The Muttart Fellowships

Sermons for the New Millennium

Martin Garber-Conrad

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Sermons for the New Millennium

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…offering a jazz player's solution to radical problems of democracy in a land based on breaking with Old World history while creating the new. "We seek not perfection," he says, "but coordination. Not sterile stability but creative momentum. Ours is a youthful sector*; the perfection we seek is futuristic and to be made manifest in creative action. "The solution, in other words, is to remain resilient in the face of the blues—ready to improvise, ready to coordinate, ready to swing. God "always plans for the loooong haul," Hickman preaches in the brilliant Juneteenth-day sermon.

– Robert G. O'Meally's review of Ralph Ellison's Juneteenth, in The Atlantic Monthly, July, 1999

[*Note: "sector" is substituted for "nation" in the original.]

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In traditional Christian theology the sermon is a proclamation of the Good News. More than information transfer or philosophical argument, it is understood as an "event" that calls forth a response in the hearer to the Good News embodied in the sermon. This proclamation is not just for the faithful—the "insiders"—but is for anyone "who has ears to hear."

In more general terms, a sermon is a discreet piece of communication, crafted for a particular audience, calling for a change in thinking, believing, or acting. A sermon is primarily an instance of oral communication, although from the very early days sermons have been written down and shared beyond the group of original hearers. Nevertheless, its roots in oral communication—proclamation, delivery, rhetorical devices, limited length, and a particular audience—are never far below the surface of the written version.

I had actually hoped to write essays or at least journalism. But what goes on in my head is speaking with people face-to-face-and eliciting a response (although, as is the case with traditional sermons, the response may happen in another time and place). Nevertheless, the dialogical quality is of considerable importance and the response is an essential part of the event that a sermon intends to be.

So, I fantasized about writing essays but what came out was sermons. Perhaps not surprising considering my professional background. Not too full of pious platitudes; not overly long; having some connection with the present reality of the implied audience but pointing beyond that reality. Calling for action, even if only the quiet acts of reflection or further inquiry.

A few of these sermons have already been delivered to various audiences. At least two more of them were crafted with a particular future audience in mind. Audiences are always mixed, including both the faithful and inquirers from elsewhere. These sermons have tried to keep both groups in mind although I expect they will be of somewhat more interest to folks within the sector or at least with some connection to it. Elements from several sermons can also be recombined in various ways for specific purposes.

Most sermons are based on a text —a brief and often traditional portion of the religion's scripture. Our sector has few classic texts, even fewer with the power and provenance of the best religious literature. So these sermons don't have explicit, strictly-delineated texts. What I have included at the end of each piece is a couple of suggestions for further reading. I hope this will be more useful than a lengthy bibliography, although that is included as well in the appendix.

People attend to sermons because the values embodied in the event are important to them or, at least, of potential interest. (Unless they are children who, research suggests, go because their mother makes them.) It is my hope that the reader will hear something with which to begin or extend the conversation about the importance of the non-profit sector to our life together as citizens of our communities, our country and our world.

Conversation, reflection, action. And, if there's a jazz player around, perhaps we can even swing!

Martin Garber-Conrad
Edmonton, Canada
September 15, near the end of the millennium

Chapter 1
Practitioner on Sabbatical: Reflections of an Ersatz-Academic

Practitioner on Sabbatical: Reflections of an Ersatz-Academic

First things first. This article discusses how it felt to be inside my sabbatical—the differences and similarities between the fellowship year and the rest of my life since I became employed in the non-profit sector in 1987 at Edmonton City Centre Church Corporation (ECCCC).

As executive director, I have complete nominal control over my work schedule. The reality, however, is that most of my days are spent in meetings, often five or six per day. Taking phone calls, reading mail, and writing responses of various types fills the rest, as well as many evenings. Committee meetings are governed by convention or constrained by others' schedules. One-on-one meetings can, theoretically, be scheduled anytime, but the volume quickly leads to the daily rate noted above.

The first difference I noted on sabbatical was the freedom of having nothing to do. No meetings, no schedule, no project deadlines. It was a little disconcerting but I adjusted rather quickly. The way I adjusted was by developing a loose routine in Wellington (mid-January to mid-March). Breakfast, or at least espresso, first thing in the morning, then back to my flat to explore the internet until early afternoon. Then lunch and, perhaps, a visit to some place of interest. Late afternoon was usually time for reading and a beer at a local cafe. Supper and some TV after or more reading. I finally figured out cricket while in New Zealand because TV fare was limited to three and a half

channels. Night life was almost non-existent in downtown Wellington although there was a cozy little wine bar that was open in the early evening. In bed by 10 or 11 p.m. I began getting 8 or 9 hours of sleep each night—a significant departure from the previous decade!

The second difference was social. I knew only one couple in all of the South Pacific and they lived in Christchurch on the South Island. I made a couple of non-profit sector contacts on the internet but didn't meet them in person until near the end of my stay. So, for the first five or six weeks I had no serious social interactions at all. Barmaids, waiters, and shop clerks. Period. It was great! I am asocial (some might say anti-social) by nature and, while I have developed considerable facility at meeting, greeting, and chatting-up in the course of my work, it was pleasantly relaxing not to have to do that for a while. No donors to impress; no bureaucrats to coddle; no staff to manage; no partners to collaborate with; no politicians to kiss. What a relief! And what a difference from my daily work routine, which seems to consist of very little else. What I did miss was human touch and so I began to look forward to getting change.

The third difference was worry. I worry day and night about the agency, my own performance, and the outcomes we are trying to achieve. (I take action, too, which is probably why I am not completely dysfunctional in my work.) But I can't help the worry. It's the way I am. This, too, may be a personality defect or even a psychopathology. (Let's not go there!) What I will say is that worry was a constant companion in my job but it stayed at home while I was in New Zealand. During this leg of my trip I received one work-related phone call telling me about a key staff resignation. I responded on the phone and indicated I would give it some more thought. I formulated a more detailed response and e-mailed it across the ocean that evening. End of story. No worry! (A couple of months later I received another phone call about an even more troubling staff resignation. Same result.)

Fourth, I enjoyed discovering the internet. Frustrating to be sure. Many more hints of interesting information than actual material on line. I had expected to be able to fulfill most of my research needs on line. Not so! Although there are thousands of non-profit sites, most had little useful information and many were uncompleted or not updated recently. Most periodicals had, at best, indexes on line. Some had only the most recent issue available, abstracts only, or complete articles only available for purchase. Getting access to local libraries was difficult via the net and non-profit collections (*e.g.*, at

the U of A) are small or impossible to access separately. Amazon.com proved to be a source for less than half the books I really wanted to order; the rest were out of print or otherwise unavailable. This despite the relatively recent publication dates of most books on the non-profit sector.

The biggest disappointment of my year was the discovery in April 1998 of André Picard's *A Call to Alms*. This work, a compilation of articles he wrote and published in the Toronto Star as a 1997 Atkinson Foundation Fellow, was precisely what I had intended to do for my project! It really took the wind out of my sails and left me struggling for the rest of the year to find something useful that I could do. I read a lot and discovered many interesting things but could not find a means of focusing my research. I just couldn't get used to the idea of doing over something that had already been done —and done quite well!

Further on the matter of my project, the whole experience felt a lot like a Masters degree where I had to pick my thesis topic before entering the program and doing the course work. Because I chose a topic outside my agency's area of work and my own area of expertise, I found that it took the whole sabbatical year just to do the basic reading in the field—with no supervision or direction. I certainly felt a lot of moral support (and indeed the curse of great expectations) but had no assistance in focusing on an appropriate topic. Admittedly, I didn't ask for much help, but by then I was back to work and agency matters became more pressing.

I also felt quite naked without such basic academic trinkets as colleagues and library privileges, although I suppose I could have secured the latter if there had been more relevant literature in local collections. As for colleagues, I did find a few virtual ones through several non-profit discussion lists on the internet to which I still subscribe. This suggests some of the difficulty of actualizing a sabbatical (academic model) from within a practice environment.

Aside from the spring-time discovery that the project I thought I wanted to do had already been done, the hardest time of the year for me was after my return from Edinburgh in late July. It was at least October before I stopped waking up every single morning wishing I was back in Scotland. Although I was in e-mail contact throughout my travels, and read the *Edmonton Journal* daily on the internet, being back in town for good meant that it was impossible for me not to know

about what was going on here—and not to worry about it. I dutifully stayed away from my workmates and didn't enquire about agency activities, but it is not possible to be in Edmonton and not know what's going on in the sector. Edmonton is a very small town that way.

What I did miss, being back in town, was not being able to take action on anything. I knew at least some of what was going on in the world that affects the sector and our agency, but it wasn't appropriate for me to do anything about it. I couldn't have work-related dealings with agency employees and my replacement certainly had enough on his plate without my helpful suggestions. So about all I could do was worry—and strategize for my return, hoping that things hadn't changed too much for my plans to make sense. (Of course, they did.) So, come January 4, I felt considerable relief at being able to act again. After months of thinking, it was good to be in a position to do something, at last.

In summary, my sabbatical was not very adventurous. I didn't visit unexplored territories. I didn't witness cutting edge, front-line work. I didn't troll teeming inner cities searching out best practices. I went to nice places with flush toilets, espresso machines, and people who spoke English (more or less). I met a few interesting non-profit sector folks (including two real experts in New Zealand) and did some reading I just wouldn't have had time to do back home. All in all, not very much. I felt quite self-indulgent, perhaps even guilty, most of the time. And yet, it was a most excellent year for me, which will prove of considerable assistance to my agency now that I am back. I am refreshed, perhaps even renewed. I have consolidated improvements in my own work style and schedule (*e.g.*, delegating to managers and not trying to attend every meeting in the world) and my workload is more sustainable and nearly sane.

I continue to be amazed by the size, strength, and importance of the non-profit sector, even if its definition (and perhaps its very existence) is somewhat problematic. Although there are striking similarities in programs and organizations in the places I visited, I am convinced that intermediary organizations are a key feature of the sector in both Britain and New Zealand that we should copy in Canada. (Intermediary organizations are discussed in more detail, below.) I am not under the mistaken impression that this will be easy to implement or will solve all our problems, but I think it would help, a little.

Finally, as will be dealt with at greater length in another article, the next decade, century and millennium will, no doubt, bring changes and new challenges to the sector. But the near future will be very much like the recent past. Things will not change that much. Entirely new things are unlikely to happen. The sector will neither rise up to save the world nor will it wither away in the face of globalized corporate capitalism. Continuity is the key "discovery" I made. The sector is old and resilient and will endure. It will continue to make crucial contributions to society and get little enough credit for it. It will be abused by politicians and remain largely invisible to everyone else. Resources will be harder to access as the pie is cut into ever smaller pieces. But strong organizations will endure and, at times, even thrive.

Life goes on and I'm happy to be back at work at ECCCC. Still, I'd return to Edinburgh in a minute if I could afford to live there!

Additional reading:

André Picard. *A Call to Alms: The New Face of Charities in Canada* (Toronto: The Atkinson Charitable Foundation, 1997).

Novels by British murder-mystery writers (preferably female).

Chapter 2
Other Places are the Same as Here, only Different

Other Places are the Same as Here, only Different

In both New Zealand and Scotland, the most recreative part of the time was just living. No meetings and committees, no reports and proposals, no advocacy and action. Instead, art galleries and cafes, cuisine and concerts, but most of all enjoyment of time to read and reflect. Shopping for the day's groceries, watching the World Cup, reading *London Review of Books*. And seeing with fresh eyes how different societies organize themselves. There are problems everywhere and Canadian social agencies are second to none, but other places are different and our way of doing things is not the only way.

New Zealand: cutbacks in paradise

Wellington, the capital of New Zealand, is a government town like Ottawa, and about half the size of Edmonton. It has a large built-up downtown with numerous buildings going back 150 years ago. The nonprofit sector there was already well-established before the turn of the century. Although a few organizations in Edmonton go back to the early years of this century, our nonprofit sector didn't really begin growing until the 1960's.

Churches also seem to be more directly involved in New Zealand than here. Nearly every parish has some sort of outreach ministry, and the six major denominations all operate large social service organizations. The three settler churches—Anglican, Presbyterian and Catholic, and the three mission churches—Methodist, Baptist

and Salvation Army, have national organizations with dozens of individual projects, programs, and facilities. Collectively, they hold the majority of government contracts in the social services field, and operate nursing homes and seniors lodges as well as the whole range of programs that we associate with community agencies here.

The Maori people face similar challenges to Aboriginal people in Edmonton: high unemployment, lower education, more criminal justice system involvement, and inadequate housing. But in daily life, the Maori are more positively visible. Maori people hold jobs as TV newscasters and in small businesses, and are seen daily in suits working in corporate and government jobs. Many words from the Maori language are in common use—in newspapers, as alternative names for public buildings and government departments, and in ordinary conversation. New Zealand's founding as a bi-cultural society with British settlers and indigenous people on par may explain these positive aspects of public life.

New Zealand is an interesting combination of British and Asian. The old houses and office buildings are wonderfully Victorian, but the awnings—a feature of nearly every building downtown, from mid-19th century commercial blocks to contemporary glass and steel highrises—give the city a tropical ambiance. The cuisine, as well, is a mixture of the old country and modern Pacific Rim. "Full English" breakfasts are updated with smoked eel in the scrambled eggs, and the traditional egg mayonaise (sandwich) includes bok choy instead of lettuce. The native lamb and fish are superb—no mutton or battered cod! And the scones are full of tropical fruits.

One particular cafe downtown best exemplified the contrasts between old and new, as well as meeting most of my humble needs. It was located in a newly renovated wing of the Victorian era former central police headquarters. It was next to a wonderful magazine store with a variety of my favourite British periodicals as well as contemporary South Pacific publications. I was even able to purchase the previous week's *Globe and Mail*, on occasion, for $5.50! The cafe, in addition to the innovative fare mentioned above, was built around a shiny brass and chrome coffee roaster (early industrial revolution look) where they roasted each days beans. Espresso (called short black), flat white, and lattes were ordered much more often than tea. The front wall consisted of glass doors opening onto the patio, with comfortable tables under the awnings (of course!).

My most striking observation about the sector in New Zealand is its invisibility. During more than two months in Wellington, the only public evidence of the existence of a nonprofit sector was a bus ad for Mental Health Week, a small story about an agency in a community newspaper, and two fundraising campaigns—people on the street collecting coins in jars for a rape crisis centre one day, and for Catholic Social Services another. (This is an interesting variant of the British fundraising practice of women with collection jars visiting each pub nearly every night.) Folks within the sector admit that they have little success getting any notice in the media unless they are meeting with a high level government official—in itself a rare occurrence.

More than 10 years ago the New Zealand government implemented severe cutbacks (generally considered to be the model copied by our own governments) and replaced grant funding almost entirely with contracts. Some predicted that this would be the end of the nonprofit sector. Although this did not happen, much damage was done to the infrastructure and capacity of the sector. Innovative services as well as advocacy suffered as a result.

On the positive side, with about the same population as Alberta, New Zealand had three large, national intermediary organizations that provide policy analysis, public education, and government representation to most social service agencies in the country. Other parts of the nonprofit sector, *e.g.*, arts and recreation, also have national intermediary organizations. I am convinced that better development in this area would be of use to nonprofit organizations in Canada.

New Zealand is an exceptionally pleasant country with advantages and challenges not that different from our own. It, too, has a very large neighbour (Australia) but is searching for a future of its own in a changing world. That future will surely lie in a more easterly direction—the Pacific Rim—a part of the world with very little tradition of a strong nonprofit sector.

Edinburgh: history and community

Edinburgh greeted me with comfortably cool weather and a hint of sea breeze last May. The temperature remained in my preferred range of 15 to 20 degrees throughout the nine-week visit, with occasional rain and wind for which Scotland is known.

The village of Stockbridge, located just north of downtown Edinburgh, was my home base for the duration. Despite its location next to the early 19th century New Town, Stockbridge felt very historical after more than two decades on the Prairies. My flat in a century-old stone townhouse was cheap by Edinburgh standards at 200 pounds a week, and young for a city where 17th and 18th century buildings are common downtown. The pint-sized fridge, electric cooker, and a sink the size of a soup bowl were complemented by an ensuite bathroom with an electric shower. And conveniently situated across the street was a news agent and, half a block down, the first of several local pubs.

Exploring Stockbridge the next day revealed a delightful and compact downtown with dozens of tiny shops, all within three blocks of the flat. A routine soon developed, walking the length of main street after breakfast to shop for daily groceries—fruit, English cheeses, ethnic baking, and birds or a meat pie from the butcher.

My introduction to the nonprofit sector in Britain was the several charity shops selling second-hand clothes, used books, and kitchen items. Eight or 10 different charities had shops in storefronts on the main street of this small village. The shops provide visibility for the charities, use dozens of volunteers every day, and contribute a modest income stream to the agencies. For large organizations such as Oxfam, with 83 shops throughout Britain, the annual income is quite substantial.

Even in the affluent village of Stockbridge, people from various income levels live side-by-side and interact daily in the village. A variety of social services are also located in the same townhouses where everyone lives—clinics, handicapped apartments, nurseries, aged housing, teen centres, and agency offices—giving a much stronger sense of community integration than in most neighbourhoods in Canada.

Eating out in Edinburgh is relatively expensive, with entrees costing 20 pounds in quite ordinary restaurants. This may explain the popularity of take away establishments, where almost everything is

breaded and deep fried, including the hamburgers and sausages! Fortunately, there were several cafes with continental fare and excellent espresso.

And although the locals complain about the declining quality of the railroad over the past decade, train and bus service is excellent compared to our own. For example, Oban and the Isle of Mull, with a few thousand inhabitants, are served by three trains a day from Edinburgh. (And we can't seem to have even one train between Edmonton and Calgary, a comparable distance between much larger populations centres.). Although the trains are both modern and comfortable, the city buses are more exciting. In the "upper saloon," where the horizontal displacement over cobblestones and around corners can exceed a couple of feet, it's hardly necessary to tell passengers to hang on!

Edinburgh is less hassle than many cities its size, and it quickly felt both safe and comfortable. Most of the street people were selling *The Big Issue*, and little prostitution was evident. Apparently, things change quite a bit for the festival season in August. Panhandlers and sex-trade workers from all over the U.K. arrive along with the tourists.

During my stay the mental health system in Britain was again going through significant changes. After years of closing acute beds, and lots of rhetoric about community care, plans were announced to reopen thousands of psychiatric beds as a result of several high profile crimes by patients who had been sent out into the community with little support.

Although I wasn't particularly looking, I did come across one exciting and innovative project in Edinburgh—with goals similar to Kids in the Hall and the Gibson Block projects combined. It was located at St. Mary's Cathedral, a beautiful, late-Victorian structure completed in 1879. The quality of stone masonry in those days, while still incredibly beautiful, had deteriorated with respect to longevity. Although not much more than 100 years old, the Cathedral is in need of quite extensive repairs. So they have a very special, long-term, employment-training program. A master craftsman and his assistant, and four apprentices—unemployed young adults who, in two to four years, will graduate as ticketed stone masons with jobs for life in Edinburgh. And, in 25 years, St. Mary's will be even better than new.

Unlike New Zealand, where there was almost no public discussion of social issues, there is a clear recognition in Scotland that the government has a responsibility to care for people in need. Unemployment, poverty, homelessness, education, and mental health were all on the public agenda, in the media, and occasions for both government and community action. Although the Labour government is quite right-of-centre, there is wide consensus that the government has a legitimate role in helping disadvantaged people. Quality child care, subsidized housing, and employment training programs are an integral part of life in Scotland. Nobody pretends that everyone can or should be self-sufficient.

Additional reading:

London Review of Books

Justin Davis Smith, Colin Rochester and Rodney Hedley, eds. *An Introduction to the Voluntary Sector* (London: Routledge, 1995).

Chapter 3
Does Size Matter?

Does Size Matter?

The nonprofit sector is BIG! 78,000 registered charities and perhaps 100,000 other nonprofit organizations in Canada. More than $90 billion dollars in expenditures each year and $109 billion in assents. In economic size, the sector is larger than the entire economy of British Columbia; three times larger than the transportation industry and six times larger than the value of all crops and livestock grown in Canada.

Yet, the sector does not have a Canadian Wheat Board to promote and market its products. Or a Transport Canada or Agriculture Minister to bring its interests to the Cabinet table. Nine per cent of the GDP in Canada—perhaps as much as 13 per cent—is not represented in any significant way at the national level or in the public consciousness. Nine per cent of all employees in Canada and several times as many volunteers might as well be invisible.

And the sector performs essential work for all Canadians: hospitals and clinics to care for the sick; universities and schools to educate the young; galleries and museums to preserve and promote arts and culture; and social service organizations to care for the disabled, the destitute, and the desperate.

We often think of the sector as providing peripheral assistance—filling little gaps that the private sector or governments can't quite manage to fill—using volunteers to do "nice" things with the pocket change that good folks drop in the donation bins. And yet, the relationship, especially with the government, is much closer. Fully 60 per cent of the income of the nonprofit sector comes from government grants and contracts—to deliver essential services for all Canadians, efficiently and effectively. (Although charities other than hospitals and teaching institutions receive only 26 per cent of all government funding.)

Despite the emphasis on personal donations in the public mind, the median level of individual giving among Canadians is only $150 per year. Particularly in these times of government downsizing, it is important to remember that individual giving has to increase 5.8 per cent in order to replace each 1 per cent decrease in government funding to the sector. Average corporate donations have never exceeded 1 per cent of corporate profits in Canada and, consequently, comprise not much more than 1 per cent of nonprofit sector revenue. Replacing a 1 per cent decrease in government funding with corporate donations would require a 49 per cent increase.

Having said this much about registered charities, the truth is that that not much is known about the whole nonprofit sector. Research is in its infancy and data sources at all levels very limited. But our knowledge is growing, and much of what we are learning points toward an important role for the sector. Not only in delivering services that people need, but in helping to preserve a civil and civilized society. Building community in an increasingly fragmented world. Increasing our social capital so that Canada can remain strong in the future.

In order to function optimally, societies need more than roads, bridges, and railways. An infrastructure of associations, organizations, and institutions—opportunities for people to gather around common interests and work toward common goals—helps our communities and regions and cities function better It's a way beyond politics for Canadians to express democratic impulses and work together. It's a way to do more and different things than are possible using the private market approach of capitalism.

The nonprofit sector is especially useful for producing common goods that are held in trust for all of us, rather than owned by one person—a symphony orchestra, an historic building, a community centre. The sector is also particularly good at doing things that are more specialized or less universal than government programs—activities that respond to local needs or the needs of a particular group.

But size is not the whole story. Although our knowledge of the sector is bare bones, some things are clear. There are two or three large parts of the sector that distort the picture almost beyond recognition. First of all, the number of nonprofit organizations in inflated by the number of churches—individual congregations and similar groups of other religions—which account for more than one-

third of all registered charities. (Despite the small size of these individual congregations, religious organizations still receive nearly one-half of all the individual donations in Canada.)

Secondly, hospitals and educational institutions, while small in number—about 5 per cent of all registered charities—account for more than half of the revenue, expenditures, and employment of the entire nonprofit sector. Many of these are very large institutions and, particularly in Alberta, hospitals now fit much better in the governmental sector since their autonomy has been effectively eliminated in the past decade. There is also considerable ambiguity about the inclusion of universities in the sector, as their autonomy also has been eroded substantially of late. And in Alberta, at least, the largest educational charities are the urban school districts, clearly governmental organizations, even if no longer a separate level of government.

In fact, of the 25 largest charities in Canada, only one of them looks anything like a charitable, voluntary, or community organization. That one is the Canadian Red Cross, although as we saw during the "blood scandal," at least part of it had already become a virtual government department. The remaining 24 largest charities are all hospitals, universities, or school districts. (Of local interest, Edmonton Public School District is the seventh largest charity in Canada, and the only one of the top 25 located in Alberta.)

If we exclude hospitals and educational educations (because of their huge size and effective control by government) and church congregations (because of their large numbers and small size individually) we are left with a sector of more modest proportions but with, perhaps, a clearer identity. A further 10 per cent of registered charities are public and private foundations which, for the most part, channel resources to other charities rather than delivering services themselves. So, these, too, can be set aside for the moment.

Aside from the issue of religious congregations, the sector still includes a large number of very small organizations. Nearly half of all registered charities have annual budgets of less than $50,000. Not surprisingly, 38 per cent of registered charities have no paid staff and almost 60 per cent have no more than one full-time staff person. Eighty per cent of the entire nonprofit sector is made up of organizations with budgets of less than $250,000—certainly not insignificant, but modest economically.

Only 3 per cent of all registered charities are considered large organizations (annual budgets more than $5 million) and more than 40 per cent of these are the hospitals or teaching institutions referenced above. Whatever their purpose, reasonably large organizations (more than $1.5 million annual budget) account for three-quarters of all non-religious donations from all sources.

The total size of this reduced sector is still significant, with approximately 40,000 organizations, $40 billion in revenue and expenditures, more than half a million employees, and perhaps 4 per cent of Canada's GDP. If we add to that the approximately 100,000 other nonprofit organizations in Canada that are not registered charities, and the 4.5 million volunteers (which, if paid wages and translated into employees, would account for more than 600,000 full-time positions) we can see that the sector is still pretty big.

Pretty big, and growing. Approximately 5,000 applications for registered charity status are filed with Revenue Canada every year, and about 3,300 are approved. This is a growth rate of more than 4 per cent a year. In fact, the total number of registered charities is already three times larger than it was in the 1960s and now appears to be doubling every two decades. And because relatively few new church congregations, hospitals, or universities are started these days, the growth rate of the rest of the sector is probably closer to 10 per cent a year. If this rate of growth were to continue (admittedly not very likely!), by the end of the 21st century there would be more registered charities than Canadians. Just think of it—every citizen could have his or her very own charity!

Most studies of the sector concentrate on organizations that have paid staff (because the others are so small). The rest of the sector seems to be made up of "grassroots associations that are not registered charities and often aren't even incorporated. Analysis in the United States suggests that these organizations may be both more numerous and more important than previously thought. There seem to be more of these groups than there are nonprofits with paid staff, with more members, memberships, active volunteers, annual volunteer hours, and FTEs of associational volunteer work. David Horton Smith argues, in a classic article, that "flat earth maps" of the sector (like those based on the Internal Revenue Service listing of paid staff nonprofits in the U.S.) ignore 90 percent of nonprofits and half of all volunteers and volunteer work time. Using an analogy

from modern astronomy, where dark matter is thought to make up at least 90 per cent of the total mass of the universe—an order of magnitude more than the entire visible part of the universe. If Canadian data has similar limitations, the usual estimates of additional organizations in the sector that are not registered charities (100,000) may be way too low.

