historical and numismatic background of the passes, tokens and medals of India – ably assisted by your wife who shares your interests – and the quality of your writing and description has produced works of eminent significance to Indian numismatics, such as the Medals of British India, Commemorative and Historical Medals from 1750 to 1947, and brought great credit to the Canadian numismatic community.*

Robert's "Medals of British India" was described by The Orders and Medals Research Society (London, England) as

*... a magnificent record of 200 years of British military, educational, domestic and social history in India and Burma... 562 pages... packed with particulars of some 1,200 medals, of which some 500.... are illustrated with excellent crisp photographs*



Robert served in Hong Kong, Los Angeles, Copenhagen, Santiago, Port of Spain and again Hong Kong, and established the Immigration Department's Refugee Policy Division in 1975. He is currently working on his third book on numismatics.

## Jim Cross Remembers 4 Deputy Ministers

During my career in the public service of Canada I reported to four deputy ministers, each of whom evokes good memories.

The first of them was **Bob Bryce**, who was the clerk of the Privy Council, the senior deputy minister in the federal government. At the time, I was a Privy Council officer seconded to Prime Minister, Louis St. Laurent. Shortly after his transfer from the Treasury Board, Bob invited me to his office. He was seated in a chair which had been given to him as a farewell present by the Board staff. I said something that amused him and he threw his head back laughing. The back of the chair collapsed and he did a backward somersault into the fireplace, which fortunately was unlit. You can imagine my shock! By good fortune, however, Bob was not hurt. He got up, shook himself, and said: "Now I know how the Treasury Board staff really felt about me!" It was a pleasure to work for such a man, who hadn't the least trace of self-importance. He had trained as an engineer to please his father but his real love was economics. He studied under John Maynard Keynes, first in Britain, and later at Harvard. Bob has been credited with, or accused of, bringing Keynesian theories to North America.

I was executive assistant to the next three deputy ministers, all with Citizenship and Immigration. They were Lt. Colonel Fortier, Dr George Davidson and Dr Claude Isbister.

**Col. Fortier** was the first I served, having been transferred from the PMO in the summer of 1956 thanks to Jack Pickersgill who by that time was the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. He felt that Fortier needed an assistant. Fortier didn't know what to do with me at first so he gave me three Immigration Manuals to read. It wasn't long before I was bored but then came the Hungarian refugees which gave me lots to do! My particular role was to find slots at Canadian universities for a hundred and some odd refugee students, other than those in the Sopron Forestry faculty, which Pickersgill looked after himself. It was this movement that revealed the talents of two young officials in particular, Jack Manion and Joe Bissett

Staff was apprehensive about Laval Fortier. Many of us had served in the military and considered a colonel to be of very high rank. In fact, the DM had a whimsical sense of humour. Once, when I was in his office, he called Fenton Crossman on the intercom about a memo Fenton had written in which he referred to the subject as a prostitute. Fortier wanted to know how Fenton came to that conclusion. "Do you personally know that she is a prostitute?" he asked. "Don't you think you should find out for yourself?" was the next question. Those of us who knew Fenton could not think of anyone who would be more devoted to his wife than Fenton was to Ruby. I realised that Fenton didn't know that he was being teased, so as soon as I left the office, I put him straight.

My next DM was **George Davidson**. A charming, fun-loving man, George was born in Nova Scotia and came to Ottawa after a career in the BC public service. He used to tell his audiences that, like a pendulum, he swung back and forth, finally coming to rest in Ottawa, the dead centre of Canada. Only his Ottawa audience did not think that funny. George was not the greatest administrator; when he was called to head the Bureau of Government Organization, he promised me that he would come back and clear up the dozens of policy memos he had left behind. I kept nagging for some action, and finally he said: "Jim, 90% of problems will solve themselves if left alone. The secret is to deal with the other 10 %." "But Dr. Davidson," I responded, "You aren't even doing the 10 %." He had a chuckle over that. I subsequently signed the memos on his behalf, which is why I got a mention in the Munsinger report.

George later became chairman of the CBC (at which time, I understand, he bought his first TV set). It was in that role that I heard from him several years later. While I was visiting a friend, Ed McDuff, a CBC technician responsible for the CBC international service transmitter in Sackville, NB., Ed received the alarming news that Davidson was coming to visit his station. I told Ed not to worry, that Davidson was a good fellow and that he would enjoy the visit. Evidently Ed did enjoy the visit, and

felt at ease with his boss. That explains a telephone call I received when back at the Bourque Building [Immigration HQ] soon after. "This is George Davidson, president of the CBC. Were you in Sackville recently?" I admitted that I was. Then with a laugh he said, "I have with me the foulest-smelling evil-looking pipe that I have ever seen." An hour later the pipe arrived by CBC messenger. It demonstrates what a good man he was: someone who dealt with everybody as equals.

My final deputy was **Dr Claude Isbister**, whom I remember for many reasons but above all for his humanity. His secretary, Laura McCormick, had brain surgery about the time that Dr Isbister was moving to Mines and Technical Services. He called Laura's doctor to find out what was best for Laura, to remain with her friends in the Woods Building, or

to go with him. The doctor indicated the latter. It was typical of him that he told no one of his humane action. I found out from Laura herself a few years later.

Dr Isbister was very kind to me. When I worked overtime, he would check the parking lot to see if my car was there. If it wasn't he insisted in driving me home. It was not very far out of his way, but he had a deformed leg. He wore an elevator shoe, but he still walked with a limp. He drove an old Austin whose passenger door could only be opened from the outside. When we arrived in our driveway, my neighbours were treated to the spectacle of a deputy minister jumping out of the car, limping over to the other side and opening the door for me. No wonder I liked that man.

## **On the Occasion of the Retirement of Head of the Appeals and Litigation Unit at the Canadian High Commission in New Delhi, K. K. Jarth**

News of your impending retirement has reached the Canadian Immigration Historical Society and caused us to dust off the excellent series of articles you submitted to the CIHS for our Bulletin in 1998-99.

The Board of the CIHS met on 15 April 2010 at Nate's Delicatessen and the Delhi Wallahs on the Board made a recommendation that in view of your extraordinary contribution to Canada's immigration program over the past 34 years we make you an honorary member of the Society. The Board accepted their recommendation, making you the second honorary member in the history of the CIHS. We will be pleased to send you future copies of the CIHS Bulletin. We are always on the lookout for articles on immigration, both serious and humorous, and if you are so inclined, we would welcome an opportunity to publish articles drawn from your experience.

On behalf of the membership of the CIHS may I extend our thanks for your contribution to Canada and for the sound advice and kindness you extended over the years to so many of our members and colleagues assigned to New Delhi.

Congratulations on a brilliant career. We look forward to welcoming you as a member of the Canadian Immigration Historical Society.

### **INFORMATION UPDATE** c/o [joandmikeca@yahoo.com](mailto:joandmikeca@yahoo.com)

or

Box 9502 Ottawa K1G 3V2

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

Please confirm to us your

- Address
  
- Phone number
  
- Email address
  
- Will you accept your Bulletin electronically?

\_\_\_\_ YES      \_\_\_\_ NO

**UPCOMING:** *The Society's forthcoming website, "Refugees and Fighter Pilots", Canadian Immigration Halls and the first winner of the Gunn Prize.*