Following the bare bones analogy above, a recent report on the nonprofit sector in Edmonton provides a local perspective—we might say, a "grainy x-ray of the left elbow." This study looked at the nearly 1,500 registered charities with Edmonton addresses. From this total, places of worship, hospitals, and teaching institutions were excluded (as is customary in these studies) as were foundations. The remaining "agencies delivering services" numbered 496 in 1990, increasing to 623 in 1994, the last year for which complete data were available. (We know there are more agencies than this in Edmonton but, with even less data about nonprofit organizations that are not registered charities, it is impossible to say anything with confidence about them as a group.)

Broadly similar to the Canadian picture, one-third of Edmonton agencies had annual budgets of less than $50,000, and nearly half had budgets of less than $100,000. Fewer than 8 per cent of these organizations were larger than $1 million. Not surprisingly, the number of smaller organizations increased more between 1990 and 1994 than did the number of larger ones (since most organizations tend to start out small).

During this short period, there was considerable growth, with the number of agencies increasing 25 per cent. Total revenue and expenditures in these agencies increased from $200 million and $185 million, respectively, in 1990, to $258 million and $252 million, in 1994—an increase of 32 per cent in four years. This economic activity seems to represent about 2.5 per cent of the GDP of Edmonton—much less than Canadian figures for the whole sector—although the actual GDP of Edmonton is not known with any precision.

Again, similar to the national picture, 44 per cent of the funding for these agencies delivering services came from the various levels of government—with a slightly higher per centage going to larger organizations than to smaller ones. (This 44 per cent is smaller than the 60 per cent national figure because hospitals and educational institutions, which receive disproportionately more government

funding, have been excluded from the Edmonton analysis.) What may seem a little surprising is that 60 per cent of these agencies received more government funding in 1994 than in 1990. The remaining organizations received the same or less.

Broadening our perspective to the south, we would see more than 1.2 million nonprofit organizations in the United States (not including religious organizations or groups with annual budgets of less than $25,000). American 501(c)(3) organizations (roughly comparable to Canadian registered charities) represent 12.4 per cent of the entire United States economy. These organizations have total assets of $1.9 trillion, and annual revenue of $899 billion in 1995. Both assets and revenue of the sector have grown 300 per cent in the 20 years since 1975.

If we looked toward the east, we would find 187,000 charities (160,000 main charities, excluding branches) in England and Wales at September, 1998, and perhaps 300,000 total nonprofit organizations. The annual income of charities there is 18.3 billion pounds. Similar to Canada (only more so!), 70 per cent of these charities are small, with annual income and expenditures of less than 10,000 pounds, and representing only 2 per cent of total charity revenue. Five per cent of charities receive more than 85 per cent of the income of the sector, and the largest 248 charities (0.015 per cent of the total, and all with annual budgets in excess of 10 million pounds) receive 40 per cent of the total income of the sector.

New Zealand is somewhere in between, with a higher proportion of larger charities than Canada, but not as many very large ones as in England. Overall, the number and economic role of charities in New Zealand appears smaller than in either England or Canada. The number of "private nonprofit sector organizations serving households" (a category that excludes governmental and quasi-governmental organizations) in New Zealand is fewer than 3,000. (This is less than half the number in Alberta, which has similar population to New Zealand.) The assets of this sector comprise just over 1 per cent of total assets in New Zealand's economy and annual revenues of this sector represent slightly less than 1 per cent of GDP.

Traditional assessment of the economic value of the sector is done by adding up the expenditures of all the charities or by adding up their income from various sources. But because there is not a direct market for most charities' services, traditional market-based

analyses may underestimate the real value of the sector. The Charities Aid Foundation in London is doing some preliminary research using non-market valuation techniques to try to remedy this situation. This method tries to determine "what people would be willing to pay if there was a market in charitable services."

For example, the general public is asked how much they would pay to "prevent closure of the charitable sector" or particular parts of it. Surveying the general population about homeless charities, they found that people would be willing to donate an additional £13 (in addition to the £8 they already donate each year) to prevent the closure of homeless charities. Under certain conditions they might be willing to donate an additional £40. When asked about all charities, people who already donate an average of £76 per year said they would be willing to donate at least another £50 per year to prevent closure of the sector, and perhaps as much as £195 per year. In any case, the value of the sector could be almost twice (or perhaps as much as six times) its worth as estimated using traditional techniques.

Extending the analysis to consumers of the sector's services, recipients of charitable services are asked how much they would be "willing to accept in compensation" to forgo the services of one or more charities they frequent. Again, in the case of homeless charities, users were asked how much they would have to be paid not to take a bed at the shelter or a room in the residence. On average, users would accept £157 per week in compensation for not using the homeless charities. This compares with actual payments of £17 per week, the average total user fees paid by participants in homeless programs. Again, traditional techniques seem to underestimate the value of the services of the sector.

Size, of course, isn't everything. But in our contemporary world, obsessed as we are with economics, that's not a bad place to start. However, as noted above, the economic role of charities is not the only contribution the sector makes to society. There is much discussion of, and some serious research into, the role of social capital in the success of communities. Most people recognize that what we might call "public capital"—parks, concert halls, clean air, safe streets—are important to the quality of life and may even influence such hard things as business relocation, maybe even profitability.

Social capital, although more difficult to quantify, is also seen as increasingly important. Beyond the most obvious capital goods owned by the nonprofit sector—universities, hospitals, art galleries—such things as community groups, recreation associations, and cultural societies also add value to our lives. Even bowling leagues and choral groups (classic examples from the research literature) are positively correlated with both good government and good business. And, in a place where families move frequently and large, extended families are less common, people seem to value occasions outside the workplace for developing relationships, finding meaning, and working toward common purposes. Many of these occasions are provided by nonprofit sector organizations and by volunteerism in general.

Another importance of the nonprofit sector is seen particularly clearly in that part of it which is usually labeled social services or human services. These agencies provide services to people in various kinds of need, especially people whose income precludes them from purchasing services on the open market. Traditionally, much of this kind of service was provided by governments or, in some times and places, by the church. Actually, historically, services to the needy have rarely been provided exclusively by one sector. Government provision of such services goes back to the first modern governments, and non-governmental groups of various sorts were sharing in this service provision long before there were modern nonprofit organizations.

Now, as government is devolving all kinds of services, the role of the nonprofit sector may increase in importance. This devolution of services must be clearly separated from changes in government funding, government spending, and government control. These four are quite independent of each other and often move in different directions. For example, in Alberta of late, there has been a significant decrease in direct government provision of services (devolution) and some decrease in government spending. Nevertheless, government funding has increased in some areas, as has government control.

One of my favourite examples of the interrelation between government and the sector is the founding of Harvard College. It was both the first corporation and the first registered charity in the United States, and its initial endowment was comprised of one private donation, a comparable allocation from the colonial legislature, and a tiny, obscure tax. Harvard University now has the largest endowment

of any operating charity in the United States, and is also a leading recipient of government research grants and contracts (although I believe they had to give up collecting their little tax some time ago).

Another instructive example is Victorian England, indeed the late 19th century in the United States and Canada as well. Relief of the poor was already a shared responsibility. The government took care of the "unworthy" poor, often through workhouses or various doles. The "worthy" poor—those with temporary difficulties or who were judged to have the potential to return to social usefulness—were left to charitable organizations to look after. Our contemporary division of responsibilities, especially since provincial welfare reform in the past decade, is almost the reverse. The government provides supports for independence primarily to those who are looking for work or pensions to those who are permanently disabled (in the right sorts of ways). Increasing numbers of those who aren't or can't—the unworthy poor—have to take their chances with charitable organizations.

Returning again to the matter of government funding, it must be emphasized that this is not a recent development. Although there was substantial growth in government funding to the sector in the 1960's and 1970's, it was always there. The form of that funding seems to be changing (from grants to contracts) as governments devolve services they used to provide directly and increase their control (despite the rhetoric to the contrary) in many areas. But there is very little evidence that government funding to the sector has decreased either in proportion to other kinds of funding or in absolute terms.

Certainly there were, a few years ago, substantial cuts in federal funding to certain high-profile national and advocacy organizations. But devolution has resulted in increased provincial funding to many more nonprofit organizations. Contract funding is not as flexible as the sector would like (increased government control!) but there is little doubt that the amount of such funding has increased. Even the entry of for-profit organizations into the contracting game (not completely new, either) has not decreased government funding to the sector. Fully 60 per cent of the revenue of the nonprofit sector comes from the various levels of government. Excluding hospitals and teaching institutions (the biggest recipients of such funding) this still leaves the rest of the sector getting nearly half of its total revenue from the government.

What's in a name? *Non-profit sector. Charities. Voluntary Sector. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Community associations. The third sector.* Each of these titles highlights certain characteristics of the sector—and suppresses other aspects of it. Naming is useful for deciding who's included and who's not and that, in turn, is essential for determining size, importance, and where it's all going. Essential but not sufficient. None of the current names eliminate deep ambiguities about the nature of the sector, its present role in society, or its future. It is even possible that there is no such thing as a sector or that this one doesn't exist, except in our dreams. Still, there seems to be something here and we who are a part of it suspect that it is non-trivial—that there is something of value in this sector, despite the conceptual difficulties. Whatever the precise dimensions and nature of the sector, it seems to represent about 10 per cent of everything that matters—things that we humans do and are collectively. This sector is, therefore, an appropriate object of research and conversation, as we who live in community seek to understand and build our future in the new millennium.

(Most of the Canadian statistics in this article are taken from David Sharp's A Portrait of Canada's Charities. *Some of the stats have been updated from other, more recent sources. And some of the interpretations are, of course, mine.)*

Additional reading:

David Sharp. *A Portrait of Canada's Charities: The Size, Scope and Financing of Registered Charities*. (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, 1994).

Hirshhorn, Ronald, ed. "The Emerging Sector: In Search of a Framework." The Canadian Nonprofit Sector (CPRN Working Paper No. CPRN/01. Ottawa: Renouf Publishing Co. Ltd., 1997).

Chapter 4
Privatization and Contracting Out: What the New Zealand Experience Might Tell Us about our Future

Privatization and Contracting Out: What the New Zealand Experience Might Tell Us about our Future

New Zealand is a country like Canada in many ways, or at least quite a bit like Alberta—post-colonial, modern, English-speaking, with a significant aboriginal population (in New Zealand, the Maori people), formerly rural, rapidly urbanizing, bi-polar cities with a north/south orientation, struggling with economic and social changes, in the shadow of a large neighbour. Like us, somewhat at the mercy of global economic and cultural forces over which they have little control. New Zealand also has a very conservative government (although an odd coalition) which is often seen as a model for our own. As a result, their social services sector experienced significant cutbacks which preceded ours by a few years and, of particular relevance to the nonprofit sector, a nearly wholesale change from largely grant funding to largely contract funding.

This change was viewed with considerable alarm at the time—"It will be the death of the sector"—although that has not, of course, happened. I say, of course because one of the few things I learned with any certainty during the past year, from both history and observation, is that the nonprofit sector is really quite resilient. Not invulnerable, perhaps, but sturdy and able to overcome or at least work through a variety of quite radical changes. The sector will survive, as it has in New Zealand, but it may not be unchanged!

As I said, the sector seems at least somewhat like our own, with agencies large and small—food banks, homelessness groups, counselling centres, family support workers, children's programming—and less-than-helpful web sites. As I learned more about the sector, other differences came into view. There appear to be considerably fewer social service agencies overall—perhaps as many in the whole country as in Edmonton—and several large ones have a disproportionate share of the field. In addition to the huge IHC (for handicapped children) and the English multi-national, Barnardos, there are six large church-based agencies representing each of the major denominations, each on the scale of Catholic Social Services here. The three settler churches: Anglican, Catholic, and Presbyterian, and the three mission churches: Baptist, Methodist, and Salvation Army. Collectively, for example, these six agencies own and operate half of all the aged programs and facilities in the country and receive, perhaps, an even larger portion of the government funding for non-aged social services.

Additionally, and largely because of their activity in the area of aged care—nursing homes, rest homes, subsidized and supported housing for seniors—these agencies also have significant assets, although not particularly liquid. For example, Presbyterian Support Central, the division for the Wellington area, and one of six operating divisions of Presbyterian Support in the country, has assets of approximately $50 million, and an annual operating budget of more than $15 million. On the other hand, their community programming (doing the same kind of things that agencies here do) is valued at less than $1 million dollars, although that is increasing annually, now that they have found ways to make the aged-care pay for itself. Anyway, their other five geographical divisions are of similar magnitude, as are the comparable agencies of the other churches … although no one seems to know just how big the Sallies really are!

Another significant factor is the age of the sector. Presbyterian Support was a national, centralized organization already 90 years ago, and charitable organizations in recognizable form date back to at least the 1860s. On the other hand, although its components are just as old, Anglican Care—a more loosely organized network—wasn't formed until the 1960s.

Nevertheless, despite these few larger organizations, the sector is perceived as weak—struggling since the beginning (with some of the same issues as today—another thing I have learned!) and burdened with the most disadvantageous tax treatment I've ever heard of. Allegedly the worst among OECD countries, if not the entire Western world, with minimal input tax credits, an unfavourable rate and low cap on private donations, few revenue-producing endowments—they even pay full G.S.T. on all grants! Another explanation for the historical weakness of the charitable sector I have seen cited is that in the early years (New Zealand was significantly settled a good 50 years before Alberta) the churches were too busy paying off mortgages and trying to attract clergy into the far reaches of the South Pacific and the women were too busy populating the island with whites to have time for the typical Victorian female charitable work *a la* England and the United States.

Anyway, the point I wanted to make about history is that in New Zealand (as here) government funding has always been an important part of the nonprofit sector. In New Zealand as early as the 1870s the government was offering money to try to encourage the sector to form hospitals and other necessary charitable institutions. This is not an artifact of big government in the 60s and 70s—government funding always was a significant part of the sector's life (and not particularly well done back then either!).

On reflection, the one thing we should be able to learn from our counterparts in New Zealand is about *contracting*. They took the lead in this matter (or the hit, if you prefer) and have had more time to reflect on the effects of it than we have. The source for this next section is the work of Garth Nowland-Foreman, a former Aussie national organization executive director who has been in New Zealand for several years consulting with local and national nonprofits, and a person who understands the systemic and policy issues of the sector very well. A 1995 paper he prepared for the National Council of Christian Social Services is titled "Neither Mendicants nor Deal-Makers: Contracting, government funding and voluntary organizations."

Even if you are not particularly interested in the narrow issue of government contracting for services, please consider what Nowland-Foreman has to say about the nature of the sector and its agencies. This, at least, might be of interest. I suspect that we all do think, on occasion, about the future of our own agencies in these times of change.

He begins: "Contracting is the word of the 1990s. And contracting for social services is a concept that the voluntary sector is having to come to terms with. Our experience of contracting may be difficult; or it may have brought some welcome clarity."

"Welcome clarity," indeed!

Given what we have mentioned earlier about government's long involvement in funding the sector, is contracting out something radically new? Or is it simply business as usual under a different name? Or can it be both?

Nowland-Foreman sees a pattern of stages of government funding over time: First the "list approach" with the government making donations to worthwhile charities. Second, the submission model of program grants in response to submissions. Third, needs-based planning, where program grants are allocated on the basis of some form of service planning. And fourth, tendering of contracts to undertake specified services. He also mentions a fifth stage, still largely in the future, both here and in New Zealand, involving vouchers or cash allowances to clients.

The second through fourth stages are most common in both places, although the trend seems clearly to be toward the higher-numbered stages.

Unlike the United States, where contracting is usually associated with privatization, in New Zealand contracting has been used as a tool of greater specification and therefore of greater government control over volunteer organizations who are providing services on behalf of the government. This greater control, with all its attendant risks and opportunities.

And contracting, it is asserted, *has* potential benefits to the three stakeholders: clients and communities, the agencies, and the government.

Such benefits could include: a more rational method for expansion of government support for social services; minority groups can bid to operate their own services; better distribution of services; more appropriate services; guaranteed access to services; and concentrating services where there is greater chance of success.

For voluntary organizations, contracting might lead to more secure funding and encourage better planning and more professional management.

And for the government, contracting offers more control over nonprofit organizations, and the mobilization of community resources for government-determined priorities, as we often subsidize such services with private funds and volunteer effort.

As you can readily see, within each potential benefit, is also a risk. Rather than providing an environment for expansion of social services, contracting can be a mechanism for rationing those services in times of cutbacks and/or increasing needs. Rather than leading to a better distribution of available services, contracting can be divisive and divert attention from overall inadequacies. If government is less in touch with client and community needs than are voluntary organizations, contracting can result in less appropriate services rather than more. Contracting can make it more difficult for agencies to respond flexibly or in an integrated way to complex needs. And concentrating services where there is a greater chance of success is also called "creaming."

Contracting can lead to the diversion of resources from direct service to additional, perhaps even excessive, paper work. (Nah, can't happen here!) For voluntary organizations, contracting can lead to *less secure* funding rather than more. Its administrative burdens can be particularly excessive for smaller organizations. Contracting can undermine the independence of all voluntary organizations. And contracting can put at risk preventive community development and advocacy work.

How do you like the balance of probabilities so far?!

But can we at least allow that contracting is successful when it establishes a win-win result? To achieve this, the nonprofit sector—that is we—need to develop strategies that will get the most out of the potential advantages and decrease the potential (and very real!) disadvantages. Such strategies must begin by taking account of the fundamental relationship between voluntary organizations and government. And to build that relationship we need to emphasize, or perhaps even rediscover, the unique nature of organizations in our sector. (Contrary to apparent understanding in some quarters, despite our similarities to private businesses in being private, and to public sector departments in being not-for-profit, "we are neither mini-bureaucracies, nor failed commercial enterprises.")

But what, then, are we? What is our sector all about? Here, Nowland-Foreman draws on David Robinson, another brilliant commentator on the sector from New Zealand (who I had the privilege also to meet) who bases his fundamental definition of the sector on *values*, three to be precise:

- independence (based on freedom of association);
- altruism (concern for others); and
- community (that is, collective action).

Now, a lot more can and should be said about these three values, and other subsidiary ones, but can we allow, at least for the purposes of this discussion, that these are important and somehow basic? (In any case, we can chat further about this after.)

Which brings us to the heart of Nowland-Foreman's analysis and the title of his paper: "Voluntary organizations are not mendicants begging for government aid, nor are they merely a new generation of slick (or not so slick!) deal-makers vying for a contract here or a contract there."

Instead, he says, "Voluntary organizations are as much about participation as provision; citizenship as service. They are an essential part of the fabric of civil society. A sector that has arisen from the community to help overcome alienation and market failure cannot be remade along either bureaucratic or market principles without destroying its essence."

In other words, the essential nature of the organizations in the sector must be a factor in any partnership with government.

Although the power relationship between government and the voluntary sector will never be equal (even less so with individual organizations, however large), genuine partnership involving interdependence, complementarity, and mutual respect must be given practical expression in the contractual relationship. For example:

- explicit recognition of the contributions of voluntary organizations and the value of their knowledge of services and community needs;
- full funding of those services the government is contracting for, including all legitimate overheads;
- expecting accountability only for what is funded;

- more reasonable funding periods, *i.e.*, at least three years;
- early consultation at all levels; and
- fair and independent systems of review and dispute resolution.

While contracting is often linked to the ideas of increased choice and responsiveness to needs, rigidities in the nature of contracting must be overcome—precisely for the sake of responsiveness to the needs of clients and community. For example:

- minimum necessary external controls;
- funding blocks of related services;
- wholistic approach to defining outcomes and accountability; and
- new support models for smaller organizations.

And the dark side of competitive models should be steered away from—because it can undermine the valued qualities of voluntary organizations. Instead, choice and diversity can be achieved by collaborative strategies, and fair resource allocation can be achieved by genuine needs-based planning (rather than being misused as a divisive rationing device).

For our part, as voluntary organizations, we must continue our commitment to stewardship of the resources entrusted to us. Government (or indeed any other outside) accountability requirements are only one strand in the "web of accountabilities" in which we are rightly and fundamentally enmeshed. They—and all other things—must be held in balance so as not to distort the goals and activities of the organization.

Nowland-Foreman's conclusion is as follows:

> The development of contracts in the social services is a symbol of wider changes facing the voluntary sector. While in some senses only an administrative tool, they are also the flying wedge of a whole new relationship between governments and voluntary organizations, between voluntary organizations, and between voluntary organizations and the clients and communities they serve.
>
> If the dynamics of the market model are accepted, then voluntary organizations are likely to lose any differentiation from commercial organizations. If we allow our vision to be limited to that of merely agents providing government-defined services, then

> we will become indistinguishable from other state sub-contractors.
>
> The challenge of contracting calls voluntary organizations to rediscover who we are, our unique nature and kaupapa for civil society, to regain our confidence and assert our place as an essential part of an open and dynamic society.

I spent a lot of time and effort, early in my sabbatical year, reviewing typologies of agencies, researching multi-dimensional analyses of organizational characteristics, and trying to come up with the perfect definition of the sector that would at least allow me to name it—so as to better understand and eventually communicate the importance, the essence, of our sector. I can state with a reasonable degree of confidence that no such definition is out there. There is no magic name, and there are no unambiguous criteria for defining just who we are, what we are about—and why it matters so much.

But Robinson's work on key values of the sector is not that far off: Independence, Altruism, and Community—even though each of these values contains its own myth that we must struggle with.

But, if we focus our attention on these values … well, we could do a lot worse.

Which also means that even if contracting finally does go away—in that wondrous new millennium we all await—our most important accountability still remains: to our mission.

That's all we have, really, that is uniquely ours.

Additional reading:

Garth Nowland-Foreman. "Neither Mendicants nor Deal-Makers: Contracting, government funding and voluntary organizations" (Wellington: New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services, 1995).

David Robinson and G. R. Hawke, eds. *Performance without Profit: The Voluntary Welfare Sector in New Zealand* (Wellington: Institute of Policy Studies, 1993).

Chapter 5
The Future of the Sector? We Don't Even Know What's Going on Now!

The Future of the Sector? We Don't Even Know What's Going on Now!

Trends are a wonderful thing. You can say whatever you want—the more outrageous the better—and it will be almost impossible to disprove quickly. This is especially the case with the nonprofit sector. There is so little hard data, especially over time. And as a new field of research, with basic definitions still unsettled, what data there is can rarely be compared with anything meaningful. Combine that with the approaching new millennium, and the field is wide open for trend-spotting and all sorts of ridiculous predictions.

In nearly all fields most predictions are wrong. And most alleged trends simply aren't. The more useful it would be to know what's going to happen in the future—for example with issues of any complexity—the more difficult it is to predict. Not only is the future contingent, our ignorance is unusually large. In North America we have the additional challenge of an almost complete lack of historical perspective, perhaps not surprising since we have so little history. The history of the nonprofit sector? Same problem.

Trend-spotting is, therefore, rarely more than wish-dreaming or an excuse for polemic. We imagine trends that confirm our hopes and dreams of an impossible utopia. Or we manufacture doom and gloom

to support our simplistic ideological hobby-horses. The fact is that the best we can hope for is rarely attainable, especially as a result of historical inevitability. Likewise, the sky does not usually fall—particularly when it would be convenient for our own purposes.

The best predictor of future behaviour is … the past. So, despite the acceleration of change in the closing decades of this century, the future is likely to be a lot more similar to the past than otherwise. That is why a better understanding of the nonprofit sector, built on basic research and analysis, is so important. Lacking that, the best we can say is that the next decade will be pretty much like the last one. The more distant future may be more different, but not necessarily unprecedented. Very little is, especially when dealing with human beings and their organizations.

The implications for strategic planning in nonprofit organizations are clear. Continuing to do what works well is not the worst thing you can do. On the other hand, if it isn't working now, the mere passage of time is unlikely to improve the situation.

None of the foregoing minimizes the value of examining changes in the rest of the world and considering how they might affect the nonprofit sector. The paperless office comes to mind, as does Jeremy Rifkin's prediction that the nonprofit sector will solve unemployment by providing volunteer opportunities and even jobs for the people no longer required by corporate capitalism. Predictions from within the sector are no sillier than these.

A favourite area of speculation these days is the internet. It is true that word processors and laser printers increased the ease with which we can all send out personalized begging letters. And it is true that e-mail is a useful means of communicating within and between nonprofit organizations. But a real, significant change? I don't think so. The photocopier did make a difference in offices throughout the land (and to the pulp and paper industry and to our disappearing forests), but although computerization is nice, the day-to-day reality of managing an agency and serving people in need has changed very little in the past two decades. Management still requires a high level of communication, and to get money you still have to ask. Person to person is still best for both these tasks. Having a web page will, no doubt, soon become a necessity, but it will be no more sufficient for success than all the PCs, fax machines, and cell phones in the land.

Actually, I'm not entirely sure that telephones represent progress or are even all that necessary in modern nonprofits. Letter-writing has much to recommend it and the phenomenal growth of e-mail is a belated recognition of this. Most of us are not that good at thinking on our feet and, consequently, phone responses to anything more than "are you free for lunch next week," leave much to be desired (and sometimes get us into real trouble). Phone calls (or playing telephone tag to return them) are extremely intrusive if you're trying to get serious work done, and most calls lack any real urgency. This is evidenced by the fact that, if we can afford it, we have someone to screen our calls so that we are not, in fact, interrupted—even when we are in the office. E-mail is quicker and more precise because we are forced to compose the message instead of just running off at the mouth. And e-mail just sits there in our mail box, patiently waiting until we are ready to deal with it. Both requests for and provision of information are improved by the keyboard. The human (warm and fuzzy) dimension can still be as prominent as desired (or socially acceptable). If you have any doubts, compare almost any historical correspondence with your last few business phone calls. So, I don't really think the telephone will catch on.

Reading in the nonprofit field these last couple of years reveals that there is considerable interest in the new millennium. It's nearly an obsession. As was apparently the case when we last changed millenniums, the literature is rife with speculation, incantations, dreams, and prophesies of doom. Consultants are being run off their feet conducting seminars, and organizations are wasting precious resources planning for the new era about to dawn.

Still, there are some trends that are worth thinking about. The most important of these are demographic trends in the number, age, and family composition of the general population and of the client groups an agency depends on. The aging of the baby boomers is the most obvious trend, although its impact on most organizations is difficult to assess. Other clear and significant demographic trends include: family breakdown (hardly new or mystifying to Alberta organizations since our province has led the way in this for so long); increasing cultural diversity (again, not a big issue here since most immigration is concentrated in other parts of the country); and increasing disease and health problems (although HIV-related problems are moderate here compared with places like Vancouver).

But, poverty *is* increasing, both absolutely and in terms of increasing disparity of wealth. This is a result of the recession earlier this decade followed by the relatively jobless recovery, continuing globalization of the economy, and decreased government support for social assistance. This demographic trend shows *every* sign of continuing, even accelerating. We can confidently predict that there will be no shortage of business for food banks and soup kitchens. Most agencies who serve people with low income or poverty-related problems, or who depend on lower income people for fees or purchases, will be affected. *All* agencies in this part of the sector will face increasing demands for service and clients with less capacity to share the cost of those services. And external funding for these services does not seem to be growing as quickly.

Some have suggested that we simply need to use more volunteers. As is clear to most people within the sector, recruiting, screening, training, and managing voluteers costs money—costs that are usually not covered by government contracts and therefore must be funded from fees or donations which are also in demand for other, urgent needs. Research suggests that substantially increasing volunteers is cost-effective only for larger organizations (*e.g.*, with annual budgets of more than $1 million). There are numerous examples in Alberta of late where government officials have suggested that the volunteer sector can look after the people who are no longer covered by the social safety net. In other words, cuts in government funding can be replaced by community charitable activity. This is patently false. In fact, a recent study by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation estimates that every 1 per cent decrease in government funding leads to a 1.5 per cent *decrease* in volunteers.

A more radical suggestion is that government spending and deficits can be reduced by having the nonprofit sector provide all services to those living in poverty, or ill, or disabled. As tempting as this might be for those of us who value the importance and capabilities of the sector, the reality is that nonprofits in Canada are too small, too thin on the ground, and too under-resourced for this grand task. And, nonprofits already depend on governments for much of the funding they use to provide services to people who can't pay. The nonprofit sector is simply not equipped to take on a significant portion of the much more costly social security and income support programs currently provided by the government.

Related to this is the biggest and scariest trend or all. It is the one that is most talked about in the sector: the *decrease in government funding*. Most of us have lamented this horrible occurrence, have secretly dreamed of someday electing a different government that would do things differently, and have tried to make up the difference by doing more fund-raising or wracking our brains to see if there is anything that our agency could sell. And yet, there is precious little evidence that there is any substantial decrease in government funding to the sector. In fact, it seems to be growing in both amount and in percentage of the sector's funding. Admittedly, because of the sorry state of our knowledge of such things, it's difficult to know for sure.

What we may mean when we complain about decreased government funding is that it is not growing as quickly or dependably as it used to. Particularly older agencies may remember a "golden era" in the 1960's or early 1970's when funding kept pace with increasing demands for service and it was no big deal to get the money. It was just there for the asking. Or, we may mean that government funding is not increasing fast enough to keep up with inflation—with the costs from our suppliers or the salary grids in our organization. And it is true that federal government funding to certain national and advocacy organizations did decrease dramatically in the early 1990's. But federal government funding represents less than 15 per cent of the government funding for the sector in Canada, and thousands of agencies don't and never did get any of it.

A recent study of charities in Edmonton showed that between 1990 and 1994, government funding to nonprofit organizations actually *increased*. Sixty per cent of organizations received *more* government funding in 1994 than they did in 1990. The remaining 40 per cent received less. Admittedly, the increase averaged less than 1 per cent, although welfare charities' percentage of government funding increased by three percentage points (from 32 to 35 per cent of their total revenue).

The real problem is not decreasing government funding to the sector, but rather the huge increase in the demand for services from "welfare" and other human service agencies as government policies and the global economy increase the number of people living in poverty…and the depth of their poverty…and the complexity of their problems. The second very real problem is the increasing number of nonprofit organizations competing for funding. For example, the number of charities in Edmonton increased 25 per cent in the four

years covered by the study mentioned above, and Revenue Canada registers more than 3,000 new charities every year—78,000 and counting, last I heard. And that's just the registered charities. Many of Canada's 100,000 other nonprofit organizations are also out there raising money. Thirdly, quasi-governmental charities—hospitals, universities, and school districts—are actively and competently competing with the rest of the sector for funds. And competing in areas well beyond their traditional ones (bequests to hospitals and chocolate sales by school children).

Increasing public scrutiny is another trend that is overstated. There are a couple of backbench MP's who have been on the sector's case in the past few years—challenging the efficiency or legitimacy of nonprofits, and Walter Stewart (in a recent book) rages about high salaries and too much lobbying in some nonprofits. The examples cited are quite awful, but they are far from representative or even common in the nonprofit sector in Canada. And the problems at the Red Cross are much more related to its ambiguous status as a quasi-governmental organization than to its inclusion in the nonprofit sector. Outrageous salaries of senior executives is largely a United States phenomenon, and is not widespread even there. While these issues could erode public confidence in nonprofits, this is unlikely to be a major problem. Continued public ignorance and overlooking the sector altogether is much more likely.

On a more positive note, there has been some talk of a huge "inter-generational income transfer" in the next 10 or 20 years as the aging and relatively affluent depression-era folks pass on their estates to the baby boomers. Estimates as high as $1 trillion have been placed on this wealth transfer. Don't hold your breath! Many minor fortunes were made in the stock market, and the increase in the value of housing has significantly built the assets of most of the middle class. But everything, from putting kids through university to living out one's last few years of life, has also increased dramatically in cost. And recent studies of boomers' plans for their inheritances indicate that "giving to charity" doesn't even make the list of possibilities.

Other major trends have been alleged around volunteers. It has been noticed that baby boomers are aging and depression-era folks are dying and may not volunteer so frequently in the future. As women enter the workforce more frequently, traditional stay-at-home-mothers may not be so available. And recent immigrants don't seem

to volunteer as often, at least with mainstream agencies. Are these trends? Hardly. Women have been re-entering the workforce since the 1960's, in large numbers since the 1970's (especially in Alberta). Agencies that haven't noticed yet have already missed the boat. There is even some evidence that young people are volunteering more frequently now, so some agencies must be taking advantage of that. And who hasn't noticed the dramatic increase in female lawyers and other professional women on boards of directors?

The reality is that the profile of volunteering has been changing, gradually, since the beginning. In late Victorian times, upper-middle class women used volunteer work as a way to get out of the house and into the outside world because they had skills and interests (beyond managing the servants) and wanted to help others. In England, the "friendly visitors" movement provided these opportunities (although charitable boards were still almost exclusively male) and, incidentally, led to the formation of social work schools and contributed to the professionalization of charitable work throughout the sector. The 1950's in North America really were a (brief) anomaly. Changes in the role and nature of volunteers and volunteer work is nothing new.

Whatever the changes in the sector or in the larger society—gradual or revolutionary—the most important thing is how the nonprofit sector responds. Some suggestions are not necessarily wrong, even if they are based on non-existent trends. For example, from a recent article: "…the future requires: willingness to question the status quo; look at problems from different perspective; risk trying new solutions; engage real people—parents, volunteers, community—in dialogue." Has there ever been a time when this wasn't required of the sector? Experimenting, testing theory and practice, being flexible has always been the role—and perhaps the key contribution—of the sector since its beginning. This is not a trend, but it is still important.

It has also been suggested that in the coming new age, "agencies [should] become client-driven rather than by funders' priorities…" or that the role of agencies should change from "service provider [to] enabler [to] educator [to] coordinator." Agencies have always been driven by the needs of clients and have always had to balance that with funders' priorities. Unresponsiveness to clients is rarely a choice made by agencies (although under-resourced agencies often have to moderate their responses because of cost or the inability to

hire the best people). Where there is deliberate unresponsiveness, it is usually because funders are unwilling to pay for anything outside the narrow parameters of the contract. As for the role change from service provider to coordinator, who's going to provide the services if most agencies were to adopt this suggestion?

A final suggestion for the future is that agencies become more entrepreneurial. One formulation goes like this: "Define [your] core business…[then] package and sell its strengths. Create [an] affiliated not-for-profit [business] to sell services to other nonprofits." If this were to be widely adopted, we would all be selling our services to each other! How would agencies (to say nothing of the people who need help) be any further ahead? nonprofits that have services for which there is a market are already doing this a lot and those who have clients who can afford some level of co-payment already derive a significant portion of their revenue from this. "Fees for service, memberships, and product sales" is already the second largest source of income (behind government revenue) for the nonprofit sector as a whole. But if agency clients are homeless or don't have enough money for food, where is the potential revenue? Nor is there much of a private market for a mat on the shelter floor, a food hamper, or supportive counselling for street people.

So, as we move into the new millennium, there will be more predictions than usual—more allegations of trends in the sector. This probably can't be helped because some people seem to think that special dates make a difference. I predict that most of these predictions will be based on lack of evidence and that most of the trends are merely allegations—careless projections of our hopes and fears. If and when the evidence does come in, most of the trends will evaporate. In short, we can expect more of the same in the sector despite the approach of the millennium:

- fund-raising will be hard (when has it been otherwise?);
- governments will continue to do counter-productive or at least inconvenient things (as they always have);
- the public will continue to underestimate the importance of the sector (largely out of ignorance rather than malice);
- volunteers will be hard to recruit, train, support, and use (as ever);

- nonprofits will be asked to do more with less (whereas all we can really do is less with less, although perhaps, if we try especially hard, we can choose some things that really matter);

- some nonprofits will go under (no more than any other year) and many more will be formed (that's a real trend!) and;

- the sector will continue to struggle and to make a very important contribution to our life and nation (and almost no one will notice until the next big scandal hits the press).

Life in the sector goes on, most of it equally opaque to those within and without the sector. People will predict the death of the sector (or the rebirth of a new and better one) and both will be equally wrong. The sector will change a little (the sector has evolved since the beginning) but will enter the new millennium very much like it is right now. Which is both good news and bad news (as it always has been).

Agencies, people: if you are doing good work now, keep doing it. If it's not working now, change it. Time alone, even the dawn of a new millennium, is unlikely to fix very much.

Additional reading:

Warren Dow. "The Voluntary Sector—Trends, Challenges and Opportunities for the New Millennium" (Vancouver: Volunteer Vancouver, 1997).

Lester M. Salamon. "Holding the Centre: America's Nonprofit Sector at a Crossroads" (New York: The Nathan Cummings Foundation, 1997).

Chapter 6
A Personal Plea to Budding Social Entrepreneurs

A Personal Plea to Budding Social Entrepreneurs

Are charity-run business ventures worth the time, energy and risks involved? The short answer is, NO! The longer answer is that new, charity-run business ventures are extremely costly in terms of time and energy and are, at best, very risky propositions. My polemic is not against long-established businesses, like Goodwill, or art gallery gift shops. Nor is it particularly relevant to charging fees for services— this isn't the same as starting a business venture. Any organization that has being doing either successfully has already dealt with these issues.

But anyone else, please consider carefully. You will read this article and think that you can avoid the pitfalls and triumph over adversity. You will be sure that I have overstated the negatives and ignored the exciting possibilities. You will be confident that you can do so much better than I have suggested. One in a thousand of you will be right. The rest of you will be very wrong. If anything, it is harder and potentially more damaging to your organization than I am telling you.

There are essentially two kinds of business ventures a charity can consider. The first is a pure business—whose clear purpose is to make money for the charity to spend on its real mission. The second kind of business venture is impure—with mixed goals. Although you would like to make some money off it, the main purpose of the business is to further one or more of your charitable objectives, *e.g.*, providing jobs for unemployed people in your community.

There are two main problems with option one—the pure business venture. First, what do you know about business? If you and your senior management are experienced business people, who have owned and operated successful businesses, that's one thing. In the more likely event that you are not, what makes you think you can do this? Do you think that all good business people are qualified to run your nonprofit? Of course not! Different skills, different corporate culture, different outcome measures—a whole different perspective on life and work. Not that there isn't some overlap, but you need to have a whole team with top level business skills, focused commitment, and a lot of time. And who's minding your agency while you're playing this game?

Secondly, you need capital. For lack of adequate capital, many business start-ups fail utterly, and more fail to make significant profits —sometimes for years. In fact, unless one underestimates the amount of capital needed and overestimates how quickly the business will begin turning a profit, almost no one could bear to start a business! If you don't have enough capital, you are increasing already high chances of failure, even if you have an exceptionally good idea. It is highly unlikely that you have enough capital.

But if you happen to have enough capital for a proper business startup, you again need to ask why. Why do you have all that money sitting around not being used to further your charitable objects? Why don't you use the money to start an innovative program or expand services to more difficult clients or raise the unconscionably low wages of your staff? In other words, why not invest in your organization's real work, instead of an unrelated business venture? Why would you risk your reserves on the exceedingly slim chance of getting more? And what do you intend to do with the new money that you aren't doing with the resources you already have?

The second type of business venture is the one with mixed motives —the type with which I have personal (and painful) experience. In our case, a restaurant—Kids in the Hall Bistro to provide job training and real jobs for young people with multiple barriers to employment. This venture had to have purposes other than profit, because starting a "pure" restaurant business is such an unlikely way to make money. Just look at the long hours, low pay, and turnover in the industry.

From the very beginning, funders at all levels misunderstood the challenges of this kind of venture and held unrealistic expectations for the program. The needs of the business and the objectives of the program were constantly at odds. Within the organization, we didn't foresee the time it would take and the disruption it would cause to our agency. Even though our capital campaign reached its goal on schedule, and our funding for the program side of the operation was generous, there was never enough money. We were under-capitalized, even after directing all our undesignated donations to the project.

Still, it is just possible that you will hit on a business venture that can succeed. You will have a unique idea that none of the real business people in your community have thought of. You will find the perfect location that all the other businesses have overlooked. You will find enough capital to start this business properly, without stealing it from your other programs or alienating donors who gave you money to provide services. You will discover people within your organization who have hidden business skills and enough spare time to do this as well as their real jobs, or you will find business people from outside to work for nonprofit sector wages. And your business venture will succeed and make a significant profit for your organization.

And in that success lies the greatest danger. It will tempt you to begin to think of profits—along with services. It will nudge you toward clients who are just a bit more economical to serve. It will steer your organization just a few degrees away from work that is costly but not very "productive." The concept of profit will, very gradually, start to compete with your charitable objects. You will just begin to think that there may be "other factors," besides the real needs of your community, that really should be considered.

The most important work our sector does simply does not pay! Never has. Never will. If it did, our sector would not be doing it. Yet, it is work that is vital to the community, and it is hard work. No harder than turning a profit in a business venture. It may not even be work on a higher moral plane. But it is different. The extent to which we pretend it is similar to business, or the degree to which we exchange profit for any other objective, is the extent to which we compromise our charitable purposes, and therefore, our reason for being.

I know you're thinking this won't happen to your organization—that you can have it both ways. That is why successful business ventures are so seductive and so dangerous—more dangerous, in fact, than unsuccessful ones where all you lose is money. Fortunately, successful business ventures are also considerably less likely!

Don't say I didn't tell you.

(This article originally appeared in Front & Centre, a publication of the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, in 1998.)

Additional reading:

Brenda Zimmerman and Raymond Dart. *Charities Doing Commercial Ventures: Societal and Organizational Implications* (Toronto: The Trillium Foundation, 1998).

Chapter 7
Short Meditations

Short Meditations

The Cult of Accountability

The report of the Broadbent *Panel on Accountability and Governance in the Voluntary Sector* is a fine piece of work. It is conceptually strong, well-researched, measured in tone, and quite sensible.

Nevertheless, the premise on which it is based is flawed and the situation it attempts to address is quite distant from real life in the sector. The entire project is, among other things, a large solution in search of a small problem. Although the report, in itself, will do little damage to the sector, it will also do very little to help make things better for anyone—donors, participants, or users of the sector's services. The reason for this is that "lack of accountability" is not anywhere near the top of the list of problems facing the sector as we approach the new millennium.

Solutions—however well-intentioned and internally strong—that address the wrong problem are not likely to improve things much. Supporters of the process will inevitably be disappointed and opponents of the sector heartened. The few real examples of gross lack of accountability by nonprofit agencies in Canada will not be fixed by this or any other report and the opportunity for high-profile attention to the sector's real problems has already been lost for the immediate future. The best that can be said for the report is that it may be of some use in encouraging discussion of secondary issues.

The real problems facing the sector: widespread, nearly complete ignorance about the sector, both globally and locally; reactionary attitudes toward people in need, usually promoted by governments for cynical political ends; fairly complete subjugation of all sectors of society to corporate capitalism; and lack of accountability on the part of funders, especially governments, is hardly mentioned in the report.

These are the real threats to the sector, now and in the future. But they will not prevail. The sector—damaged, with its effectiveness compromised—will nevertheless survive.

History is pretty clear on this and all those with any interest in the sector should take from it whatever small consolations they can.

Additional reading:

Panel on Accountability and Governance in the Voluntary Sector. *Helping Canadians Help Canadians: Improving Governance and Accountability in the Voluntary Sector* (Ottawa: Panel on Accountability and Governance in the Voluntary Sector, 1998).

Strategic Planning and All that Jazz

> …offering a jazz player's solution to radical problems of democracy… "We seek not perfection," he says, "but coordination. Not sterile stability but creative momentum. Ours is a youthful nation; the perfection we seek is futuristic and to be made manifest in creative action." The solution, in other words, is to remain resilient in the face of the blues—ready to improvise, ready to coordinate, ready to *swing*. God "always plans for the loooong haul," Hickman preaches in the brilliant Juneteenth-day sermon. "He wants a well-tested people to work his will.... He wants us limber as willow switches and he wants us tough as whip leather, so that when we have to bend, we can bend and snap back into place.…Roll with the blow like ole Jack Johnson.…Keep to the rhythm and you'll keep to life."
>
> (Robert G. O'Meally's review of Ralph Ellison's *Juneteenth*, in *The Atlantic Monthly*, July 1999)

The problem with strategic planning in nonprofit organizations is not that we're not business-like enough, because even businesses realize the limits of strategic planning in these times of rapid change. There is much to be said for the "spaghetti school" of planning: throw ideas against the wall and see what sticks. Three to five years can be an eternity.

Nor is the main problem that we are, of necessity, "top line" rather than "bottom line" organizations. Revenue, not expenses or profits, is and must remain the economic driver of our activity.

The problem isn't even that as a service industry we don't have a lot of assets or convenient tools like production schedules or inventory. Our product is consumed as it is produced, with a half-life measured in nano-seconds.

The main problem is that strategic planning is a method or technique when what we really need is a metaphor. We are an artistic sector rather than a scientific one. (Although many branches of modern science also make constructive use of metaphor.)

Rather than the careful strategic planner, the diligent MBA, or the flashy global entrepreneur, our sector could model itself and its leadership on the jazz player—"limber, tough, [able to] bend and snap back." "Ready to improvise, ready to coordinate, ready to *swing*."

Serious study of history and the human condition suggests that our business is an enduring one. Much of what our sector does—feeding the poor, looking after orphans, assisting the sick, and supporting arts and culture—is essentially the same task as it was hundreds, even thousands, of years ago. Maybe the real problem with strategic planning is that it doesn't take a long enough view. So we get diverted into measuring outcomes, achieving budget targets, and completing work plans. In the real sector, the music goes on.

"God 'always plans for the loooong haul.…Keep to the rhythm and you'll keep to life.'"

"Why Does He Hate Me? I've Never Even Given Him a Grant."

> It is as if [money's] potential is worth more than anything for which it might actually be used—as if the power to decide how it is to be spent is the really valuable thing.
>
> There's a paradox here—giving money can be the exercise of power by the donor over the receiver, but the transfer of money is also the transfer of power—even if money is only transferred from

> donor to grant-seeker against a specific budget. Maybe this is one reason why core funding is valued so much—more of the power of choice remains with the grant-holder.
>
> (Text of the 1999 Allen Lane Lecture, given in London on February 8, 1999, by Steven Burkeman, Trust Secretary, Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust)

Steven Burkeman reflects on the history and meaning of philanthropy—of giving money away, especially other people's money. He discusses with some sensitivity the power imbalance inherent in unreciprocated gifts and how that affects all of us who give to people who are unable to return the favour.

He explores how the power of money distorts the relationship between donor and recipient—whether such relationships involve wealthy and poor individuals, or institutional donors and recipients like foundations and agencies. This is the context for the text quoted above, and inspires his call for foundations to mitigate the harm of the power imbalance in funding relationships. "Foundations which are prepared to fund core costs—to accept that they may not be able to photograph that for which they are paying—are to be welcomed, for they are going against a culture of money power."

Burkeman also supports work at all levels that seeks to change the "economic divide"—the divide between those who have power and those who don't"—and encourages donors to go beyond merely giving money. He affirms "the rich and powerful [going] places they've never been" to see the lives of those who have been the objects of their charity—and, in seeing, to take the risk of a changed view of the world.

Near the end of his lecture he quotes the founder of his trust: "Charity as ordinarily practiced, the charity of endowment, the charity of emotion, the charity which takes the place of justice, creates much of the misery which it relieves, but does not relieve all the misery it creates."

Hard words for many of us in the sector, but worth meditating on—and taking action.

Immaculate Conception and other Myths of the Sector

> How the sector evolves will depend in large part on how well the myths about it are understood, how the sector balances the trade-offs it faces, and how other institutions respond. The first of these misconceptions is the "myth of pure virtue."
>
> (Lester M. Salamon, "The Rise of the Nonprofit Sector: A Global 'Associational Revolution'" in *FOREIGN AFFAIRS*, July/Aug 94)

Salamon describes the phenomenal rise of the nonprofit sector throughout the world as well as the challenges faced by the sector now. Nevertheless, he calls for the sector to recognize and struggle with its "myths" (similar to the founding myths of many religions and cultures) so that their inherent distortions do not compromise the important work of the sector. Careful consideration of these myths can help us both value the truth contained in them and limit the damage they can cause.

The *myth of pure virtue* gives the sector a "saintly self-perception and persona" as a "fundamentally flexible and trustworthy vehicle for the realization of elemental human yearnings…" This may suggest agencies in the sector are not "vulnerable to all the limitations that afflict other bureaucratic institutions—unresponsiveness, cumbersomeness, and routinization." This myth can also lead the sector organizations to assume they are immune to the tensions "between flexibility and effectiveness, grass-roots control, and administrative accountability."

The *myth of volunteerism* suggests to people within and outside the sector that "true nonprofit organizations rely chiefly, even exclusively, on private voluntary action and philanthropic support." This myth has fueled the notion that the "key to the expansion of the sector…is to reduce the role of the state." Overlooking the sector's partnership with government since the beginning and the magnitude of government's financial support "threatens to consign the nonprofit sector to a more marginal role than might otherwise be the case."

Although the number of nonprofit organizations has grown dramatically since the 1960's, the *myth of immaculate* conception ignores the "deep historical roots [of voluntary activity] in virtually

every part of the world." This myth contributes to our failure to learn from history (because we are under the mistaken impression that we just invented ourselves).

Myths are not entirely untrue nor are they without their uses. But confusing them with the whole of reality leads to avoidable errors that compromise the future of the sector.

The Myth of Sustainability

I certainly don't want to assert that this is a trend, or that it happens all the time. But I have noticed, among government funders, much more emphasis lately on the "sustainability" of projects that they fund. Some government funders only want to fund projects that, after a year or two, will no longer need their funding. How absurd!

Traditionally, foundations and other private donors have funded experimental or pilot projects—testing new concepts, developing new delivery methods, breaking ground in dealing with new social problems. There are some rewards in this role, to be sure—the excitement of being on the cutting edge may outweigh the risk of projects not working.

The second step of this traditional process was that the interventions that were demonstrated to be both workable and widely needed are picked up by the government so that the private funders can move on to other fields.

It appears to me that some government funders are resisting involvement in projects that require core, ongoing funding. They increasingly want to switch to funding the short-term, exciting projects for which their funding will be only temporary. Even if the project is wildly successful, there is no interest in or commitment to ongoing funding. Therefore, some government funders have added sustainability to the list of characteristics they demand of projects seeking funding.

This is counter-productive in at least two ways. If the project is really innovative, it is unrealistic to even think about sustainability before knowing if the project works. More importantly, if the government is going to switch to the role of funding exciting, new projects for the first year or two, who's going to fund the ongoing

work? Have governments asked foundations or other private funders if they are willing to change roles and take on open-ended funding of effective projects that meet obvious needs?

Most work in the nonprofit sector is there for a reason. If it were sustainable—if the participants could pay the cost of the service, if businesses could make money on it, or if the whole of society agreed that it was a priority—it wouldn't be a pilot project in the first place! The most needed services on any large scale will never be sustainable unless the government funds them—including essential core costs. Private philanthropy simply doesn't have the resources to do this with more than a few specialized projects. Has anyone in the government asked them if they are willing to take over this traditional responsibility of the government?

If this view persists or spreads, I would suggest that government funders stop funding pilot projects altogether. Why experiment with new solutions if you have no intention of continuing them when they prove effective?

Otherwise, nonprofit agencies should turn the tables and demand "sustainability plans" from government funders. If the sector is being asked to go to the trouble and expense of demonstrating new services and investing in new projects, we need a firm commitment from the government that, if the work proves effective, it will be funded on a permanent basis and made available to all who could benefit from it.

A Classification Anomaly

> Classifying lettuce as a mammal produces approximately the same effect. Lettuce is a non-fur-bearing, non-milk-producing, non-child-bearing, and non-warm-blooded non-animal. Further, as a mammal, lettuce is highly ineffective, being sedentary and not warm-blooded. All other animals are much faster! Lettuce is also remarkably non-agile and fails to protect its young. On the whole, lettuce is a miserable excuse for a mammal!
>
> In a similar way, nonprofit action has increasingly been misclassified as a very deficient form of productive enterprise.
>
> (Roger A. Lohmann. "And Lettuce Is Non-animal: Toward a Positive Economics of Voluntary Action" in *NSVQ* 18/4, Winter 1989)

Roger Lohmann is committed to developing a positive conception of voluntary action as a particular but consistent type of economic activity, rather than a deviant form of mainstream market economics. It is his hope that this will counter the negative tone of much analysis of the sector which suggests that nonprofits "arise only from the failure of other institutions but are themselves inefficient, unproductive, poorly managed or mismanaged, and inadequately controlled."

He argues that this stigmatization explains much of the negative political and business attitude toward the sector and the resulting policy consequences for it. For example, challenging the tax-exempt status of charities because they have an unfair competitive advantage only makes sense only if one "accepts the premise that nonprofits are competitive actors in the marketplace."

Some of this difficulty goes all the way back to Adam Smith's "unproductive labour" which set voluntary activity entirely outside the scope of economics. People engaging in such activity were considered to be consuming rather than creating, "not working at all…are all maintained by revenue." Is this not how much of the activity of our sector is regarded, especially by "bottom line" types? No wonder people question the "basis of rational choice in voluntary action."

In fact, don't we often think of ourselves that way as we search for productive enterprises that might subsidize our revenue-consuming primary activities, or some small thing of value that we might put on the table to entice a corporate contribution? And it's not easy, since "services are primarily social acts and not physical objects."

Further handicapping us in the commercial marketplace is the "central fact of common goods that they cannot be inventoried, warehoused, or traded, for the simple reason that their production and consumption are simultaneous." Pretty poor excuse for a business we are!

Lohmann does go on to formulate a positive theory to both explain and value the "common goods" that are of such importance to our sector. If you have an economic bent, I would encourage you to pursue this article. But even without that, don't you just love the image of that miserable lettuce that can't even protect its young?!

The Cheshire Cat Smiles

> What remains, the smile on the face of the Cheshire cat, is the quality of the service an organization provides, even as the formal structure of the organization vanished from view.
>
> (Jon Van Til's "On the Boundary" column in *NonProfit Times*, March, 1999)

Van Til and increasing numbers of scholars are calling into question the whole notion of a distinctive "third sector" comprised of nonprofit organizations. The largest parts of the alleged sector—hospitals, universities, trade and professional organizations, churches—rarely, if ever, think of themselves as part of such a sector. They are health care, or education or accountants. There is also an increasing blurring of the boundaries between the sectors as governments devolve many of their traditional activities, businesses encroach on traditional nonprofit domains, and charities look seriously for commercial activities that they can undertake.

Which really calls into question the original premise of my project—discovering, defining, describing, and promoting the importance and future of the "whatever" sector. Which isn't all that bad a result from a lot of reading, thinking and meditating!

"Just empty yourself…"

Additional reading:

Ralph Kramer. *Nonprofit Organization in the 21st Century: Will Sector Matter?* (The Aspen Institute: Nonprofit Sector Research Fund, 1999).

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Appendix A:
Reading Lists

Reading Lists

Key Texts for Understanding Nonprofits

This reading list was compiled by Putnam Barber in January 1999 from an e-mail discussion of the "10 most important texts on the…sector" instigated by Dr. Susan Keen of the University of New South Wales in late 1998. Academics and practitioners from several locations who participate in the ARNOVA-L electronic discussion group/list contributed. I have checked out many of these entries (that are still in print) and heartily recommend any of them that might catch your fancy.

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John Casey, Universitat Autonoma de Barcelona:

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CITIZENS: Strengthening Global Civil Society (Washington, DC: CIVICUS Publications, 1994).

Lester M. Salamon and Helmut K. Anheier (Eds.). Defining the Nonprofit Sector: A Cross-national Analysis (Johns Hopkins University Center for Civil Society Publications, 1997).

Lester M. Salamon and Helmut K. Anheier (Eds.). The Emerging Nonprofit Sector: An Overview (Johns Hopkins University Center for Civil Society Publications, 1996).

Kathleen D. McCarthy, Virginia A. Hodgkinson, Russy D. Sumariwalla, et al. The Nonprofit Sector in the Global Community: Voices from Many Nations (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass and Washington, DC: Independent Sector, 1992).

Putnam Barber:

John Burbidge (Ed.) Beyond Prince and Merchant: Citizen Participation and the Rise of Civil Society (New York: Pact Publications, 1997)

Ernest Gellner. Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and its Rivals (New York: Viking Penguin, 1994).

Mancur Olson. The Logic of Collective Action (Harvard, 1965, 1971).

Elinor Ostrom. Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action (Cambridge, 1990).

Robert D. Putnam. Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy (Princeton, 1993).

Alan Ware. Between Profit and State: Intermediate Organizations in Britain and the United States (Princeton, 1989).

Saxon Harding, Ottawa:

Henry Hansmann. The Ownership of Enterprise (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996).

Basic Philanthropy Book Reading List

compiled [and annotated] by Dwight Burlingame and Varden Hadfield

Addams, Jane. ***Twenty Years at Hull-House***. New York: Macmillan Company, 1981.

Addams recounts her experiences during her residence in a settlement house in Chicago's West Side slums from 1889 to 1909. In her account, she emphasizes the importance of providing for the physical, spiritual, educational, and cultural needs of the poor people in the surrounding neighborhoods.

Bellah, Robert N. ***et al. Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life***. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.

An analysis of 200 interviews with middle class Americans to examine their pursuit of the good life. The authors discuss an increasing individualism and self-interest and a lack of a language to describe what makes people happy. Then, they present involvement in voluntary organizations as a way to mediate the harm of individualism and to enjoy the good life.

Bremner, Robert H. American Philanthropy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988.

A social history of American philanthropy from colonial times to the present, examining such fields as religion, education, humanitarian reform, social service, war relief, and foreign aid.

Burlingame, Dwight F. ***et al***. ***Capacity for Change? The Nonprofit World in the Age of Devolution***. Indianapolis: Indiana Center on Philanthropy, 1996.

A collection of essays that discuss the impact of decreased government funding for nonprofits, or the increased reliance on nonprofits to do government's work, on the nonprofit sector. Discusses the possible impacts of this movement and potential nonprofit responses.

Burlingame, Dwight F. and Dennis R. Young, eds. ***Corporate Philanthropy at the Crossroads***. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996.

Organizes the discussion of corporate philanthropy into four areas: (1) neo-classical/corporate productivity model, (2) ethical/altruistic model, (3) political model, (4) stakeholder model. A variety of perspectives examine implications of current trends as well as suggestions for the future of corporate philanthropy. Examines volunteerism, firm size, business performance, power, and ethics.

Carnegie, Andrew. ***The Gospel of Wealth***. Indianapolis: Indiana University Center on Philanthropy, 1993.

Originally published in 1889, Carnegie discusses the proper administration of wealth and the best fields for philanthropy. He encourages philanthropists to give away their fortunes during their lifetimes, not after they die. He suggests a ranked order of causes including universities, libraries, hospitals and medical laboratories, public parks, meeting halls, and churches.

DeToqueville, Alexis. ***Democracy in America***. New York: Harper & Row, 1966.

Presents a French visitor's view of America in the early 1800's, from its geographic features to its government, to the people's deep involvement in associations and politics. DeToqueville discusses a comparative perspective between Europe and the United States, emphasizing the uniqueness of the American experiment in democracy.

Fishman, James J. and Schwarz, Stephen.
Nonprofit Organizations: Cases and Materials.
New York: The Foundation Press, Inc., 1995.

A comprehensive text on laws affecting nonprofits. Presents and discusses a variety of cases related to tax-exempt organizations, their trustees and directors, and their donors.

Hall, Peter Dobkin. ***Inventing the Nonprofit Sector and Other Essays on Philanthropy, Voluntarism, and Nonprofit Organizations***.
Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992.

Analyzes the development of America's fastest growing institutional sector. Examines the public perception of nonprofits, their structure, and the consequences of that structure for management and public policy. He discusses the difficulties of research on the nonprofit sector as well as thoughts on the future of the sector.

Kelly, Kathleen S. ***Effective Fund-Raising Management***.
New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 1998

An academic text outlining the practice of fund-raising including programs, processes, and publics. Topics include historical, organizational, legal, ethical, and theoretical contexts of annual giving, major gifts, planned giving, capital campaigns, and donors.

Lagemann, Ellen Condliffe. ***The Politics of Knowledge: The Carnegie Corporation, Philanthropy, and Public Policy***.
Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

A history of the Carnegie Corporation, a foundation created to give a way Andrew Carnegie's fortune from its founding in 1911 to the present. The corporation moved through scientific, cultural, and strategic philanthropy phases It was criticized for promoting the white middle-class culture in the United States.

Monroe, Kristen Renwick. ***Heart of Altruism: Perceptions of a Common Humanity***. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.

Explores the causes of altruism using an analysis of interviews with philanthropists, entrepreneurs, heroes, and rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe. Monroe sketches a hierarchy of levels of altruism, and suggests that altruists have a somewhat different way of viewing the world, although they don't feel much different than everyone else.

O'Neil, Michael. ***The Third America: The Emergence of the Nonprofit Sector in the United States***. Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1989.

Identifies and discusses several major nonprofit subsectors-religion, private education, health care, and others. Discusses the social influence of each of the nonprofit subsectors on American business, government, and society. Provides insights into the direction, growth, and role of the third sector during the next 25 years.

Payton, Robert L. ***Philanthropy: Voluntary Action for the Public Good***. Oryx Press, 1988.

Presents Payton's reflections on the place of voluntary action, association, and giving in American life. First, Payton explores the variety of philanthropic experiences in America and defines the boundaries of the philanthropic tradition. Then, moving from theory to practice and back, he explores the most important problems and issues in philanthropy.

Powell, Walton, ed. ***The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook***. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987.

An extensive, empirically-based overview of the nonprofit sector including many tables, figures, and references as a guideline for a basic understanding of the sector. Includes articles from a variety of experts on the scope of the sector, its relationship with the state and private enterprise, and processes within the sector and within nonprofit organizations.

Perez-Diaz, Victor M. ***The Return of Civil Society: The Emergence of Democratic Spain***. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993.

Examines the transition of Spain from a preindustrial economy with an authoritarian government to a modern, democratic state with a market society and voluntary associations such as trade unions and political parties. Discusses both broad reflection on relations between the state and civil society and empirical analysis of the Church, the economy, the workers, and the unions in Spain.

Putnam, Robert. ***Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy***. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.

A 20-year, thoroughly empirical study of the development of regional government in Italy from 1970-1990. Putnam examines

why some regions were more successful than others in developing the social networks that make up a civil society. Contrasting the North with the South, he includes the history of these regions back to early medieval times in his analysis.

Schneewind, J.B., ed. ***Giving: Western Ideas of Philanthropy***. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996.

A collection of articles on the a variety of conceptions of charity and philanthropy, from the middle ages to Victorian England, and including both African-American and International perspectives. Discusses ways we understand charity and how we come to these understandings.

Sealander, Judith. ***Private Wealth and Public Life: Foundation Philanthropy and the Reshaping of American Social Policy from the Progressive Era to the New Deal***. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.

A historical analysis of seven major foundations during the early 1900s, primarily from 1903 to 1932. Discusses ways these large foundations attempted to influence public social policy. Although their agendas the overlap among the sectors, he presents a "collectiveness index" as a gauge of an organization's external social benefit. He argues that current policies governing thee nonprofit sector are inadequate because of their lack of empirical bases.

Wolch, Jennifer R. ***The Shadow State: Government and Voluntary Sector in Transition***. New York: The Foundation Center, 1990.

The "shadow state" refers to voluntary organizations outside the political system which receive government funds, and are still subject to some state control. Wolch develops a theory which maps the new, changed terrain between the state and the voluntary sector and examines implications of the new interactions between government and nonprofits.

Wolpert, Julian. ***Patterns of Generosity in America: Who's Holding the Safety Net?***. New York: The Twentieth Century Fund Press, 1993.

A thorough discussion of American generosity and the effects of decentralizing government programs. It provides a historical perspective as well as an analysis of the effects of decentralization upon and within the nonprofit sector

Wuthnow, Robert. ***Acts of Compassion: Caring for Others and Helping Ourselves***. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991.

Relying heavily on evidence from surveys and interviews, Wuthnow attempts to unravel the paradox of extensive voluntarism and compassion in an American society which highly values individualism and self-interest. He discusses the languages of compassion, the importance of faith, the limits of caring, and compassion in context of the larger society.

Young, Dennis R. and Richard Steinberg. ***Economics for Nonprofit Managers***. The Foundation Center, 1995.

The first introductory economics textbook intended primarily for nonprofit management students. The text introduces the basics of micro-economics, using examples from the nonprofit world. It also examines the role of nonprofits in addressing the problems of market failure.

Appendix B:
The Edinburgh Letters

The Edinburgh Letters

Tuesday, 19 May, 1998

Sunday night. Ten hour Air Canada flight, including an hour on the runway waiting for the brakes to cool sufficiently from our just landing. Thankfully aboard a half-filled Airbus, with slightly less uncomfortable seats than a 737 and lots of room to spread out. Our national carrier is still doing the most unusual things with chicken, but I did manage to sleep almost entirely through both movies, leaving only three hours of bum hell until London.

Arrived Monday afternoon at grey, humid Heathrow. Terminal 3, largely under re-construction, also quite stuffy. But saw my first Bobbies with their cute helmets, wandering around, being helpful. Later, passed two automatic-weaponed, flak-jacketed flying squad members, looking a little less approachable—except with the attractive airline clerks. Was relieved to see nearly everyone as comfortably dressed as I was. Fashionable Londoners clearly don't hang out at Heathrow.

Adequate espresso and reasonably good danish in smoking area of Terminal 1 during three-hour wait for mercifully short British Midlands flight aboard aforementioned 737. Bum hell. Only vegetarian snacks left by Row 21. Unidentifiable, though creamy, contents. Arrived to blue sky and cool breeze in Edinburgh. Fourteen pound taxi ride to my flatlet, with chat about Isle of Skye at no extra charge.

And flatlet it is. 1 Dean Park Crescent. One room plus shower, in half-out basement of Georgian-style rowhouse in nice residential district. On border between Dean Village and Stockbridge, just north of Newtown. Met at door by owner's French girlfriend and her two large but friendly dogs, slightly pissed (not the dogs) but reasonably coherent and most hospitable. Showed me around my flatlet. Bathroom even smaller than in Wellington, Beckie, and also apparently Georgian. In the corner of the main room, a Baby Belling cooker, bowl-sized sink, bar-sized fridge. Twin beds, furniture mostly Scandinavian pine-printed cardboard, tiny TV, and a couple of old wicker chairs. Folding kitchen table (large enough for a chess board if all the pieces are aboard) stowed in the other corner, and kitchen chairs outside in the hall. But the tiny desk is in a large bay window with full morning sun.

Owner's friend invited me upstairs for a glass of wine and a smoke. Was pleased to hear that owner—in Prague, due back Wednesday—also smokes. Reportedly a nice guy, he clearly has good taste in both art and women (although a few too many framed posters). Said friend then took me for a quick ride around the neighbourhood, over noisy cobblestones, ending at The Dome. A glorious pub in an old stone bank building, with a huge stained-glass dome and marble columns in the nearly cubic main room. Bought me my first overpriced pint of lager on this side of the ocean. Still, a welcoming pub although I was still in my very relaxed traveling duds.

Home by 8:30 p.m., as mist rolled in from the sea. Struck out on my own for a late supper. Found sausage, a crusty roll and savory onions at take-away on the next street. Returned to my flatlet for telly—BBC docu-comedy about parking wardens, called "Booters" or some such. Window open, cool sleep under heavy duvet.

Unpacked in the morning and carefully, some would say obsessively, found just the right place for everything. No enclosed space unfilled. Waited for cell phone. Delivery successfully achieved at 11 a.m. With some trepidation, tried the electric "instant hot" unit in the shower stall. It works after a fashion, apparently quite safely. Probably necessary since hot water tap runs only lukewarm, and that not quickly. It is good to see the Scots upholding the English tradition of quality plumbing. Toilet seat is of the design that (per Mark H.) strikes fear into the hearts of small boys. Thankfully, I'm taller now.

Set off at noon to explore immediate neighbourhood, find breakfast, and shop. Had to pass two pubs just to get beyond first block. Bought *Daily Mail* from choice of at least six morning papers and found quite good eggs benedict (five pounds, fifty) and espresso at Mansion something-or-other at end of street, although they don't open early, except for weekend brunch. Lead story was Kirk's very narrow passage on weekend of their committee's recommendation to allow churches to accept National Lottery money, while continuing strong opposition to gambling. *Daily Mail* thought it a reasonable accommodation to the late 20th century.

Found cafe across the street with espresso and things baked which opens at 9 (for breakfast tomorrow). Also scouted a couple of Italian restaurants for dinner. Tiny shops line both sides of the main street. Every other one seems to be a thrift shop—charities, shelters, St. This or That. Clerked exclusively by elder, smocked women. Lifeboat Society has eldest personnel—with cute smocks, like yellow life vests. Cancer Board has highest calibre goods. Waited in long line at PO for stamps, after purchasing postcards, wine, flowers, *TLS*, pastry for tomorrow and toilet paper. All the necessities! Also spied vintage bottle of Laiphroaig, high on deli shelf, but decided I better find a bank machine first. On way home, stopped at Something House Hotel for my first pint of the day. Pricey brew, but lovely cast iron table under the trees could not be missed. Started *TLS*.

Back to the flat to try first phone call on my new cell phone. Number 0385 720917. Will probably require the country code for Scotland but, perhaps, not the first zero, above. Tried to call Beckie. Direct dialing with country code didn't fly but Canada Direct, with appropriate calling card, worked just fine. Beckie already out, so called Danielle at the office. Edinburgh, on GMT, is seven hours ahead of Edmonton. So call me mid-morning or mid-afternoon!

And tomorrow will, no doubt, be just as exciting. Immediate goals: find cyber-cafe with potential for e-mail, purchase Scotch, look for an art gallery. You know. Somebody's gotta do it!

Soon it will be time to find supper. Perhaps a wee malt before dining. Probably take along the airplane spy novel—which needs finishing before more *TLS*. A bit of telly then, and off to bed. To think of you all, and wish you were here. Later…

Your intrepid correspondent,
Martin G-C

Friday, 22 May, 1998

I saw my first contemporary building today. Downtown. Standard Life Centre. Not concrete; real stone. Not all glass. Not 40 floors high. Instead, precisely in scale with huge red sandstone Caledonian Hotel next door. Amazing. There is either real urban planning going on here or corporations simply have good taste and respect for their community. Have passed several facades of several vintages and conditions being repaired or restored. Few gravel parking lots in evidence. Did see one small high-rise in the distance, but didn't pursue.

Actually, the architecture is almost overwhelming—there being so much of it. The three-or four-story row house, row office or row store is almost everywhere. Occasionally a detached home, school or church. Actually quite a lot of churches! Several turned to other uses.

Pubs are everywhere. So many pubs, so little time. So many bakeries, so little time! And many more cafes than I have been led to believe. Am trying to find ways to control my intake of espresso—already four and it's just after lunch. More beer, I guess! Relatively few outside tables, however. Probably because building fronts are so close to the street and there is so little vacant land. And, perhaps, not much confidence in the weather. Cool and sunny today—just what I like for urban hiking. Did spy one lovely outdoor site—off the cellar of St. James Church, just below the Castle hill, overlooking a beautiful old cemetery. Cappuccino, wine and vegetarian fare. Social justice bookstore, etc. Will stop in next time I am by that way.

And I will be by that way often. It is on the road to Web 13, arguably Edinburgh's first internet cafe. Owned by locals, rather than the franchise from London. I have just opened an account there—although not until after I sent you the previous e-mail. And so, I now have an e-mail address: marting@web13.co.uk

Do let me hear from you. I probably won't go in every day—2 pounds, 50p per half hour for on-line time and a bit of a hike to get there—but it will be good to get news from home. Especially gossip!

Back to architecture. Overwhelming, as I said before. But in a good way. I expect I will get used to it. This will become my new emotional baseline. Toronto, a couple of weeks ago, was good preparation. It had been years since I had been in an older city.

Block after block of pre-turn-of-the-century buildings, and mail after mile of downtown. Haven't had that experience for many years. Edmonton is so unlike other cities. Actually, all real cities, I guess. Not that I'm not fond of Edmonton. But it's different being surrounded by architecture older than even me!

Have also been on the lookout for evidence of the third sector. As mentioned last letter, the secondhand shops are the only evidence so far. There is plenty of social service around, but it all seems to be the work of the Edinburgh Council. Special education centre directly across the street—in beautiful old school building—although no clients yet visible. Aged centre and housing complex just down the block—clients very much visible! National Trust (historical, I think) office also down the block, in renovated row house, of course. Aids Walk posters in the local cafes. But the secondhand shops are special. Even more than at first count. At least a dozen within the four-block shopping district of Stockbridge. Don't know if they are all here because the rents are cheaper than downtown, or if each village has its own complement. Lifeboats, shelters, aged, cancer, churches, dogs, and some issues I can't identify from the names.

In the media, social concerns are evident, daily, at least—unlike New Zealand. Earlier this week, along with the Kirk and gambling issue (still present in the letters), there was a bit of a flap over legal aid. Government plans to put more money into the civil side. A quandary for the right wing newspapers who could hardly oppose transferring resources from defending freeloading criminals—and while acknowledging that battered women may need assistance to leave abusive marriages—had to denounce the changes because it will just encourage acrimonious and expensive divorce proceedings. You know how women are!

I am taking a stand on all this by giving up on the tabloids—and I was only reading the legit ones—and purchasing *The Scotsman*, instead. Although barely left of fascist, it does seem to be about the only newspaper that isn't owned by Mr. Murdoch. (Please correct me if I'm wrong!) Also a very small sports section. Which, since I can't get SKY TV, I don't get to watch much of anyway. (Yea, Real Madrid!)

The social issues today are "youth gangs" in Glasgow—Muslim community leaders claim the authorities are not doing enough — and a report from the College of Physicians that the closure of hospital beds has gone too far and compromised patient care. Does any of this sound familiar??

Finally, language. Better than New Zealand-ish! Surprisingly similar to English. I have some difficulty with prices because they are said so fast, with little context, and require precision. Still, I have been able to order food and drink and even carry on slight conversations in shops. However, I did pass three older, overall-clad workmen on the job repairing a stone wall beside the sidewalk this morning. I am quite sure they were speaking Chinese!

Your Edinburgh correspondent,
Martin G-C

Sunday, 24 May, 1998

(These letters are often started before the previous one is sent and so are now dated when I intend to post them.)

At last, some international cricket on the telly Thursday night! South Africa 224/7 beat England 223/9 in 48.4 overs. First of three matches. ENG batted first, largely uninspired. SA started off strong but ENG defense almost won out in the end. On a related theme, this from the sports section this morning: What do you call a Scotsman in the second round of the World Cup (football)? The referree! On another related theme, non-cable TV here makes memories of TV in New Zealand seem pretty exciting. The four channels are BBC 1 and 2, Scottish, and TV4. The BBC dramas we get on A&E and Showcase in Edmonton are better than anything I've seen here so far.

Have been eating mostly Italian this week. One Thai restaurant in the neighbourhood, several take-away Chinese, and a few non-ethnic eateries, but Italian seems to be the best of the lot. Little place at the end of my street with about two dozen distinct pasta dishes. Excellent espresso and relatively early opening, so I go there in the morning to read the paper, too, although the scones tend to be stale. A bit sad since there are so many good bakeries in the neighbourhood. And, on a similar note, when are restaurateurs going to learn not to warm up croissants in the microwave? Or when am I going to learn to just order them cold?! Oh, well, it's the espresso that matters most—uniformly good everywhere I have tried.

On my map-less walk earlier this week I unexpectedly came across the Scottish National Portrait Gallery. Was not on my cultural A-list as I am particularly fond of neither portraits nor photography. However, the 97 international photography/portrait show was most excellent. Saved the rest of the gallery for later—in case I should encounter it again, unplanned.

Visited St. Cuthbert's Parish Church graveyard this morning, at the foot of the Castle wall. Legend has it that some sort of worship has been going on thereabouts for the past 13 centuries. Spire dates from 1700s but church was rebuilt mid-19th century. Several gravestones from 17th century still readable. Including that of the inventor of the logarithm! 1617, although I forget his name. It appears that the graveyard also houses some of the living: a couple of nests in sheltered corners—the only evidence I have seen of homelessness here.

Next to and above, on street level, is St. John's Church. Also 19th century. In its cellar, open to the graveyard mentioned above, is a peace and justice coffeehouse where I had a spot of lunch. The food was rather more healthy, *i.e.*, beans and sprouts, than I might have wished, but the cellar ceiling was arched and impressively stony and the red wine was adequate. Decided to wait for the French deli on the way home to do espresso and dessert, however.

Also spent a most relaxing hour walking along the Water of Leith last afternoon. Hardly more than 15 feet wide and a foot deep, with dead shopping cart and fruit crates moored under the Stockbridge bridge and brown foam along the edges, the river is nonetheless quite alive. Saw no fishes, but ducks were feeding—swimming in place with heads ducked under, allowing the current to bring their lunch. Pigeons roosting in contested chinks in the stone walls of buildings forming part of the river bank, and other birds flitting among overhanging trees. Shared the path with mums and strollers, elders, and clear evidence of multiple dogs—despite signs to the contrary. Perhaps E-burgh dogs don't read.

On John Privett's recommendation I intend to try St. Mary's Anglican for services on Sunday—before visiting Web13 to post this letter. While crossing the Dean Bridge I believe I saw its striking spire, off to the right, although there are so many it's hard to be sure from a distance which one it will be. Review to follow in due course.

I hope most of you got Letter 2. Am having some difficulty doing multiple addresses with the mailing program used at Web13. So I am never absolutely sure that my messages are being sent, and to whom! By the way, I trust it is understood that if you don't want to receive these epistles, please let me know by return e-mail and I will strike you from the list. One less address to type in the little window. In any case, the frequency of correspondence will probably decrease as I gradually get a life. Although I will diligently respond—with great delight!—to any personal e-mail as soon as I get it.

Finally broke down and, eschewing the Scottish diet of meat and potatoes and everything deep-fried, shopped at one of several small neighbourhood fruit markets. Just couldn't resist the still-on-the-vine tomatoes—fully ripe, in red, orange, and yellow. I expect strawberries will be my next deviation.

In the second one-day cricket match on Saturday, ENG snatched defeat from the jaws of victory, after holding SA to 226 runs for nine wickets, could only bat 194 with all out. Typical weakness in the middle order and some silly running. Oh, well, tomorrow's another day.

Speaking of another day, yesterday brought closure to the social issue of the week—Edinburgh Council's plans (Tuesday) to become the first city in Britain to outlaw begging. Plan was withdrawn (Friday) as it seems to be unconstitutional and probably inconsistent with EU human rights legislation. Instead, the enlightened ones are hiring 70 more police constables to patrol our streets. And I have yet to see even one beggar although there are a few guys selling *The Big Issue.*

Have crossed the Dean Bridge one more time since beginning this letter and, after consulting a larger map, now suspect that the spire I spied was only that of the Dean Parish Church—St. Mary's being yet more distant. Will try to sort out this mystery tomorrow.

Jazz Sunday night at Henry's Cellar Bar—"Timeline", out of London, at 10 p.m. If I think I can stay up that late I may try to go. Still, with Monday fast approaching, I'll want to be well rested for my first visit to the laundrette!

From Edinburgh, almost live,
Martin G-C

Tuesday, 26 May, 1998

Arrived home Sunday in time for the tail end of "How to Steal a Million" with Audrey Hepburn, Peter O'Toole, an old guy with amazing eyebrows, and a lovely cream coloured XKE. Only thing on the telly all day until the final ENG-SA cricket match this evening. Being in an historic city—although I think it was set in Italy—makes older movies somehow special.

Didn't make it to the Cathedral Church of St. Mary's in time for services Sunday morning—placing higher priority on ethereal communication with you all (E-burgh letter 3) and replies to your kind messages. Beckie, Ralph and Peter were first off the mark, with notes waiting patiently in my mailbox. I did visit St. Mary's on the way home, however, and sorted out the mystery of the church spires. The one I had first seen—lovely orange sandstone on the Belford Road—is now the Belford Hostel, complete with a supply of empty kegs in the burial yard behind.

But St. Mary's was the next in line—high spire, centre, and two wonderful towers in front. Outbuildings, as well, and very much alive as the Cathedral of the Edinburgh Diocese of the Episcopal Church of Scotland "independent of, but in full communion with, the Church of England." After a solitary walking tour—so cool and quiet inside—Scots started showing up and I found myself just in time for choir practice. The 20 voices thoroughly and beautifully filled the space, and the precision and humour of their rehearsal was impressive. Was sorry not to hear the organ in full play, but took a flyer for the Tuesday evenings in June organ recitals that sound deliciously ambitious.

Approaching the Cathedral, I noticed scaffolding covering the east face of the building. This was explained inside—the Cathedral Workshop, more than a decade old, trains unemployed young people in stone masonry and other historic and artistic preservation and reconstruction skills. Their excellent work was evident on the facade, and in murals and tapestries inside, and should be much in demand in Edinburgh.

And, on my way back from the churches I finally saw Dean Village. Down in the flats, below and west of the Dean Bridge. Will have to hike down on my next walk. It looks quite old and perhaps not too quaint. Will also have to see if there really is a Dean Parish Church down there.

Opened my house red this afternoon. Spot on! A 1992 Bulgarian reserve Cabernet, the best I could find at the local wine shop for under £5. Paid £6 for a modest N.Z. Sauvignon Blanc that I knew from Wellington to be dependable if uninspired, but was unwilling to go that high for a N.Z. red. Still haven't selected my house Scotch yet. The single malts that I am most interested in are all 30 pounds and up. Reminds me of what a good deal spirits are in dear old Alberta—and the local wine stores have no greater selection than Chateau Louis. What I have found, however, are a number of private bottlings of well-known single malts—many of which are not listed in my "malt bible." It will be interesting to see what I find when I finally visit a real Scotch store!

Also this afternoon had my first "full breakfast"—at the highly recommended Maison Hector. Two eggs, tomato, two better than expected sausages, potatoes, ham (just like back bacon!), mushrooms (that actually tasted like mushrooms), cold toast, and a flat cereal product resembling a square pancake. Needless to say, everything but the toast was fried. It was filling though not nearly as good as similar fare in N.Z. But at least I shouldn't need to eat again today! Washed it all down with an adequate espresso and ice water (although the ice part seems to be largely conceptual here).

Passed directional signs for the National Gallery of Modern Art. So it must be in the west end nearby. A highly recommended gallery in a city with several, so will include that on a future excursion—soon.

Despite a late rally, ENG bowlers held SA to 205 runs for eight wickets—a total even ENG's iffy bats should be able to exceed. They did, decisively, in 35 overs, losing only three wickets, to take the final match of the Texaco Trophy series. A different England tonight! I can't wait for N.Z. to come to town.

Didn't make it to Henry's Cellar Bar for "Timeline"—resting up for the laundrette, you know!—but now see that they have live jazz there every night. As soon as their African-fusion phase passes, I will certainly make the scene.

The laundrette was special this morning. And for an additional 60p—service wash, it's called—they do everything for you! Best deal I've had all week. Had to wait in a pub though, while the wash was in. Don't know how the Scots do it. I can hardly hold a pint and a half. It also seems to be the only place those of us without cable
can watch football. Had my first pub cheeseburger while waiting — thoroughly nuked. An experience not to be repeated.

On a happier note, and after much thought, I invested in a bottle of "house" Scotch today. Murray McDavid bottling of a 1978 Highland Park at 46 percent. Outstanding! Hope I can find another bottle to bring home. It's cool today, but I am…

Warm in Edinburgh,
Martin G-C

Thursday, 28 May, 1998

Explored Dean Village on the way home from posting last letter. Not much to see, but at least it's not quaint! A few architects' studios, a couple of multinationals' offices, and some private and council housing. Earliest date I saw on a building was 1804—some of the doors not more than five feet in height. No church, but a couple of fairly impressive structures. Dean Village was the beginning of the food chain in 18th Century Edinburgh—11 mills supplying flour for its bakeries. All powered by the Water of Leith (its modest proportions mentioned previously) held back by a dam perhaps 40 feet across, creating a reservoir about the size of Commonwealth Pool. Barely canoeable, the river was enough for a whole city.

Followed the Leith Walk along the south side of the river toward home—Stockbridge—where the path switches sides again. Above the path on the river side, I came upon a large stone pavillion with Doric (or Ionic—I always get them confused) columns and, inside, a lifesize marble statue of a comely lass with erect serpent at her left side and a simple cup in her right hand. Below, within the base of the pavillion, is St. Bernard's Mineral Well. Studded door securely locked. Plaque nearby memorializing a Mr. Nelson who bought,

restored and gifted it and the grounds to the city in 1888. His motto, carved in stone, "A liberal man deviseth liberal works." Not a bad thought. But who is the marble woman? Surely neither Mr. Nelson nor St. Bernard.

Wandered through the part of Stockbridge on the south side of the river that I hadn't visited before. Public library—with sign announcing fewer open hours, starting last month, in response to lack of funds for the library system—and a pub with some history. Pub sign described a flood that devastated that part of town last century and occasioned a 1p tax increase on each glass of ale. Insult added to injury, as always.

Spitting rain today, on and off. More on, as I was about to set off again after doing a little shopping—a cheese and onion pastie for supper, a slice of Grosvenor pie, fresh flowers for the window and, since a hundred pounds doesn't last the week here, I noted the butcher also has macaroni pie. So I decided to stay home and study my single malt.

It's about the breeze here. At first, I thought of Wellington. Only I'd never be tempted to attach the adjective "tropical" to it. The 10-13 degree daytime temperature is fine for a brisk walk, but the three to five degrees at night means that even I have to close the window—my little flatlet's only source of fresh air. A hard choice. No wonder duvets are so popular, and so substantial, here. (Bring your sweaters and warm booties, Beckie; all those sheep can't be wrong.)

Not much social sector news this week. Still lots of spin doctoring of the Irish referendum results. And the pardoned nurses. Short report of recent poll showing vast majority of folks at all levels of major corporations favour more childcare for their employees. Only tiny portion are doing anything about it—but that's not news! Also discussion of English young offender program that has them face-to-face, apologize to and compensate their vicims, and how well it works at reducing recidivism. But that's not news, either.

Have to mention squirrels. Haven't seen many. Lots of ducks on the river, pigeons everywhere, the odd finch with yellow breast, black birds with yellow beaks eating oatmeal bread outside my window, and one huge raven-type creature being chased across the valley by a flock of tiny, very noisy, brownish birds. However, the squirrel that I did see today, from high up on the Dean Bridge, down

in the park below, was gigantic! Cat size, at least. Pirate-cat size. Easy to follow its path because even the big trees were swaying as it lumbered among their branches. I suppose even a city as green as this can hardly support many mammals of that size.

Newsagents. Everywhere. Smaller and less oppressive by far than Mac stores, they fit well into row house or tiny shop front. At least one per block in shopping districts and hardly fewer in residential areas. They carry the main British dailies and a selection of women's and sports magazines. Cigarettes and some other convenience items. But no *LRB*. Where are the magazine stores with a whole range of tempting periodicals? Not even a listing for same in the yellow pages. I miss Wellington's expansive mag shop next to the Astoria. I miss Hub Cigar! Fortunately, the newsagent across the street from my flatlet has fresh buns and croissants every morning and, I just discovered, *TLS*.

Rainy and cold again Wednesday. Not much inspiration for exploring. Fortunately my larder and wine cellar are adequately stocked, although I could use another small piece of that applewood smoked cheddar. English cheese, that.

Dutifully set out anyway, but only made it as far as River Cafe. Warmed by two espressos and 10 pages of *TLS*, I tried again. Found the Stockbridge bookstore (just over the Kerr Street bridge, built in 1789 and widened and repaired in 1900) with good variety and several substantial markdowns, and re-found the Italian bakery with its yummy chicken, onion, and mushroom pastry. One to take-away, then quickly home to fire up the "Baby Belling" for the first time. And the day clearly requires a more-warming beverage than espresso! On the road home I notice with dismay young Scots in their single-ply sweatshirts, open jackets or unlined shells, as unconcerned as young Canadians in the face of weather which is, after all, still above freezing. Getting old, I am.

My daily reading: *The Scotsman*, usually with morning espresso; *TLS*, when going out, because it fits folded in my back pocket; Gibbon, considered seriously for the first time today, but deferred until my flatlet warms because it is much too weighty for comfortable transport; afternoons, on my fellowship topic, *Beyond Prince and Merchan*t, snugly fitting my jacket pocket; and, under the duvet, my current spy story, a 1979 Craig Thomas from the secondhand shop. Have now established an economical reserve in said genre with "four

for a pound" from a local charity shop, who asked me kindly to donate the books back to a different shop when I finished, as they were trying to get rid of them. Not easy living in a corner of the world with too many books!

Your eyes on The Rock,
Martin G-C

Pentecost, 31 May, 1998

Although I consider all you addressees to be friends and have, therefore, presumed upon your time and attention in the past, I certainly don't want to prolong such presumption in my absence, especially since I will, no doubt, need to do so again, on occasion, when I return. I will, therefore, at the end of the week, eliminate from the list of addressees any from whom I have not heard, via e-mail, since this journey began. Neither a long, deeply personal message, nor tasty gossip, nor effusive praise is required. Only simple, human (cyber-)contact. If you have experienced a prolonged absence from your computer, or have been otherwise indisposed, a simple request will effect reinstatement on the list. Do let me hear from you, eh?

I take it all back. I found the illusory good bookstore—Waterstone's, on Princes Street. *TLS, LRB, NYRB, etc*., and a whole wall of Scottish books. Purchased *LRB* instead of *TLS* for next week—just because I can't get it across the street. And, to last letter's reading list, permit me to add *The Europea*n. Although designated a business newspaper, I occasionally read it (having been introduced to it at Bistro Praha) because it is one of the few publications I have found that consistently takes the European Union seriously, even at it continues to doggedly oppose the coming Euro.

Had a good walk through real downtown E-burgh, to and fro on Princes and Queen streets, as I made my way home from posting last letter. Saved George's Street for another time, and only noted, for future reference, the cafes with outdoor tables on Rose Street in my haste to beat the rain. (The day had started out sunny and warmer than before—a nice fall morning, I thought.) Tried new

route downtown and found that my topographical skills developed in Wellington were holding true, here: I managed to find a route that was uphill both there and back. Otherwise, how was I to arrive disheveled and damp when it hadn't yet started raining?

That temporary condition was corrected as I approached home turf. Finding myself right in front of The Baille, reportedly my landlord Geoff's home pub, I decided to sit out the downpour with some lunch. Selected the roasted duck pate with orange and fresh ginger and a half of Becks—which I had not had on draught before — from a choice of nearly two dozen taps around a more or less circular bar. The pate had a wilted slice of bar orange on the side and no evidence of ginger, fresh or otherwise. Still, not that bad — quite like the liverwurst in a tube that provided an occasional tasty alternative to the ubiquitous Spam and Velveeta on white of my childhood lunch box. And the Becks was inoffensive, as expected.

On the way downtown (up, in terms of altitude) I encountered an elaborate spire without a church under it. Turned out to be a monument to one Catherine Sinclair, who "loved all children," among other unreadable traits and/or accomplishments. Then passed imposing building with huge green dome (under repair) and bright gold cupola with cross on top of that. Not another church, rather the West Registry Office. Park across the way held a better than life-size bronze of old guy on horseback (military connection suspected but not confirmed). And, in front of the Caledonain Hotel, two burgundy Daimler limos. No flags, but someone important must have been in residence. (Thoughts of corporate merger flashed through my mind.) On the way back, chanced across the imposing Church of Scotland Offices. A very impressive corporate HQ—though apparently not multinational.

I have noted that many Scots-persons own little dogs known, I believe, as Scotties. Really! The odd thing about the owner I passed this morning was that she was actually using a small scooping device after her canine. Part of a very elite group, judging by the evidence on the footpaths of my neighbourhood.

A word about immigrants. Some of them must be recent. Unlike many I met in Wellington, who had obviously been there since school days because they had the New Zealandish language down pat, most of the ones I have met here actually speak English. They may have a bit of an accent from whichever colony they left, but it is clearly

English they are speaking—and we are mutually understandable. But to be fair, even those who speak Scottish are more comprehensible than the natives of Wellington. I should also note here that the residents of Stockbridge have been unfailingly polite and, when occasions presented themselves, kind to me and to one another.

Further on language, a favourite young person's expression here: Brilliant! With the "r" pronounced as a soft "w." This probably isn't exactly cutting edge since I also have heard it in the media. Or, do youths say this in Canada, too?

For the poets in the crowd, and those with interests poetic, I offer the following quip by Charles Simic, quoted by Stephen Burt in his *TLS* review of a couple volumes from *The Best American Poetry* series:

> Poetry proves again and again than any single overall theory of anything doesn't work. Poetry is always the cat concert under the window of the room in which the official version of reality is being written.

As I think about it, this might not be a bad role aspiration for our "third" sector, as well!

Speaking of the third sector, the newspapers and TV don't! Much like New Zealand, the sector is silent and, except for the secondhand shops, invisible. Not that social services news is absent. Unlike N.Z., it appears every day in the papers. But it is all about government activity—local council or national, on unemployment, health, minimum wage, youth crime—with no mention of or comment by the "charities." Perhaps it is just my small sample—still less than two weeks here—but it does look like a trend.

Rain again on Friday, although a little warmer. Took my umbrella to morning espresso—which stopped the rain for my return. Bought two lovely Italian rolls from the local deep-fried emporium. Better rolls than any of the bakeries I have visited. (Not a small sample!)

Got well into the *Prince and Merchant* book—social capital, civil society, *etc*.—and some serious thinking about my topic. Received snail mail both yesterday and today (Friday). Much appreciated! Have offered to fix my landlord's side gate which—flapping in the gales these days—is beginning to annoy me. I expect some modest handwork to be a nice change from reading and keyboarding.

Saturday morning, drizzle, and time for gate-fixing. Geoff insisted on helping although he was quite willing for us to implement my design. Despite the committee work, the job—including procuring materials from the local ironmonger—was completed in an hour. The gate works like new, although it probably won't last a hundred years this time. But then, who will?

And Geoff has invited me to join him at The Baillie tonight for a pint and to "meet a few of the local reprobates." Review to follow!

Keeping warm on the Burgh,
Martin G-C

Tuesday, 2 June, 1998

Didn't make it to St. Mary's on Sunday morning—pouring rain and gale-force winds—so watched the Pentecost service on BBC1 from England's largest parish church, Holy Trinity in Kingston-upon-Hull. It was big, but good to hear the King's English well spoken. And a very smooth brass quintet. Worked well with the organ on the final hymn, too.

Further religious note. Banner headline on Page 3 of yesterday's (non-tabloid) newspaper: "Worshippers wonder if there's Spice after Geri." No comment.

Well, Saturday night at The Baillie was most interesting. For those of you who grew up with real pubs this won't come as a surprise, but for me, with long-term living experience only in midwestern U.S.A. and Western Canada, it was special. The subset of the "local reprobates" that I met were an academic crowd—good lads, all. The retired chemist who works mornings at the Royal Society and had just gone three days without drink except for official functions at the office. The semi-retired physicist, and the largely retired French prof who's been here since the '50s. All Englishmen, but with a deep commitment to Edinburgh. "Wouldn't live anyplace else (unless we won the lottery)." And, across the room, a well-known DJ, surrounded by attractive women. With brief asides on Tolstoy, Montreal, and the Leith Jazz Festival, starting next weekend in the old harbour area, the agenda was gossip, football, and sex.

Pubs, even in the city, are still the primary place for male socializing and, therefore, talk of gossip, football, and sex. Geoff likes this one for the variety of clientele, its openness, and because it is not connected with his work. (His workplace is on the outskirts.) The Baillie was packed and, although he has been attending regularly for five years, half the people he'd never seen. When I arrived at 8 p.m. the crowd was more than 90 percent male. By 10 p.m. women constituted at least a quarter of the group, and the average age had dropped considerably. Geoff's friends attend daily—he mostly on the weekends because of work—and have thoroughly analyzed the variety of "crowds."

I liked The Baillie. I will go back. I will not, however, consume two pints of McEwan Lager again in two hours! Don't know how they do it—and they had quite a headstart before I arrived. The quantity! I can handle the alcohol, but I'm still bloated and it's nearly noon. On the other hand, perhaps it's just a matter of practice or a judicious switch to whisky—my theory of espresso versus coffee. Oh, the sacrifices one must make for sociology!

National unity note. When this group thinks of Canada they think Montreal—and are touchingly worried about Quebec separation. I tried to reassure them.

Can't even take a taxi today until I find out if the bank machines are working again. Sunspots, I suspect, as all within walking distance were down. Good thing my landlord was buying last night—in gratitude for the gate repair job!

Another of my premature generalizations has gone the way of most such. Just when I thought the sector was publicly silent, a major story in the weekend paper quotes a spokesperson for Save the Children Scotland. About Government plans to introduce mandatory parenting classes for at-risk families. Stigma, classroom-led, legislated attendance requirement, *etc*. Sound points all, researched and documented, with positive, alternative suggestions supplied. Good to see!

Set out Sunday afternoon, when downpour diminished slightly, to post previous letter. Wind coming from all directions. Umbrella went Titanic halfway across the Dean Bridge. Was getting pretty damp anyway. But thoughts of home and friends warmed and cheered me. (Wanna buy some swamp land with great development potential?)

Another sector note. At The Baillie, a "lady" worked her way through the crowd with a collection jar. Shades of Sally Ann. This time, for the local hospital high blood pressure unit. Our group contributed small change gladly. Led to a discussion of begging on the street. My key informants reported that it never happened in Edinburgh until 10 years ago. Nor anywhere else in Britain, except certain London neighbourhoods. Everywhere now, they assured me. Still considerably less than in Edmonton, I assured them. There is no expectation that Labour Government will change this. "Just another right wing government." But some hope that, when the Scottish Parliament convenes, the permitted 3 percent income tax surcharge will go toward such. And toward higher education, which has sustained a 35 percent funding loss in the 90's.

Produce notes (or what I have been eating from where). Strawberries from Spain. Tomatoes, Dutch. French apples were soft so I chose a Braeburn from South America. Mealy. Since then, have seen fresh Galas from New Zealand. At least, everything is ripe, and tomatoes of all colours actually have taste. I wonder if England grows anything besides garden flowers?

New (to me) British terms: Agony Aunt: the (usually) female (usually) at work who listens to people's problems and offers advice. Outwith: nearby, as in "the new housing development is being built in Glastonbury, outwith the airport and surburban shopping." After seeing it used a few more times I may be able to add precision to the latter definition.

Have I obsessed too much about the rain? Well, Monday morning the sky is a brighter shade of grey and the weatherpersons are promising increasing dry.

The Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art was a most interesting visit this afternoon and I didn't even get rained on! A creditable Picasso and a couple of brooding Braques. Two pleasing Dalis and a delightful Miro. Early 20th century Scottish works that strongly resembled, in colour and line, works in the EAG collection, and a wonderful Moore sculpture on the lawn, Reclining Figure, 1951. Gender not specified but, as a keen observer of modern art, I am quite confident I spotted a pair of breasts.

What I really went to see, however, was the Calum Colvin show, Sacred and Profane. The eight large photographic works are based on

eight paintings from the Scottish National Galleries, by such artists as Rubens, Titian, Canova. Using the camera first as projector (to ensure a two-dimensional final result) and then as receptor, Colvin paints figures from the historic paintings onto three-dimensional "sets" which include a multitude of contemporary, kitch, and nationalistic props and icons. The result is a most unusual juxtaposition of classic and current images—of sacred/profane, saint/sinner, goddess/Madonna, universal/particular, myth/media, high culture/tat. Recontextualization in spades. Brilliant. Way cool. Outstanding!

Returned via the Leith Walk (the Water of Leith being somewhat more impressive today as a result of the rains) which was flooded at one point, necessitating a detour through several back gardens. The sign at the bottom of the hill below the Gallery said: Stockbridge 1-1/4 miles. As did the sign 20 minutes later. If one could catch a cold from being damp and out too long in cold, windy, miserable weather, then I will certainly get a good one this week. On the other hand, the songbirds seemed to be enjoying themselves. It sounded like jazz.

Still afloat on the Burgh,
Martin G-C

Thursday, 4 June, 1998

Had my first "up close and personal" encounter of the feline kind on my way home today. A chubby, little black female, sunning (just kidding!) on her front porch. Was quite willing to rouse herself for a scratch and pet. Lovely green eyes.

Took my longest stroll today, after posting last letter, along Johnston Terrace toward the Castle. Canon at noon (heard but not seen) and a lone piper beside the grand Tollbooth Kirk, thoroughly scaffolded for restoration. Then, innumerable Scottish Shops, kilt stores and too-cute pubs and bakeries along the Royal Mile. Didn't actually climb up to the Castle itself, but ended up skirting Old Town. Always on the lookout for philosophy, I dropped in at David Hume's first flat in Riddell's Close. Missed St. Giles, but passed Burns' temporary residence, walked around Heriot's School, saw the 1699 first home of the Central Library, visited a cafe where a 1420 arched cellar serves as the kitchen, and lots more structures of similar vintage. It certainly became clear why "my" part of the city is called New Town!

I have also arrived at an architectural generalization. In the first 100 years, the limestone does get blackened somewhat, depending on the type and surface finish. After that, assuming adequate design and roof drainage, not much more happens to it. The 1699 library, with no sign of recent renovation, looks just as good as the 1870 townhouses (restored in the 70s) in my neighbourhood. Agreed, sandstone does show some wear. But, for the most part, I see no reason why this city—with occasional preventive maintenance—shouldn't look just as good in another few hundred years.

On the other hand, within view of the Castle and in Old Town itself, I saw more brick, cinder block, and stucco new construction going in, and ugly 1970s government blocks, than in all of New Town. Wonder how that will look in 100 years?!

In search of a Gents room, I stopped at the Rutland Hotel for an overpriced pint (Christopher having gently chastised me for even considering half-pints) and a nice view of a major intersection. Considered a snack, but Spotted Dick was not the least appetizing item on the menu so I decided to hold off on lunch until I got home. Did purchase an Italian White Finger and a Scottish Buttery for a late supper.

Have further refined my understanding of the term "outwith." Today's paper quotes Lord Hardie (Crown Prosecutor) saying he "still has to decide whether to challenge the four-year terms on the basis that they were outwith the range reasonably available to the judge in all the circumstances of the case." So more "outside" than "nearby." I still like the word, whatever it means!

Another new word: fissiparous, as in "But the tendency has been less fissiparous than an oscillation between the Scylla of theory and the Charybdis of empiricism." Which one would certainly want to avoid! (From a John Sutherland review in *TLS*.)

Edinburgh now, apparently, has gang activity although not, apparently, youth gangs. For the second time in two weeks, men (apparently) have hidden themselves in a trendy bar on the Royal Mile and, after closing time, made off with the night's takings. At least I don't have to worry about being at risk, making, as I do, every effort to avoid trendy bars!

Finally made it home to Stockbridge for my first visit to our local French restaurant. Pierre Victoire, apparently a chain, but with a two-course lunch for £4.90. Was looked after by a harried Moroccan waiter who was covering all 12 tables, including a party of 10 that had

just ordered the last of the poached salmon. (I overheard him respond to a German diner that, compared to his nine years working in France, he found the weather cooler but the people warmer in Edinburgh!) So I had the pasta instead, served with overcooked vegetables and, of all things, mashed potatoes. Must be that nouveau cuisine I keep hearing about. Still, the zucchini was tasty and absolutely nothing was deep-fried in batter. The first course, steamed mussels in wine, green peppercorns, and cream, were among the best I have ever had. Small, but tender as warm butter. Brilliant!

Had 12 e-messages today! Thank you. The note about response must have worked!

Mystery quote. Guess the speaker and date: "Let us not condemn the murderers today. What do we know of their fierce hatred for us? For eight years they have been living in refugee camps in Gaza, while right before their eyes we have been turning the land and the villages in which they and their forefathers lived unto our own land. We should demand Ro'i's blood not from the Arabs in Gaza but from ourselves, for closing our eyes to our cruel fate and the role of our generation." (From a Omer Bartov review in *TLS*.)

And, perhaps an easier one. Author only, no date required. History, he has written, teaches us no lessons for predicting the future: "Far from unveiling the secret of things to come, history bestows a different gift: it makes us—or should make us—understand the extreme difficulty, the intellectual peril, the moral arrogance of supposing that the future will yield itself so easily to us…. Far from offering a short cut to clairvoyance, history teaches us that the future is full of surprises and outwits all our certitudes." (From a Gordon S. Wood review in, where else, *TLS*.) Darn, I was afraid of that!

Downed another pint this evening—practice, practice; no pain, no gain!—before getting take-away to go with my still-fresh rolls. And, speaking of culinary treats, a wonderful British invention, Jaffa Cakes, "made with real orange juice." You can even get them in Edmonton!

Wednesday started off at least partly sunny with visible blue sky. For the first time in a week, neither sweater nor overshirt needed under my light jacket. Such a nice day that I took my laundry in and did a bit of light shopping. Absolutely nothing interesting happened today.

Edinburgh commercial leaders were in the newspaper today

complaining about the state of Princes Street (the Burgh's main thoroughfare)—boarded-up shops, cracked sidewalks, interminable road work, poor impression on tourists. Council promised to do something about it—next year. (I could tell them that it's no worse than Jasper Avenue but they probably wouldn't understand!)

Am off to the High Kirk St. Giles for free Thursday lunchtime organ music, right after posting this letter. Bach's "Toccata, Adagio and Fugue in C," Dupre, Mozart, Vierne, and Parry. Will let you know how it sounds, next time.

But I won't make you wait for this. First quote: Moshe Dayan, then Chief of Staff of the Israeli Defence Forces, at the May 1, 1956 funeral of a young settler. Second quote: Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

Downing the full measure in Edinburgh,
Martin G-C

Sunday, 7 June, 1998

Have been observing the townhouses in my immediate neighbourhood a little more closely. At first, they all look more or less the same. Three or four floors, usually five on the main streets, made of gray stone, with three-part "bay" windows in front. In fact, even small details, such as the profile of the lintels and the decorative stone "brackets" that hold them up, can be precisely the same for several blocks. I guess this New Town really was one of the early examples of "tract housing."

There are, of course, exceptions. A townhouse extending for most of the block, just up the street, has huge stone columns—full height in the central section, flanked by two story columns on either side. There are variations in the width and depth of the "light wells" that expose the front windows and doors of the bottom floor, largely below grade. Many blocks have curved units going around the corner of streets, or slightly different front porches for crossing the light wells below and to provide access to the main floor units, and above.

The similarities and differences combine to give the feeling of a

unified but not uniform community. Changes of elevation help, as well. And the mews, behind, add even more variety. No longer used as garages (or stables?), almost all have been converted to residences, but retaining, for the most part, the large garage doors. Rarely more than two stories, and somewhat more modestly constructed than the townhouses in front, they nevertheless provide solid, stone accommodation that is far from unattractive. And some folks probably enjoy having units that are all their own, from roof to sidewalk. Not that there are actual sidewalks in the mews!

The light wells also provide real separation from the sidewalk, giving a bit more privacy than where townhouses directly abut the street. Still, one of the advantages of the townhouse style is that you can look into people's windows with impunity! (Most in our neighbourhood eschew drapes and curtains in front.) In the three blocks between here and Stockbridge, I have seen wonderful antique furniture, excessively decorated playrooms, impressive works of art, delightful flower arrangements, thoroughly kitsch junk stood, shelved, and hung on the walls, and one massive collection of fine malts and cognacs that I, for one, would not display even in our suburban front window in Edmonton. And you can hardly help looking!

On the way to pick up my laundry, I also saw an old man with chin on window sill, gazing down from a second floor "bay," completely unmoving. Still there on my return.

Sector good news. A routine letter to the editor from a backbencher, defending a government minister against accusations of inaction. Not news, you might say. It was the content that was, I thought, of interest. The backbencher talked about being out in the community and seeing an early intervention program in action, and how all the folks agreed that it did a lot of good for the children and their families, and that this was surely a good investment of £5000,000 of taxpayers' money. I figure that when politicians start to use early intervention in a natural, offhand way to score political points, we are halfway there. So, good news, I would contend!

Tried a new way downtown this morning and finally found Queen Street one block on my right when I had expected it to be one block ahead. No problem. But it caused me to pass an overwhelming number of statues and monuments. Too many to remember, except

the six Greek-robed ones set on columns on the front of the old Bank of Scotland building. And the very tall Sir Walter Scott monument, now completely sheathed in scaffolding and green mesh.

The noontime organ music at St. Giles' was quite wonderful! Forty minutes of peaceful delight in the midst of the tourist hustle of the Royal Mile. The Bach piece, not one of my favourites, was nevertheless just fine, especially the "Fugue". This is the newest organ I have heard (1992)—in the oldest church I have been in (the four central pillars date from around 1120 and its most distinctive feature, the crown spire, was completed in 1495). The organ is Austrian (Rieger Orgelbau) with three manuals and 57 stops in a modern, soaring, oak case stained a translucent red, picking up the colour of a few red robes in the stained class windows. It even incorporates some of the 32' pipes from the previous organ—which were palpably evident at the end of the "Adagio". The church, although rectangular, is not very much so—perhaps three to two or four to three, length to width. The organ is centrally located in the south transept, so the sound does not echo much. And, with the solid stone floor, you feel the bass notes equally throughout your body—rather than mainly through your feet. Surrounded by the sound wherever you sit, I would guess.

The Dupre piece was okay, the Mozart "Andante" very waltz-able, and the Vierne "Arabesque" not bad. But the final C.H.H. Parry—with whom I am not familiar—"Fantasia and Fugue in G" was outstanding! Rich, powerful, and gloriously tuneful, with just a few quite unusual chords. And the organist today was only the assistant at St. Giles'!

Following the music, hiked up to the Castle gate. Passed the Scotch Whisky Heritage Centre but passed on the tour. Decided to put the £5 toward a single malt instead. Sought expert advice today, but will save the actual purchase for another time.

Arrived home late Thursday afternoon in time to catch a bit of the first day of the England versus South Africa cricket test. England batted 179 before losing the first wicket—a new record for them—and finished the day at 249/1, a most excellent start!

Found the two interesting blocks of Ann Street—"Not Suitable for

Heavy Goods Vehicles"—on my way home last night. It includes smaller, more upscale townhouses, with Edmonton-size front setbacks and generous, dense gardens overflowing onto the sidewalk. Met a ginger cat sitting near the end of the street. Also discovered a "pocket park" named for Raeburn (probably a DWG) and donated by an insurance company to The Ann Street Society—a grassroots community organization, I expect. Most real parks here are fenced and locked, although many have signs saying you can rent a key by visiting the appropriate solicitor.

Can't get over the sense of history here—so absent at home (Gibson Block notwithstanding). The crown spire at St. Giles' was restored in 1648! They're now in the midst of a £3 million development campaign for the Cathedral. I don't know about this fundraising thing. You do it once, and then in a couple or three centuries you have to do it all over again!

Speaking of fundraising, the charity ladies were out with their donation cans on Princes Street today. Homeless, animals, an illness, something else. Don't yet know if this is an everyday occurrence downtown. Or only when the sun comes out!

A word about cars. Although far from my areas of expertise, within a block of leaving dinner tonight—an only slightly overcooked trout swimming in an unruffled lake of dill cream—I passed both a burgundy Boxster and a dark blue SL320 convertible. Enough to bring out just a touch of longing, even in one so spiritual as I. But, closer to home, more modest and amusing treasures: a pair of Citroen 2CV6s, the older one lemon yellow and the newer one bright red, looking for all the world as if they were modeled on tiny toy cars, or sculpted of hard candy. And a few parking spaces later, an even smaller duo, previously observed to be owned by a normal size family: a Mini Sprite and a Fiat 500, each about the size and aerodynamics of an overturned cast-iron bathtub. The Fiat, a particularly short tub. And what do I find parked outside my garden gate? A Morris Minor 1000, shiny black, looking like a prop from a pre-war gangster movie cast with midgets! Or so it appears to one unschooled in this art form.

Leith Jazz Festival started Friday, through Sunday. About a dozen indoor venues—pubs, cafes, restaurants—as well as some groups on the street. Local musicians, but everything is free. If Geoff doesn't invite me I'll take the bus down myself on Sunday afternoon. Only

about four miles, and I do need to see the harbour area anyway. The buses on my street (No. 34 and 35) go either to Leith or to George Street downtown. I just need to remember to board on the correct side of the street for where I am going.

From sunny Edinburgh,
Martin G-C

Tuesday, 9 June, 1998

Friday sunny and warmer than last two weeks. Did a bit of shopping—deli take-away for later, a bar of soap for shower — and the usual espresso. Read both morning and afternoon, trying to get through a couple more project-related books. Also finished *LRB* a bit early—not expecting be able to restock at the good bookstore until Sunday, and not sure if it's open then. Ah, the risks I take in a foreign city!

Saw one more quite beautiful car—a repainted (black and red) Austin-Healey 3000 Mk III—being negotiated over outside my afternoon tea break. Just longing, not unseemly envy!

Another interesting feature of townhouse backsides is the plumbing stacks—decorating the gray stone with intricate, largely vertical patterns of cast-iron black. Also, telephone and cable TV wires everywhere, front and back. The compensation, in our neighbourhood at least, is that there are no overhead wires. Power and main communication cables are underground, the latter down the middle of the sidewalk, making six-inch wide paths of newer asphalt, vaguely straight, with occasional mysterious detours.

Have met a sparrow-sized bird on walks both morning and evening. Allowed me to approach quite closely before flying off silently. Rust brown throat and back, velvety gray head, black and white wings. Have seen in both river valley and front gardens. Any idea what I am enjoying?

Attended the Jazz Festival with Geoff on Saturday night. Not quite

up to Edmonton standards, but the lager was flowing and the street-level venues were fun, but crowded. We enjoyed at least six groups (some more than others) and visited eight venues. I managed to keep up. (Sorry, Christopher, we were drinking half-pints because there were 12 venues!) We spent the last hour at a local, nicely redone hotel—formerly the haunt of sailors and hookers—with espresso and brandy, waiting for a taxi. Was raining quite heavily by them. We took a taxi home. I was grateful to return "early" as I am out of shape for staying up late these days. Don't know if it's my less frantic, more reasonable "fellowship lifestyle," or just getting old. Geoff said this was the first year he had heard so many groups—and better than average quality compared with other years.

Overall, the groups were fairly bluesy, with one particularly fine traditional trio of old guys in red shirts. Our favourite group, called, I believe, "Mud in Your Eye", was three guys who didn't look too promising when we arrived. Just the young guy playing guitar and singing. Then the old guy (I figured he was a banker) started singing and playing steel guitar, and a thirtysomething guy with lots of tattoos took out his harmonica, and the young guy switched to keyboard. Awesome! May try to catch them on Sunday afternoon in a different venue. All in all, quite fun, even with the rain.

Still able to get up at a reasonable time on Sunday, I finally attended St. Mary's Cathedral before posting last e-letter. The bells (real ones, I expect) pealed long their complex tones as I approached on foot. Inside full but not packed. The setting was Britten's "Missa Brevis," with treble voices only today—the choir from the Cathedral's renowned music school, I expect. Very fine, even the solo voice and duet on the "Benedictus". First hymn, which my mother used to sing to me when I was small, brought tears to my eyes. That sure doesn't happen often these days. The 1982 Scottish Liturgy is quite normal so I was able to follow it adequately.

The Provost (a Trinity College man) preached in English, managing to include references to the decommissioning of the local nuclear plant, the downsizing of the Spice Girls, and the re-shuffling of the Cabinet in his treatise on the difficulty of explaining the Trinity. The motet, Faure's "Mater, Maria Gratiae," was especially lovely with the treble voices, and the voluntary, Stout's "Introduction and Allegro" (another new one on me) was quite grand. All in all, a most acceptable way to spend a Sunday morning.

On my way home, stopped for the "best traditional breakfast in

Edinburgh." It wasn't. Not by a long shot. The haggis was the best part! And they didn't even have espresso, so I had a lager instead. Actually goes quite well with breakfast. Did find a French bakery open and got a couple of the chewy, flavourful rolls I had eaten at a local coffee shop but couldn't find in any of Stockbridge's bakeries. As it was almost time for Evensong by the time I finally got home, I decided not to go back to the Jazz Festival. Instead, will attend the telly to see how ENG is doing in the cricket test with SA, and ponder England's sad, record-breaking rugby thrashing in Australia. Not that real Scots would be shedding any tears! It was actually warm today. I had to carry my jacket home in the bakery sack.

Neighbourhood integration. In addition to the special education centre in the old school across the street, and the purpose-built seniors' centre down the block, I have seen, within two blocks of my flat, a nursery (daycare centre), nursing home, and family planning clinic, all in townhouses, as well as a youth club attached to the seniors' centre. There are at least two disabled apartments (in townhouses) within the same radius, and an office for disabled housing, in a storefront just across the bridge. None of these are further than a block or two from a pub or two—youth clubs for a slightly older age group. And I must emphasize that this is a very residential area, and solidly middle class.

Sector-related news items from last week. Local police are making dire predictions—although the crime rate is down—if they don't get £20 million more next year. A charity worker was fined £300 for hitting a cop during a "murder mystery weekend." She admitted she was a bit potted and thought he was part of the play. (I guess there are no easy fundraising ideas!) And, best of all, the Benefits Integrity Project, intended to root out "cheats, scroungers and layabouts" has examined 55,000 clients at a cost of £11.5 million per year, and has found 70 cases of fraud! The department admits that they have saved not a penny.

And, the best millennium celebration proposal I have heard yet: Load up an old ICBM with a payload of fireworks. You get the picture. As for me, I'm heading for the cellar, just like we learned in school in the 50s. If no cellar is handy, I suggest you do as we learned (more realistically, I'm afraid) in the 60s: bend over, place your head between your legs, and kiss… Well, you get the picture.

As June 10 approaches (a really big deal here, I assure you!), the

mainstream media got the silly notion to explore whether Scottish football fans might support England in the likely event that Scotland doesn't survive the first round. Scots fans made it clear that they have precisely two favourite teams: Scotland and whoever England is playing! Sound like a sporting city you know?

Gray day, Monday. Morning dry, afternoon steady rain. (In England also, apparently, as cricket test was abandoned in a draw.) Serious reading planned for today. Tomorrow, depending on the weather, a look at the design competition for the new Scottish Parliament. But it would take more than rain for me to miss posting this letter!

Your busybody in the Burgh,
Martin G-C

Thursday, 11 June, 1998

Umbrella continues to get a good workout these days. Scotch Whisky at home has a lot more appeal than Scottish tourism sites!

Sector headline this week: Hospital hit squad to check quality of care. National group under the Health Minister will examine systemic hospital board problems as well as individual doctor incompetence. Opposition parties have wondered why government doesn't also address underfunding of hospitals.

The latest round in the quality education debate is a letter to the editor which notes the £300,000 of funding for the first university curry cooking department—at Thames Valley U—and goes on to suggest that perhaps the new universities are somewhat different from the traditional ones. The department is called The Asian Academy of Culinary Skills, and is intended to train Indian restaurant waiters, chefs and managers. (Perhaps we need a new name for Kids in the Hall!)

Finally, the government is expected to announce today their plans "to end decades of underspending on essential assets which have damaged the performance and efficiency of key public services." This is taken to mean hospitals, schools, housing, and transport infrastructure. The government also plans to eliminate the spending battles between departments. (I guess this new government has

never watched "Yes, Minister!")

In this city of John Knox, I am more likely than otherwise to note references to him. This, from a letter to the editor in *LRB*. "As Mill wrote in *On Liberty*, 'it may be better to be a John Knox than an Alcibiades, but it is better to be a Pericles than either.'"

Tuesday morning looked like rain so I took my umbrella and planned to try a bus to downtown. Poured while I was drinking espresso but, when it became clear I was headed to the bus stop, the rain stopped. After posting Tuesday e-letter, I found my way to the Royal Scottish Museum to view the five finalists for the new Scottish Parliament buildings. The submission by Rafael Vinoly Architects PC and Reiach and Hall Architects was, by far, the best. The other four, in turn, resembled a typewriter, a silly hat with a huge TV screen on the front, Scotsdale, and quarry blocks askew. My preference, relatively low profile, picked up curves from the castle and nearby town sites, integrated well into the neighbourhood, and has a strong, organic relationship to the "spine" of Edinburgh. Will save the rest of the museum—which now has an entry fee—for its one free night or for when Beckie is with.

Came across the Portfolio Gallery on my walk to the Museum. "Through Fire and Water," by John Davies, is large-scale B/W photographs of rural/urban interface in Wales. Not bad, if you like photographs. As my return path passed Greyfriars Tollbooth and Highland Kirk again, I stopped this time. Interesting history of expansion, fire, division and rebuilding, it was the site for the signing of the historic "Covenant," but is quite plain and boring — clearly Church of Scotland. Interior was set up for Princeton University Orchestra concert—Schumann and a soprano—later this week. I'll give that a miss as there are two organ concerts this week elsewhere.

Started raining after I got to the bus stop for the journey home, and stopped when I got off across the street from my flat. I think I have this weather control thing down pat! Pleased to welcome Ellen to the e-letter list, even as Jim, Wayne, and Gayle are deleted.

Not pleased to hear of threatened rail strike the day Beckie arrives, especially since we both have not-cheap RailPasses. Maintenance workers objecting to inconvenient work changes in the face of record company profits. (The latter part never happened in the good old BritRail days!) Hope they get it sorted out before we are

inconvenienced. (Solidarity Forever!)

A *New Yorker* cartoon to go with my gallery visiting shows a group of school children with their guide, sitting in front of a classical painting of the Greek mega-god with a swan. One of the youngsters, understanding dawning, asks: "So Zeus was like their President Bill Clinton?" In the same issue, an S. Gross cartoon has a group of mythological fish with legs walking up the beach out of the primordial soup, and a little one asking an elder: "Are we there yet?" And finally, from an article about the demise of independent bookstores, a parenthetical reminder: "(Nowadays, of course, a bookstore without at least an espresso machine is like a fish without a bicycle.)"

The 1879 Father Willis organ is, indeed, "The Wondrous Machine!" as the title of the series announces. Tuesday evening, despite a bit of rain, saw me back at St. Mary's for this promenade concert of works by Bach and his students/contemporaries, given by the Cathedral's Master of Music, Timothy Byram-Wigfield. Well worth the £6 ticket. This is not the first time I have been struck by the "excess" of music. Really, Bach, alone, would be enough. How wonderfully extravagant that there are Bach's contemporaries—and jazz, too!

After the interval I moved to the choir stalls, directly in front of the organ, and was, therefore, behind the projection screen. As the evening wore on and the light faded I could see a ghostly image of the performer through the back of the screen, reversed, his hands moving to the right as the notes went lower.

The final set began with Liszt's "Fantasia and Fugue on BACH" (using the notes associated with B's name). A majestic piece, demonstrating Liszt's deep understanding of Bach, and his enjoyment of a completely arbitrary musical theme! Then, "Vorspiel XI," and another one, not in the program—bits of not unpleasant fluff by M.G.Fischer. And finally, the "Passacaglia"—20 amazing variations on an eight-bar theme, plus an extra really wonderful variation at the end, for good measure.

The organ itself, growing dim as the evening progressed, looked every bit the Victorian machine it is—but completely unmoving. During the loud parts, the sound blanketed me most comfortably, blocking out the rest of the universe. But the softest notes, although I was staring directly at the organ, seemed to be coming from

nowhere—or perhaps from everywhere at once. An experience unlike any other, although I have attended and enjoyed dozens of concerts in many fine venues. I was cold after sitting in that damp cave and it rained a bit on the way home. But who cares!

Wednesday morning set off for the Scottish Gallery ("applied arts") to see the Edmund de Waal porcelain show (nearly sold out) reviewed yesterday. Common vessels—jars, cups, containers w/ lids—in pale turquoise glaze and Japanese simplicity. Not bad, but not as interesting as the paintings of Sir William Gillies (1898-1973). This centenary exhibition was also mostly sold, at 2,500 to 25,000 pounds per! Oils and watercolours, the landscapes tend toward simplicity, almost primitive. The still lifes quite complex and unusual. A lovely surprise!

Dundas Street appears to be New Town's gallery row so I stopped in at several others on the way back. Gallery 41 with mixed media works by Fiona Macintyre (and exquisite silver jewelry, Beckie), Malcolm Innes Gallery with historic topographical and sporting prints, and Bourne Fine Art with 20th century and contemporary Scottish artists. My favourite, Colin Thoms' (d. 1997) delightful Klee-like squiggles, especially in the small etchings.

Although I don't generally do theatre, I'll try to report on that next time. Haven't found a comprehensive listing yet, but there is plenty of it going on. And, speaking of theatre, after a couple of chapters of (the British) *Introduction to the Voluntary Sector*, I adjourned to the Baillie to claim a seat for "people's theatre," as Scotland faced Brazil in the opening game of the World Cup. The defending world champions scored in less than five minutes, but Scotland responded before the end of the half on a penalty kick. They held their own for most of the second half before Brazil scored again—off a Scottish player. 2-1 final, but the Scots looked better than expected, I would say.

You need to understand that this was a religious experience for most of the congregation—a lot of faith involved just in being there. Further, it was reported on the news that one-third of the male Scottish workforce booked off early today. The number on sick leave was also expected to be quite high!

Never on strike in the Burgh,
Martin G-C

Sunday, 14 June, 1998

According to the telly, the current Scottish antipathy to England in football (and elsewhere) goes back to William Wallace's defeat at the hands of Edward I, 700 years ago. And they found several pub patrons willing to agree with this thesis and discuss it at length! I first realized how strange and alive (if that's the right word) this sense of history could be when I had folks in my first parish who were still angry at 300-year-ago Catholics (who were German also, as I recall). I, on the other hand, have found quite enough to dislike that only happened last year. But I always was short on capacity (although I did get through two pints during the football match).

In case you haven't already seen it, allow me to recommend the 1991 film "Delicatessen," co-directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Marc Caro. The former went on to direct "Alien Resurrection," but don't hold that against him. The musical connection is the lead, a former circus clown who accompanies the girl-next-door-pretty cellist who can't see without her glasses, on his saw. I suppose the bizarre, cannibalistic butcher may account for why it's considered a "surreal black comedy" rather than a musical. Both the climax and the conclusion are wonderful—if slightly over the top.

Although the weather report Thursday morning promises increasing dry today, it also says that tonight it's going to start to get cold (three to six degrees)! Ah, the joys of Scottish summer. Or, as columnist Jim Gilchrist says in *The Scotsman* this morning: "I've had about enough of the weather this past month or two. We've run the full gamut of wetness, from the soft torment of smirr, which in occasional doses can be moderately refreshing but is now seeping seriously into the soul, to the kind of stair-rod downpour which turns gutters into torrents and sends cataracts bounding through the gullies and canyons of Scots-baronial roofscapes." He continues with an historical quote: "That April, right evil weather; and the May, mickle weet and rain; and June, right evil weet and wind and the beir seed right late in all places." (Quoting a Scottish chronicler writing of the summer of 1577.) See, I'm not the only one who complains! (And, as it turns out, the forecasters were kidding about the dry today. It rained for two hours at suppertime, necessitating a pint and refuge at Maison Hector.)

It's time for another mystery quote: "Our merchants and master-manufacturers complain much of the bad effects of high wages in raising the price, and thereby lessening the sale of their goods both at home and abroad. They say nothing concerning the bad effects of high profits. They are silent with regard to the pernicious effects of their own gains. They complain only of those of other people. The clamour and sophistry of merchants and manufacturers easily persuade…that the private interest of a part, and of a subordinate part of the society, is the general interest of the whole." (Answer next time.)

Although this may be getting a bit boring for those not infected with the organ music bug, I attended the final lunchtime presentation at St. Giles' to hear again their modern Rieger organ and, as it turns out, Timothy B-W from St. Mary's, filling in for the scheduled Bulgarian who apparently had visa or health difficulties. I sat in the choir stalls just below and off centre the organ and quite enjoyed its sharper, brighter sound. It also has superb bass notes because of the several ranks of 32-foot pipes. Bach's "Prelude and Fugue in D" started things off powerfully, followed by shorter pieces—Couperin, Saint-Saens, Messiaen, Howells—and concluding with Mulet's quite strong "Tu es Petra." I'll skip the detailed commentary except to note that "Danse Macabre" has to be one of the funniest pieces of music I know. In addition to bells, tin whistle, and lots of reeds, I could swear I heard cellos in the middle.

Took a different route to and from St. Giles' this time. Rather than walking along the base of the castle outcropping, I strolled through the Grassmarket and window-shopped Victoria Terrace. Some amusing shops—small 19th century machinery, for example, and the most complete broom store I have ever seen—and lovely old structures, *e.g.*, the India Buildings. I also noticed that they have lap dancers in Edinburgh. (One can learn a lot from just reading signs!) And for Mike, I stopped to refill my tanker at the Old Fire Station Pub, the former home of Britain's first municipal fire brigade, 1824.

In light of my recent warning about ICBMs, you'll be pleased to know that the Westminster Parliament is looking after me, anyway, by passing this year the Nuclear Explosions (Prohibition and Inspections) Act. Clause 1 (1) says: Any person who knowingly causes a nuclear weapon test explosion or any other nuclear explosion is guilty of an offense …" There, I feel better. How about you?

The Scotsman has also rediscovered collective nouns. Some that I don't remember hearing before, or am delighted to recall: a jam of tarts; a lack of principals (*e.g.*, university); a goring of butchers (see movie reviewed above); an odium of politicians; and a consternation of mothers. All related, in some small way, to my life or work!

Friday sunny and not nearly as cold as predicted. Am aware again of the joys of shopping in a real community—food and flowers today. It feels normal, now, to go from deli to butcher, from bakery to flower shop. I'm getting to know the keepers of my favourite shops—to share food lore or get word of impending delicacies. My lack of serious cooking is starting to annoy me, especially when I see the neat rows of pink rabbits, lamb chops, and game birds laid out in the butcher's cases. I may have to correct that deficiency soon, and more fully explore the range of my "Baby Belling" cooker.

Edinburgh Fringe program out today. A total of 16,141 performances of 1,309 shows, from 9 to 31 August. Expected to earn £26 million with a £36,000 grant from the Edinburgh Council. "Flowers in the Park," exploring the reactions of people during the week before Diana's funeral, is already generating mild controversy.

In Glasgow, city councillors now have to "declare an interest" when having an affair with a member of council's staff. New rules also require them to refuse gifts valued at more than £20 and to pay their taxes on time. This code of conduct is expected to spread to other councils quite soon. And speaking of standards, a top English girls school is modifying its dress code. For the first time in 145 years, sixth formers at Cheltenham Ladies College may now wear trousers (navy blue, of course) to class in lieu of the uniform skirt. Fine for them, but who's going to uphold tradition if not England?

Was going to do the City Art Centre today, but discovered it was time to recharge my electric toothbrush, so did that instead. (The excitement of living in a foreign capital just never quits!) Laundry will have to wait until Monday, however.

Finally found a reasonably comprehensive theatre listing: "Love, Lies, Bleeding" at Traverse Theatre (a love story, of course); "Guards! Guards!" at King's Theatre (long running, whatever it is); "The Bible–The Complete Word of God" at Royal Lyceum (based on the

book, I think); "Working Legs" at St. Bride's Centre (political fable; "Valley Song" at Traverse Theatre (conflict between generations); and "Down the Tubes" at Netherbow Theatre ("a quirky fantasy set beneath the streets of Edinburgh"). Two operas are coming this week to the Festival Theatre: "La Traviata" (with Claire Rutter) and "The Queen of Spades" (Scottish Opera's first production of this work); and "NDT 2" at Festival Theatre (innovative dances from European choreographers). As always, I will ferret out real culture for you!

Saturday—for the second day in a row!—no rain yet! Wrap up of weekly news highlights the Queen's Birthday List, concentrating, this time, on ordinary people. Including a Mr. Watt, 61, and now MBE, who has kept the streets of Stonehaven town centre (in Kincardinshire) spotless for 21 years. Even health care and social workers are on the list this time. Ain't democracy wonderful?!

Finally, to bring us back to St. Giles', Council officials have rejected their plan for a ramp to improve access for the disabled. Conservation bodies and commissions feel that a wheelchair ramp would not fit in with the character of the Cathedral and of Parliament Square. A spokesperson for the disabled coalition agreed that conservationists had the right to reject the idea, but added "the burden then falls on them to say what does suit." Indeed!

Upholding standards in the Burgh,
Martin G-C

Tuesday, 16 June, 1998

Hot off the wire Sunday morning: Audubon, via Diane, suggests that my little bird is the Rosy finch, in adult mating colours. Thought you'd want to know. Also pleased to welcome Rolf and, indirectly, Tom and (the other) Dianne, to the e-letter list. This edition, number 13, our lucky number. It seems like we have been doing this for some time.

The quote last time was from Adam Smith. He was in the news last week because the (strongly Labour) Fife Council had deleted the reference to his birth from the Kirkcaldy town sign in favour of the obscure German town with which they are twinned. The change was

widely thought to be ideologically inspired. A professor from the Department of Accountancy and Business Finance at the University of Dundee reminded, in a letter to the editor, that many have misrepresented Smith's views and offered to redress the balance, with some less often quoted passages from *Wealth of Nations*. He concluded that perhaps twinning with another German town, Rheydt, could be arranged to "emphasize the disservice done to Adam Smith's name by propaganda." Can you guess who was born in Rheydt?

I have watched quite a few football games since Tuesday last — doing the male, cultural thing in this part of the world. Still waiting for England's first game on Monday, but have seen teams from all corners of the world. Former colonial powers and colonies, democracies, dictatorships, and monarchies. It appears that form of government is not a significant factor in football success. Although height may not be irrelevant. There is a football body-type, but it comes in all heights and colours. Still, teams with no tall players, *e.g.,* Korea and Saudi Arabia, aren't doing very well. Ethnic diversity seems also to be related to success. Norway has blacks, Mexico has a blond, South Africa has some whites. On the other hand, it may just be hair. It seems you need at least one guy with dreadlocks, a balding old guy, and a couple of skinheads. I know, small sample.

The lessons I have learned from watching football, although not as sophisticated as *The Art of War*, do seem worthy of note. 1) There's an awful lot of running around that is not connected with immediate success, but seems to be important, somehow. 2) You always have to go back before you can go forward, sometimes, all the way back. 2a) Even very close to the goal, you usually have to send the ball back before it goes in. 2b) Even if you take the ball all the way down, all by yourself, you usually have to pass it back before your team can score. 3) In spite of this, initiative, sacrifice, and individual brilliance are quickly noticed and clearly recognized. 4) One goal in a whole game can seemingly take forever to achieve and yet be sufficient to ensure one's place in history. 5) The good teams with good players usually win. 6) It's almost never too late, except sometimes, in which case it may have always been too late. 7) Some days, 0-0 can be a very fine result.

Sunday is the third day with no rain during daylight hours so I had a pleasant, windy walk downtown this morning. I'm hoping this is a trend! Plan to attend Maison Hector for jazz at 4:30 p.m., although I

also want to catch a bit of the Yugoslavia versus Iran football match so that I can celebrate or commiserate, as required, with the owner of my favourite cafe. (So much work, so little time!)

Went for jazz, first. Turns out that starting times indicate only that the group may actually play sometime that day. By 5:30 p.m., two musicians were present (with girlfriend to mind the table) and one was writing out music. Not promising. But, before 6, the third arrived and a really quite cool trio—guitar, bass, and tenor sax—played spiritedly. I stayed for the first set, finished my second pint, and headed home for warmed-up take-away. Iran lost 1-0, but defended valiantly (or so I will offer at coffee tomorrow morning). Bank machine, on the way home, was "not providing the service requested," *i.e.*, money. Will try again tomorrow.

Which, but the way, is the day Britain is introducing its own toonie! Reported to be large but not too thick. Can hardly wait. In other news, it appears that there is a shortage of males available to lonely, single, Scots females. The going rate for male escorts is £40 per hour. Now they tell me—and with Beckie arriving on Friday! Causes are thought to be Britain's high divorce rate and women delaying relationships for career reasons. And, thanks to Girl Power, women are willing to pay.

Final news item: Any of you (old) subversives who think you might have a file with MI5 will be able to apply to see it, when changes to the Data Protection Act are passed this fall. The changes apply to the cold war period, and your chances of having a file are apparently better if you were a Labour Party member. I'm sure there will be a line-up!

Woke up to rain on Monday morning. Lots of it. City Art Market and the Flowermarket Gallery on the agenda. Want to be back in time for England versus Tunisia at 1:30 p.m.. Will watch at the Baillie to see if Scots are really as anti-English as alleged. Although The Baillie is likely to be more open-minded about this than the "local" pubs. Don't think I'm up for that much naked nationalism.

Becuase of the rain I attended the Royal Scottish Academy for their 172nd Annual Exhibition—the RSA being closer to my familiar bus routes than the aforementioned galleries. (Isn't tradition wonderful!) No less than 439 works by almost as many artists, stacked and packed into eight halls and one balcony, in the conveniently

organized RSA gallery. Painting and sculpture in many media and styles. Lots of figurative painting and drawing (including several pieces that would be of interest to Braden) and some excellent sculpture—the awarded pieces being non-representational and tending toward minimalist. Overall, a very strong show with nearly one-third of the pieces—most of those under £1000—already sold. There was much that I would be delighted to export to the colonies and find a place for on our walls. And, with admission at £2 and the generous catalogue reduced to £1, this was certainly one of the better cultural deals in town. Market Street will have to wait for better weather, or tomorrow, in lieu of the former.

England won 2-0. The cheering was subdued and the crowd at the Baillie small. I tried another Scottish delicacy—nachos—with my pint. It works.

During half-time, I was reading an article in the New Yorker about Lincoln Kirstein, the great ballet and arts impresario. Author Nicholas Jenkins calls him (among other things): "a kind of entrepreneurial anti-entrepreneur 'I'm in the business to lose money!' is how he cheerfully put it." Without pretensions to being an impresario in our modest sector, I find this a useful perspective on my job (back when I had a job!).

I finally know why the Scots have such big ones. Longer and wider even than the English. They have such big umbrellas because it rains the whole bloody time! No, I'm not bitter. Just a little damp around the edges.

Starting to be a tradition in the Burgh,
Martin G-C

Thursday, 18 June, 1998

English football "fans" reconfirmed their reputation as international hooligans with riots in France on Sunday night and Monday. Seemed to be mostly guys without tickets, and similar fans from Tunisia, their first game opponents, responded in kind on Monday. No problem in the stands at the actual match, but this does make it unlikely that England will be invited to host the World Cup any time

soon. Alternative behaviour was demonstrated by Scots fans last week, who endeared themselves to the locals as spirited but polite party animals. So goes the game of life these days.

Not feeling all that well on Tuesday, I settled for a quick visit to the Filmhouse Cafe Gallery to see "large paintings exploring the eroticism of fruit," by Juliana Marie Capes. The two large paintings—one, a myriad of luscious strawberries, and the other, banana peels (not at all the kind of image one might expect from that fruit)—were colourful and not completely devoid of passion. The smaller paintings were either undistinguished abstractions or more closely resembled micrographs of the little critters that must be upsetting my stomach than they did fruit. Of course, there are many kinds of arousal, and the exhibition was free. Also, the cafe and pub looked convivial and I probably wouldn't have to check my *New Yorker* at the door.

There is another advantage to how the neighbourhood is arranged here. Trees and grass take place in parks, where designated people come around in all kinds of weather to cut the grass and do whatever needs to be done with the trees. (This latter comes particularly to mind because of the extensive and expensive tree surgery committed at our house in my absence.) So, instead of grass to cut, there are small front gardens where lovely flowers seem to grow without much human intervention, and where there are few weeds because there are no lawns nearby to breed them. And, with the complex ownership implied by the townhouse form, the garden may actually be the responsibility of the old couple upstairs or the students living in the cellar. At the very least, there is deniability if the results are less than stunning. I could get used to this!

Sad news for those of Scots ancestry—a genetic disposition to MS, twice as high as other Brits. Study showed that having a "Mc or Mac" surname was an especially strong risk factor which extends to migrants in such common destinations as the South Island of New Zealand. Scotland, overall, has the highest per capita incidence of this disease of the central nervous system.

And news from Glasgow isn't any better. Undercover trading standards officers checked pubs during the Scotland versus Brazil game last week and found football fans were being conned by pub landlords. Half the premises visited were "fiddling their customers," *e.g.*, passing off cheap spirits as the good stuff or diluting drinks with water. Officers promise further checks during future Scotland

matches. Don't know what this world's coming to. If you can't trust your publican, who can you trust? Thank goodness the trading standards officers are out in force!

Architectural bad news: University of Edinburgh needs more than £50 million to restore some of the most stunning architecture in town. Beautiful 17th and 18th century buildings are crumbling and jobs have already been lost, *e.g.*, through the closure of the staff club (in a building the university couldn't afford to fix). Apparently the university's entire repair budget is being spent on the 30-year-old buildings that require constant maintenance. Many fear that the university will have to sell key buildings to private firms, although one wonders who would want them in the state they're in.

On the other hand, you'll be pleased to know that there has been spirited debate in the letters to the editor about the new Parliament Buildings competition. The Countess of Rosebery wrote today in support of the design I favoured, and in much the same terms. A credit to the aristocracy, the Countess is!

I have met some delightful children these past few days. There seem to be a lot of moms and grams in this neighbourhood. Perambulators and strollers abound, all with well-used convertible tops up. Played peek-a-boo with a lively little tike at coffee this morning. His mother recaptured him just as he made a grab for my water glass. Not that it would have made much difference since they were on their way out—into the rain.

Rode "upstairs" on the bus today. An exciting experience, especially in the front seat with nothing to hold on to. Although it is not high enough to see that much more of the city, horizontal deflections of at least a foot make potholes in the cobblestones especially thrilling!

The other side of urban planning: townhouses and other more distinguished structures downtown are being converted to hotels, even in the face of rising prices for office space. Edinburgh has apparently broken out of the category of "three-month visitor destination" and is now seeing plenty of tourists all year around. Since it's clear they aren't coming for the weather, perhaps there is hope for Edmonton, too!

I've got to come back to the public role of the charitable sector here. My first impression is looking more accurate all the time (and I have been here for a month now). Despite continuing problems with the health care system and much discussion—news stories, features,

columns, letters to the editor—of the proposed minimum wage, there is little from the sector on these matters. Again, it is possible that they are doing a lot of good work behind the scenes but, if so, it is a well-kept secret.

As for Canada news, not much of that either. There was a notice last week about a series of "Braveheart" conferences—in Edinburgh, Philadelphia, and Canada—to explore the Scottish influence on North America. But the article talked exclusively about the session to be held in Philadelphia. Unless this is your specialty, I suggest you wait for the video. There was also a brief article about a Scottish company perhaps taking over the nuclear reactors in Ontario. Always on the forefront of technology, this fits well with the their cutting-edge telecommunications industry—soon to emerge, I'm sure, from the 19th century. (Geoff mentioned in passing one day that they had just gotten PCs at work last year. He works for BP, one of the largest companies in Britain.) On the other hand, aside from the Clinton saga and racial murders involving pickup trucks, we don't have to read much about the States either.

An excellent joke concerning the fragility of analogies and metaphors in reasoning, told by Joseph Epstein in his *New Yorker* review of a new biography of Alexander Bell:

> The Russian peasant Poityr, in Kishinev in 1910, is so astonished by the telephone, which he has just seen in use for the first time, that he asks his better-educated friend Ivan how this amazing invention works. "Very simple," Ivan says. "Imagine a dog so large it stretches from Kishinev to Odessa. You step on the dog's tail in Kishinev and it barks in Odessa. Do you follow that?" "Yes, I think I do," Poityr says, hesitantly. "Good," Ivan says. "Now, remove the dog."

Wednesday opened with bright, blue sky and a few fluffy white clouds—the first really warm day I can remember. As I was having coffee at an outdoor table, a local passed by and commented, "You'd think we're in the south of France." Good thing, because Beckie arrives Friday night and is less tolerant of cold weather than I am. Anyway, we'll see how that affects my literary sensibilities and output—or maybe even the weather! You can believe that I will be thinking about you, in any event.

In fact, you can believe whatever you need to believe to be happy!

Faithfully yours in the Burgh,
Martin G-C

Sunday, 21 June, 1998

Just in from the British Library—noted in *The Scotsman* this week—best excuses they've received for not returning books: "I regret the book cannot be returned to you. It has been eaten by the dog belonging to the veterinary surgeon who borrowed it." The book? *Behaviour Problems in Dogs*. "We regret the book is irretrievably lost. It was in a car sent to the scrap metal merchant and crushed." "The book can no longer be returned as there is no money in petty cash to pay for the postage." And finally, "Our reader borrowed the book for his wife who has died under rather unfortunate circumstances." The book? *Total Orgasm.* (Don't you just love British humour?!)

In the mews, on my way to/from the laundrette, there are workmen repairing one of the stone buildings. Their small truck has a flat bed with low sides, looking very much like the horse drawn wagon it replaces. Their pace and everything else about the scene seems very 19th century. Each time I pass, the three of them are considering how best to raise a large stone block to the top of the scaffolding with a chain hoist. With almost vaudevillian movements they draw the drive chain round and round—causing minuscule movement in the hoist chain—until it is finally in the correct position. Then they puzzle over how best to attach the stone to the chain—with ropes, sling or whatever. As I return, several minutes later (and indeed, the next day, as well) they are still hovering over a stone block in the back of the wagon—though perhaps a different stone—pondering and strategizing. Hourly pay, or just a different pace of life in Edinburgh?

More on front gardens. Floppy poppies and lush, over-ripe roses — pink, yellow, salmon—browning and moth eaten around the edges. The largest and most interesting shrub in my flat's front garden, growing from between the stone blocks on the top of the wall, has leaves somewhat like rosemary, with slim, inch-long buds at the tip of each branch, ready to burst forth in tiny but not yet identifiable flowers.

An interesting Brit word that I have run across several times in my charitable-sector reading: Quango. A government-appointed body that funds organizations and services but does not, itself, deliver direct services, *e.g.*, an arts council or a housing funding body. Has a nice ring to it, although I have no theories about its origin. Anyone know?

A letter to the *New Yorker* about current depictions of politicians quotes from Max Weber's classic essay, "Politics as a Vocation": "And even those who are neither leaders nor heroes must arm themselves with that steadfastness of heart with can brave even the crumbling of all hopes." I take this to be good advice to non-profit CEOs and, perhaps, to those in senior management in other sectors, as well. (Also in my reading today, the government's "response" to the Coopers & Lybrand review of the Child Welfare Program. As one insightful observer has noted, "There are no coincidences.")

Sorry about missing this follow-up on Thursday. A couple of you did submit guesses. Rheydt is the birthplace of Joseph Goebbels, at one time a well-known Minister of Propaganda.

Another apology is due. In my efforts to share with you the cultural life of Edinburgh, I forgot to tell you about our own community's Stockbridge Festival, starting Monday. Definitely grassroots, the only (allegedly) nationally-known group is the folk band "Deaf Shepherd," playing on Tuesday. Other events include a Theatre Workshop drama, a Dance India presentation, a "street market party" next Saturday (booths selling stuff and kids' performers, apparently), and local bands at most of the pubs in the neighbourhood. It all concludes next Sunday with the 10th Annual Great Stockbridge Duck Race (in aid of Moonbeam Children's Charity). The Water of Leith is high this year so a hot duck race—with brand new ducks this year—is being predicted. That's our community—on the forefront of entertainment and charitable fundraising! (Unfortunately, the annual riverbank cleanup had to be cancelled this year—the banks are under water because of all the rain.)

Took my usual bus beyond my usual downtown stop today—just to see where it goes: Tollcross (whatever that is), Fountainbridge (apparently there was a fountain there at one time, now the site of a massive brewery making, among other brands, McEwan's Lager) and, eventually, the community of Gorgie—somewhat less upscale than New Town. A few 19th century townhouses, and not exactly industrial, but a lot of one-story stucco buildings, construction sites (as opposed to actual construction), really ugly Council housing, auto parts stores, bingo halls, *etc*. Still, it does have the requisite number of newsagents, butchers, bakeries, fishmongers, veg markets and take-aways, and an operational parish church. It's not quite the burbs, but interesting to get a more grassroots perspective on Edinburgh. Don't think I'll need to visit again, though.

More on the new Parliament Building: I'm sad to report that *The Sunday Times*' architecture and design critic radically disagrees with me and the Countess on the best of the five design finalists — rating our favoured choice last. How do these guys get jobs anyway?? And speaking of capitals, Scotland is on its way to being the Hep C capital of Europe. In response, the government is preparing to sanction a plan for home delivery of needles to addicts. As I have observed before, Scotland often gets to be on the forefront of social developments in Britain.

In other Brit news, maverick Tory MP Alan Clark gave his backing to the (English) football thugs and said violence by rampaging crowds of hooligans was perfectly natural. This did cause a storm of protest. I guess folks just aren't used to having a Tory be such a man of the people. And where do the kids learn such awful behaviour anyway?

More politics. For his strong promotion of Europe (to say nothing of his social policy!) Labour PM Tony Blair is now being called "Thatcher without the handbag."

Finally, in response to rampant Scottish nationalism, a 67-year old pensioner and operator of a dogs' home in London is prepared to "establish his claim" to the throne of Scotland if the Union dissolves. Malcolm Harry Erskine, the 17th Earl of Bachan, claims to be a descendant of the Stuart kings of Scotland, and merely following the wishes (in 1625) of James VI. Like I said before, history is very much alive here. So, remember that name—you heard it here first!

Another blue-sky day, although not quite south-of-France warm. Weather prediction, for what it's worth, is a hot weekend for Beckie's arrival. I take that to mean high temperature above 15 degrees and not raining all the time. In any event, the flatlet is cleaned, fresh flowers have been secured, and the fridge is stocked with Brie, white wine, and strawberries—good, English ones. Fresh scones are on the counter. Okay?

Re: Quango, above. Still don't know where the word comes from, but I just found out that—for official purposes anyway—they are no longer called Quangos, but Non-Departmental Public Bodies, NDPBs, for short. Progress, eh?!

And on the generalization front, so soon after my comment about the

quietude of the sector over here, Liz Nicholson, ED of Shelter (the largest homeless charity in Scotland) got a whole news story Friday about her opposition to the government's domestic violence measures which could see thousands of families evicted from public (and perhaps private) housing if a family member or guest is convicted of a violent crime. The measures are intended to reduce the impact of anti-social behaviour on the neighbours, but Liz fears that whole families will be evicted, making vulnerable women and children homeless—as is apparently already happening in England. The government has attacked her and promised that women would (of course) not be evicted under these changes to the *Crime and Disorder Bill*. Tricky issues, these, and good to hear from the sector on them.

A tiny Canada connection in the paper today: Anglea Hewitt's new CD of Messiaen Piano Works got five stars and a very fine review. She's one of "ours" isn't she?

Finally, in a libel suit that has just come to trial in London, the perplexed High Court judge finally asked, "What is Linford Christie's lunchbox?" Don't you ask!

As expected, Beckie arrived safely on Friday night after a long and uneventful flight—two and a half hours late. If you are ever tempted to fly KLM/UK Air from London Stanstead to Edinburgh (or anywhere else) don't do it! It's not worth it, however cheap. Eventually though, we had a lovely, quiet weekend—reconnecting, and then, exploring Stockbridge.

Letting sleeping dogs lie in the Burgh,
Martin G-C

Tuesday, 23 June, 1998

From David Grossman's *New Yorker* article on Israel at age 50: "To what purpose do we subordinate such a huge part of our strength and our creativity to the Army if we are unable to use this military power to make possible a fundamental change in our region? Has power come to be an end in itself, and have we forgotten that it must be only a means of protecting life? Or have we perhaps forgotten, because of this unbearable lightness of death that prevails around us,

what the word 'life' really means? Living means not just defending the borders of life, as Israel does with great effectiveness, but also doing something about what is going on within those borders. If we don't do this, in the end we will be like those suits of armor that no longer have knights inside them." Seems like an important question for any country/government/organization/person that deploys power, even if not military. To life, then!

We slept in on Saturday and headed out for breakfast at noon, a common practice in Edinburgh, were the earliest opening restaurants start weekend brunch at 10:30. Walked all around Stockbridge to orient Beckie to our neighbourhood. We checked in at all the charity shops and did a bit of shopping for supper—a haggis pie for Beckie from the local butcher, and a spinach and feta slice for me from the Italian bakery. We'll also grill tomatoes—already a favourite of Beckie's. Stopped for a pint at the hotel with outside tables so we could enjoy the 20+ sunshine before returning to the flat where I explained the basics of cricket (England well behind South Africa) before switching to the second half of the Belgium versus Mexico World Cup match. Beckie's reading and recovering from jet lag.

A major study of 500 European teenagers by the research agency, GfK, indicates that today's youngsters are preoccupied with sex and have little interest in changing the world. A good social life is their priority and "taking drugs is as normal as having a cup of tea." (A cup of tea is normal? Ugh!) They also have a negative attitude toward institutional authority, *e.g.*, police, teachers and parents, but value family and hate divorce. Most of them want to go into journalism, social work, or advertising. And you were thinking that there's no real news over here!

On a technical e-mail note, Beckie has reported sometimes not getting the entire Edinburgh Letter—missing the last few paragraphs and the "sign-off." There may be a limit on number of lines or characters for messages in her e-mail program, or something else might be amiss. If any of you have gotten incomplete letters—they always end with a closing and a P. S.—please let me know. I can resend second-halfs to you, or simply make future editions shorter, if this is a widespread problem. I'd hate to think that some of you were missing out on the Full Marty!

The comforting patter of rain as we went to sleep on Saturday night, but sunny and warm again on Sunday. Beckie slept in to deal with

her jet lag. Brunch eventually, bus downtown to send previous e-letter, and probably a little walk along the Water of Leith to introduce Beckie to some of my feathered friends here. We'll check out the jazz at Maison Hector—arriving later this time—but home in time for a bit of the U.S.A. versus Iran contest. (It is permitted to cheer for former or birth countries, as well as Scotland.)

Charity shops—which I have mentioned in the past—are in the news this week. Shoplifting and, in response, security measures—extra staff, closed circuit TV, and dye tags. Remember, these are not big operations like Value Village or the Bissell Store, but largely small, single-bay stores, staffed entirely by (elderly) volunteers and dealing mostly in used clothes and knickknacks. Still, it's real money for the charities, *e.g.,* £3 million per year from Oxfam's 67 shops in Scotland. And there are half a dozen other charities with at least as many shops. The often brazen thefts—"You get this stuff for nothing, so why can't we take it?"—are causing considerable concern in the industry, and charities are now asking for donations of security cameras and electronic tagging systems.

Beckie remarked on how well-dressed the women were at morning coffee yesterday. I suggested it was a generational thing—the women we observed were all a decade or two beyond us—and Stockbridge is, after all, quite upscale. Confirmation was seen today in downtown Edinburgh, as people of all ages and genders were out in shorts—including some who probably shouldn't be quite that adventurous! But residents and tourists alike can be forgiven for going a little wild with the very positive (and possibly short-lived) change in the weather.

Additional fashion note. I think I saw "pedal pushers" on an attractive young woman downtown. They did not look good. Pedal pushers are my mother in the 50s, as we traveled across the country in our '49 Chevy, or as she whistled me in from hide-and-seek, to wash my hands for supper at our first house in the burbs. My mother, not an unattractive woman, did not look good in pedal pushers. Nor did any of the other moms, as I recall. I acknowledge that women may wear whatever they please, but please tell me pedal pushers are not coming back!

> Halftime in the USA versus Iran contest, walking from cafe to pub.
> Cloud, the colour of slate, blankets the town.

Individual drops of rain splat gently on the sidewalk.
Evening sun breaks through from near the horizon.
The light stone face of the townhouse on the hill
Shines warmly against the dark grey velvet of the sky.

After Monday breakfast (with appropriate compliments to the Iranian owner for his team's victory over U.S.A. last night), we set out in full sun for the swimming baths so Beckie can maintian her regimen of lengths. Found Glenogle Swim Centre, without much trouble, in a lovely Victorian stone building (big surprise!) not that far from downtown Stockbridge. (Stiff breeze with alternating sun and cloud all day meant passing my overshirt back and forth between us.) After ascertaining fitness swim hours and costs, we kept walking toward Princes Street, visiting a few commercial galleries, a couple of churches, and finally a cafe-ized pub. Beckie likes English beer—Caledonian Blond, this time—and finds my lager tasteless. (Which, for me, is precisely the point—almost tasteless, just like Canadian beer!) French deli for supper take-away and a short bus ride home (it was starting to rain again) for an afternoon nap. Work, work, work. That's all I do, especially when tourists are in town!

From the conclusion of David Denby's *New Yorker* piece on Norman Mailer turning 75: "He had summed up his present state of mind in this way: 'About the time that you obtain some wisdom, and you become mellow, like Camembert—about that time you also can smell yourself just a little. You didn't die for any cause, did you? You're not a protagonist—you're the guy that's left at the end. At this point, however, I'd hate to think that it's over.'"

Wouldn't we all? So have some cheese, eh?!

No longer alone in the Burgh,
Martin G-C

Thursday, 25 June, 1998

Remember, if you are not getting the entire Edinburgh Letter, please let me know. I can resend second-halfs to you, or simply make future editions shorter. Don't want you to miss out on the Full Marty!

Beckie began her swimming regimen on Monday, 5-6 p.m., after we had coffee at the Bib & Tucker—my favourite afternoon reading site. They have two magnificent, old, wooden chairs with well contoured bottoms, one of which fits each of ours quite nicely. We discussed our different reading preferences—hers for at home, mine for almost anyplace else. Found her way to the swimming baths all by herself, so she must be getting sufficiently oriented. I stayed at B&T, with my new *LRB*, for a second espresso.

As you may have heard, the Government in Britain has just instituted a minimum wage: £3.60 per hour for those over 21, and £3 per hour for 18-20 year olds. This latter rate will rise to £3.20 in the year 2000. (Although this is about $8.50 in Canadian dollars, costs are considerably higher here; I expect the equivalent purchasing power is not much more than $6 or so in Canada.) The Low Pay Commission had recommended that the younger workers get the £3.20 now, but the Government argued that it would cost jobs. An OECD report released today shows that in all 17 countries studied with a minimum wage there are no negative employment effects from including young workers in the regular minimum wage. Big surprise, eh?! In any case, 150,000 Scots are expected to benefit from the £3.60 wage, especially bar staff, waiters, laundry workers and cleaners.

On Tuesday's visit to Web13, Beckie came with me to experience the thrill of an internet cafe, and to see your messages in person — all four of them. I had also saved a couple of past ones for her to read. Thanks for sharing! Ralph and Christopher both replied to the Quango query: Quasi-autonomous non-governmental organization. Seems obvious when you know it, so thanks, you two. And Diane had previously supplied bios on the characters referred to in the quote about John Knox—but I unintentionally deleted the answer before I could record and share it. You are a font of knowledge—among all your other commendable traits!

After Web13 we visited The Grassmarket and Victoria Street shops, then up to the Royal Mile. Decided on St. Giles' (saving The Castle for another day) and on down to The Tron Kirk. A most interesting shell—17th century church, 19th century Old Town fire, and 20th century stabilization—outer walls and roof only. Interior is now a visitor and interpretation centre, on scaffolding, above the excavation of Marlin's Wynd—a "lost close" from 16th century Edinburgh that

hadn't been seen for more than 300 years. Among other things, Beckie observed that Old Town does not look as old as she had expected. I suggested that it was because the stone buildings were so well-built and have remained in use (though not necessarily the original one) throughout. This old town is not (just) a museum!

We had a late lunch at Pierre V.—the French restaurant chain now in receivership. And a very nice (cheap) lunch it was—£5.90, for three courses. (In this town, the only other sit-down lunch at that price is a bowl of simple pasta at a low-end Italian eatery, or a cheeseburger.) Beckie had guineafowl terrine, risotto-stuffed tomato, and lemon cheesecake; I had French bean and tomato salad, pork casserole with garlic and peppers, and pear/peach slice. Huge bowl of cooked veggies included.

You'll be pleased to know that Robert the Bruce's heart was reburied in Melrose Abbey this week. It had been removed for safekeeping during an archaeological dig a couple of years ago. A private ceremony was held with reps from the three major Christian churches in Scotland, a member of Melrose Community Council, and officials from Historic Scotland. Public ceremony later this week, with reading from John Barbour's 14th century epic poem, "The Bruce". Among other things, his heart had been taken on a crusade in 1330 (at his request). The rest of The Bruce is buried at Dunfermline Abbey, the traditional resting place of Scottish kings. Just thought you'd want to know.

Historic vote in the Commons Monday to end inequality in Britain's age of consent laws (for sexual activity). Age for gay consent has been adjusted to 16, in line with hetero consent. All party support, as well as from most Church leaders. Passed 336-129. A further amendment to make it an offense for teachers, social workers, or other adults with authority to have sex with any under-18's in their care, was not accepted. Don't know why.

Tuesday night organ recital at St. Mary's—the last in the series and the only time Beckie will get to sit in the choir stalls right in front of the organ. A request recital, so quite a mixture of pieces—many modern and a few quite strange. The first half was somewhat more familiar and traditional with Dupré, Vaughan Williams, Mulet, Peeters, Saint-Saens, and ending with a quite powerful Julius Reubke "Introduction and Fugue," from "Sonata on the 94th Psalm."

The second half began with "Rhapsody No. 3 in C sharp minor," composed while Herbert Howells was enduring a sleepless night during a Zeppelin raid. Lots of passion and pyro! Then, a little Percy Whitlock piece, followed by a Messiaen we both enjoyed a lot, "Transports de joie," from "L'Ascension." Next, I thought the Fats Waller arrangements of "Go Down Moses" and "Ain't Misbehaving" were great! Son of a minister, Fats played church organ in Chicago before switching to theatre organ. Beckie is not at all fond of the theatre organ sound, but liked very much the penultimate piece, Lefebure-Wely's "Sortie in E flat." The program concluded with Widor's "Toccata," from "Symphonie V," quickly becoming one of my favourites! We had a pleasant walk home in the long summer evening light. Enjoyed hearing the night birds from the park below, while crossing the Dean Bridge, above.

While we were at the recital, Scotland joined England in apparently playing below their potential, loosing to Morocco, 3-0, (though, technically, both Scotland and Morocco were eliminated from further competition by the Norway upset of Brazil). I watched the re-broadcast on arriving home, although I had expected as much — we had passed fans with painted faces who weren't cheering. (I wasn't going to ask!) The less said about the game, the better. And, even though this has happened in seven previous World Cups, I expect we'll have to listen to the recriminations for the next few days, at least. The joys of European culture in late June—at least if you're pulling for British teams! (Although there is still some small hope that England will make it on to the next round.)

Saw a wonderful little film on the telly last night, after all of the above. "Betty Blue," a French work with Beatrice Dalle and Jean-Hugues Anglade, which opened the Edinburgh Festival in 1986. Some amusing eroticism (among other things) in the life of an aspiring writer whose girlfriend gradually slides from devotion to dementia. A wonderful restaurant scene, too, in response to a pizza being sent back. I can assure you they never do this at Kids in the Hall Bistro, no matter how bitchy the customer!

We are planning a visit to National Gallery of Scotland this afternoon, as soon as the day brightens. I haven't been to this one yet, so am quite looking forward to it. Hope to see some of the works "recycled" for the Sacred and Profane show (reviewed in a previous letter) at the modern art gallery. Will keep you apprised of the situation.

From Adam Phillips' *LRB* review of *The Poems of A.E. Housman*, edited by Archie Burnett: "Even when poetry has a meaning," Housman wrote, "as it usually has, it may be inadvisable to draw it out." Not because it may be disturbing but because it may be beside the point. For Housman, the meaning of a poem too easily substitutes for what he calls the feeling in it. If poems had meanings, they would not need to be poems.

Never drawing it out in the Burgh,
Martin G-C

Sunday, 28 June, 1998

More from the review of the A.E. Housman poetry book (actually two, including one by Tom Stoppard, mentioned below): "Housman never lost his faith that there were real things—like suffering and love and knowledge and death—and that we are obliged to take them seriously. If, as he wrote, 'accuracy is a duty and not a virtue,' it is not up for grabs; and it is part of Housman's finer rigour to make, as well as take on, such distinctions. 'Life,' Stoppard's Housman remarks, 'is in the minding.' Caring about something is caring that it be as good as it can be. Housman took the kind of care of his chosen (dead) authors—often savaging those who could not do them justice—that he wasn't ultimately able to take of the man who was the love of his life, Moses Jackson. But the scholarship was not a substitute, or some kind of embittered retreat: it was another way of doing a similar thing. Accuracy was a form of love for Housman; and love always exposes one's incompetence." (I can certainly identify with that last sentence!)

Rained hard during morning coffee, but after taking both of our umbrellas to Web13 to post XVII, the sun finally broke through so we didn't need them. Nice mixture of sun and cloud over the Castle as we walked Princes Street toward Waverly Station. What a delight to see a crowded train station with several trains arriving and leaving during each hour. Like a different era or, at least, a different continent! Beckie picked up schedules for trains to the Highlands. On our way along Princes Street, we enjoyed the lovely rose garden(s) just below. In full bloom now, with yellow, pinks, and salmons predominating.

Very few true reds—consistent with home front gardens in my neighbourhood—but an electric peach that really stands out!

After walking for nearly three hours we decided to put off the National Gallery again so as to save our feet and energy for the literary pub tour tonight. Several sites in Old and New Town that have particular literary significance, complete with actors playing the part of the respective bards. Should be fun! But on the way home our route took us past the Scottish National Portrait Gallery so we stopped in for a quick look at a couple of exhibits, a particularly interesting one of 30-odd photographs of stone circles and similar structures in the British Isles. Some were quite mysterious and moving, even as B/W photos.

In the paper this week, *The Scotsman*'s business columnist comments on the doomsday scenarios favoured by some business leaders in response to the new minimum wage law. After outlining the pitifully small investment of British, and especially Scottish, business (small, medium and large) in such areas as employee training and R&D, he concludes: "Ultimately, it is no use managers blaming such reforms as an attack on their attempts to bolster productivity when, to a large extent, those efforts, seen in a broader context, remain indefensible." Sounds like another left-wing columnist trying to confuse us with the facts!

The sector is in the news again—this time, Citizens Advice Scotland (something like Community Connections plus ESPC, I gather). They released a report today—"Small Change"—which documents the miserable working lives of people in the five lowest paying sectors in Scotland: restaurants and catering, caring services, agriculture, security, and cleaning. The report highlights exploitation by employers, especially of employees with less than two years of continuous service who, *e.g.,* are not protected by legislation against unfair dismissal. The article also notes that the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants' last quarterly survey showed "that 48 percent of financial directors questioned believed that workers should be paid a minimum wage of £4 an hour or higher." I guess those damn left-wingers are everywhere—except perhaps in the Labour Government!

Beckie has found Edinburgh to be grey, grey, grey! Buildings, sky, sea, *etc*. Hard to argue with, especially during her first week here. Still, I contend that the city is equally green. Parks, trees and

front gardens everywhere—very few places in the city from which one cannot see extensive green areas. Of course, most of them are private and locked, but just walking home today (about half an hour) we passed six different parks large enough to have names — most too large to see from one vantage point. So, not denying the grey—I'm pretty used to it by now—but adding the green!

Even though Scotland is out and England far from stellar, I am enjoying the World Cup. (This is the first year I have seen more than part of one game.) As the field narrows, I expect to get to know particular teams better, as they play and are televised more often. There have already been some excellent games! On the other hand, Wimbledon seems especially boring this year. And ugly, with hardly any green grass left on the courts. Have I been spoiled by real sport, or is tennis simply less exciting this year? I did enjoy a clay court tournament a couple of weeks ago quite a lot. Maybe it's just Wimbledon.

Postponed pub tour in favour of Filmhouse to see Pedro Almodovar's 1997 (Spanish) film, "Live Flesh." Based very loosely on a Ruth Rendell thriller, it starts in 1970 Madrid with a birth on a city bus and ends with another street birth about now. Some pretty bizarre and unlikely plot twists, but a visually powerful little tale of infidelity, revenge and, perhaps, redemption in the end. Cops, wheelchair basketball, sex—pretty well everything, except car chases! Afterwards, some flavourful pasta at Lazio—our first sit-down dinner together—before another thrilling bus ride home (in the Upper Saloon, as it's called) at a still-sunny 10 p.m. Turned out to be quite a nice day.

"Mrs. Hornsby was certainly not a woman to jump to conclusions, which could have meant she had a mind that had to pull its load slowly like a yoked ox, or else she was a very careful thinker." From *Jerusalem Inn* by Martha Grimes, set in Northumbria, which geography Beckie now recognizes from the railway schedules! (Just to let you know that I am not the only one reading and thinking carefully in Edinburgh.)

Intense sunshine early Friday morning. Rain by the end of breakfast. Taking Beckie to the laundrette and flower shop before we set out for the National Gallery. As a columnist today quoted someone asking, "Is there no beginning to your talents?"

To put it simply, the National Gallery is wonderful! The main floor starts with Titian and the 16th century Venetians. Many, many, excellent works. Then, on to 17th century Italian, French and Spanish, with a small room for Poussin's Seven Sacraments. Then, 17th century Dutch and Flemish. However, aside from some interesting church interiors from Haarlem, I begin to lose interest by the late 17th century. A room, just opened, of French Impressionists revives me, particularly a minor Van Gogh landscape, "Olive Trees," and a couple of Seurat paintings that Beckie particularly liked.

The 18th and 19th century stuff bored me as it usually does—too many horses and rich matrons—except for two luminescent Turner cityscapes. Finally, upstairs for various pre-1530 works: Cranach's "Melancholia" (after Durer, but with more varied symbolism, reflecting the earlier and less depressing understanding of melancholia), some small, still-vibrant tempera works, and a couple of triptych altar pieces. Upstairs, in back, Roman Baroque Sculpture and Design in the Age of Bernini. Some of the drawings were mildly interesting. Overall, my favourites were the Turners, the Van Gogh, an early El Greco, and a recently cleaned and restored Titian, "The Virgin and Child with St. John the Baptist and an Unidentified Male Saint." Such rich colours, detailed brush work, and superb composition. Could have been painted yesterday—except that it was so good!

Stopped at a pub on the way back for "The best food on Rose Street." If it is, you never want to eat on Rose Street! After discussing National Gallery experiences, we walked back to purchase the gallery catalogue. Arrived home just ahead of heavy rain—in time for Beckie to take her evening swim, and me, to watch England versus Colombia. England played a fine game, winning decisively 2-0, and proceeding to the next round.

Exposing my incompetence in the Burgh,
Martin G-C

Tuesday, 30 June, 1998

Here is something from an unlikely source that may relate to our sector—the opening paragraph of Mary Beard's *LRB* review of *Hadrian: The Restless Emperor,* by Anthony Birley: "The Emperor Hadrian once went to the public baths and saw an old soldier rubbing his back against a wall. Puzzled, he asked the old man what he was doing. 'Getting the marble to scrape the oil off,' the old man explained, 'because I can't afford a slave.' The Emperor immediately presented him with a team of slaves and the money for their upkeep. A few weeks later, he was in the baths again. Predictably, perhaps, he found a whole group of old men ostentatiously rubbing their backs against the wall, trying to cash in on his generosity. He asked the same question and got the same response. 'But haven't you thought,' replied the canny Emperor, 'of rubbing each other down?'"

The reviewer suggests that this story was probably told of many emperors, highlighting Roman assumptions of what made a good one. Might it also point to the ancient origins of self-help groups? In any case, allow me to suggest that these are words we, in the sector, are increasingly hearing from our own canny emperor!

Stockbridge Festival on the weekend was amusing. A real, small-town feeling. One street was blocked off on Saturday afternoon, with booths selling goods—mostly clothes, crafts, minor antiques and the obligatory donut trailer—staffed by local church and community groups. Face painting and old-guy New Orleans band also on the street—complete with 60+ flappers in outrageous boas. Actually, more stalls and activity than I expected. Then, we hit the local pubs for a series of bands and, for Beckie, a series of liquid refreshments. Cruithne, three local lads with bagpipes/accordion, keyboard/guitar, and bodrahn. Then, Andy Chung, a Chinese Scot singing cheatin' and hurtin' songs in appropriate country twang. Next pub, the most excellent JimJammers, three late-sixties-aged guys with red shirts and a dynamite Dixieland sound. Keyboard dude was really hot. Finally, a smoky singer accompanied by mercifully soft guitar, and Royzone, a local Ceilidh Band with whistle/flute, guitar, accordion, fiddle, and bouzouky.

As for Beckie, she "tried them all," moving beyond McEwans 80/ and 70/ ales, to Blackthorne Dry Cider, Directors Bitters, Beamish Irish Red and Duchars India Pale. She stopped just short of Guinness—

saving something for next time. (And I, of course, stuck with my tasteless lagers.) Dutiful to the end, I read *LRB* and Beckie wrote postcards during breaks in the music. We may also come down again for the "launch" of the (charitable) rubber ducks from the bridge on Sunday. The fun just never quits here in Stockbridge!

Yet another report this week about children suffering from mental health problems—30,000 (one in four), in Glasgow. Of these, 12,000 have "a moderate-to-severe diagnosable mental health disorder." About 10 percent of all their young people. From the Glasgow Children's Service Plan, published Wednesday. A consultant to the report said that given the strong correlation between poverty/deprivation and mental health problems, Glasgow shouldn't be surprised at the numbers which, he said, are probably even higher than in the report. For example, 43 percent of Glasgow children qualify for free school meals—double the national average. Both national and local governments have promised to do something about the problem. Sound familiar?

Because weekend brunch starts so late on Sunday, I prepared Beckie a free-range egg and tomato roll to give her energy for a morning swim. Then we went out for (my) brunch before Web13. Literary pub tour is definitely on for tonight—rain or shine—at least that's our story now! Bright, clear morning, but that doesn't mean anything beyond the hour. They seem to be having trouble with rain in Wimbledon, too, I noticed. (Beckie does rather enjoy watching tennis.)

Still reeling from the National Gallery visit. To see so much excellent 16th and 17th century art, all in one place—multiple paintings by most of the big guys—makes me long for larger, older cities. Not that I don't enjoy EAG and many of their fine works from this century, but you just don't get the institutions, range, and perspective in a place barely 100 years old. I do love Edmonton for all sorts of reasons, but tons of world-class art, day in and day out, within walking distance, is hard to forego.

Frustration Sunday at Web13. Sent EL-18 okay, but couldn't read your e-mail because my password was inoperative. Administrator isn't in on weekends so can't be fixed until Monday. On the way home we stopped for Beckie's brunch—a Persian salad with basil, coriander and mint leaves, cukes, tomatoes, feta, *etc*.—with a Moretti beer. Then down to Stockbridge to watch the ducks being chucked into the Water of Leith. Two got stuck on the bridge

ledge—quite out of reach, I checked—but the rest made it into the water to be herded by a gang of splashing and laughing kids. We didn't follow them to the finish line because, if we had bought duck numbers, ours surely would have been the two stuck on the ledge. Kinda' like Scotland's football team. Beckie met a very friendly grey cat on the way home and so collected cat fur on her tights for the first time in 10 days.

A newspaper poll released today, marking the 50th anniversary of the NHS, shows more than half of Scotland's doctors predict an end to "free" healthcare. In related news, the Labour Government has given NHS trust chairmen one month to cut patient queues or risk losing their jobs. That should concentrate their minds! On the other hand, Beckie was reading an analytic article on the subject which argues that although waiting lists have grown dramatically, the actual time spent waiting for elective hospital procedures has not increased—14 weeks, exactly what it was in the 1960s! Article suggests that length of wait is a better indicator of health service efficiency than simply the number of people on the waiting list. Makes sense to me.

Finally, an article with a New Zealand connection. Edinburgh University anatomy department is returning eight preserved Maori heads (19th century tourist souvenirs) as part of a "cultural repatriation" process. This is not the first time Scottish institutions have returned aboriginal artifacts, especially human remains. The article also notes that the British Museum is not doing likewise, apparently unwilling to set a precedent that "might encourage the Greek government in its claim to the Elgin Marbles."

Pub tour was great! Two actors with an ongoing dialogue about Edinburgh writers—down and dirty versus proper intellectuals. Burns, Scott, R.L.Stevenson, Hugh McDiarmid, *etc*. Recitations from, readings about, historical and cultural background in four related pubs: The Beehive, The Ensign Ewart, The Jolly Judge and Milnes Bar. Beckie worked her way through a few more writerly beverages: Teakston Best Bitter, Scrumpy Jack, and Orkney Dark—the only one she didn't really like all that much. Beckie had good chats after with the Scots actors, a Canadian, and women from St. Louis and LA. I discussed children's programming with a new charity CEO and a primary teacher. (Even the folks from LA couldn't believe that we didn't have school lunch programs in our strange country!) All in all, quite fun!

And we're off to Inverness—the capital of the Highlands—on the train tomorrow. Just there and back, a comfortable way to see some of the countryside. Details to follow!

Pulling my load slowly in the Burgh,
Martin G-C

Thursday, 2 July, 1998

Happy Canada Day, one day late! We had a a very nice anniversary in Inverness—the "hub of the Highlands." Four-hour electric train ride up (three and a half back) arriving early afternoon. Had a decent lunch at the Station Hotel—a pleasant old-style lounge with tartan carpeting and Gents Room complete with stags head—and then set out for short walks around town. Castle (couldn't go in), 16th century house (cute but boring), churches, huge but disappointingly recent cemetery, lots of souvenir shops, and the worst espresso and latte that either of us have ever had. We left it on the table with a very small tip.

Scenery was not dramatic—except by the coast near Edinburgh and the Grampian Hills just before Inverness—but it was quite peaceful, lush, and remarkably unspoiled. I didn't see a single billboard the entire way, in towns or on the highway along the tracks. A few still-functioning factories, lots of green fields, and some sheep and cows. Occasional ruins, and attractive stone houses in each little village. Pizza for our anniversary dinner at LittleJohns—a small chain complete with model trains running around overhead. Better places didn't start serving dinner in time for us to catch our train. But we have both had worse pizza. Beckie has started to sample modern Scottish literature—*Like*, by Ali Smith, a complicated 90's-family chronicle. She figured it helped make the train ride back seem shorter. I slept until Perth, which made the ride seem shorter to me, too.

British Medical Association report out this week says that GPs miss physical or mental signs in up to 95 percent of patients suffering from domestic abuse. The report, "Domestic Violence: A Healthcare Issue?" calls for more and better training of physicians, both in diagnosing abuse and in knowing where to send women for help. About time, one would think!

An interesting Jack McLean column in *The Scotsman* about the origins of British cuisine—baked beans. It all began in 1902 with small tins imported by Fortnum & Mason from the U.S.A. He asks, "Who was to know that they would become a staple of the British diet? Who was to know that they would become the staple of the underclass and indeed the British joke?" He goes on to relate his lifelong love affair with the dish, started when he was a sickly child after the war and warmed baked beans on toast, courtesy of his grandmother in Glasgow, helped nurse him back to health. Yummy!

Finally did The Castle today. On our way up the Royal Mile we stopped first at Gladstone Land, a restored 16th century merchant's residence and one of Edinburgh's early tenements (to which state—with the more common negative meaning of the word—it had sunk before restoration). Quite interesting, especially the master bedroom in front, more than 20 feet square, with lovely, decoratively-painted stonework and beams discovered under later plaster during restoration. Then, The Castle itself, although the large open area in front of the main gatehouse is spoiled by the massive stands being erected for the big Tattoo during the Festival. (Usually this civic space is despoiled by dozens of parked tour busses; today only room for a few.)

The Castle was okay. Lots of 17th century cannon, interesting stonework, and interior buildings from 15th through 19th centuries. A garrison was actually stationed there until 1923. Mostly what one would expect from such a tour—self-guided or mouthy tour guide, or best of all, according to Beckie, a CD player with buttons for more information, if desired, at each station. My favourite structure was the tiny Chapel (after Queen, later Saint Margaret, circa 1047-1093), with interior dimensions of 10 by 28 feet, three or four small stained glass windows and walls two feet thick. Built in the late 13th century, it is the oldest building in Edinburgh, and was only rediscovered in the 19th century and returned to its original use in the 20th. Simple, primitive, still quite alive. And a guild of women named Margaret look after it to this day.

Returned through the Grassmarket and famished, decided to have a more proper anniversary dinner, a day late. A nice, little Italian place (with Indian music, and then, Sinatra) rustled up some excellent pasta for us, their only customers at 3:30 p.m. We toasted our 24 years and one day officially together, and our friendship with all of you. It did the trick!

Edinburgh Zoo in the news today. An ice cream van in their carpark was apparently used as a mobile studio for a porn film last year. The film titled "The Ice Cream Van" is the work of a duo with 130 such works to their credit, who also run a taxi firm in Saltcoats. Police have promised to look into the matter, but have received no complaints yet, either from the Zoo or from other Edinburgh residents. Limited distribution, I suspect.

Big England versus Argentina football game tonight. I will not miss it! Beckie may or may not go swimming. We have certainly had our exercise for the day already, climbing around and such. And it didn't even rain. Actually, it was clear enough to have spectacular views from The Castle of all sides of the city, the harbour, the Firth of Forth, and the green hills beyond.

Finally enjoyed Wimbledon today—while waiting for the football. Suk/Sukova versus Gimelstob/V.Williams. First mixed doubles match I've seen in years—humour, variety, and very fine tennis. Don't know the others all that well, but have been impressed with Miss Williams (and the other Miss Williams) for some time. Left them at one set each, for the kickoff. England played superbly despite losing a player to a red card at the start of the second half, with the score 2-2, where it stayed for the rest of the game. England defended valiantly, a man short for nearly 75 minutes, through the full length of extra time. Penalty shoot-out decided the game, with England losing by one. Terribly sad, but one of the best games in any sport that I've ever seen!

From Jonathan Dollimore's Literary Notes in *The Independent*: "The traditional defenses and criticism of art either dovetail it with ethics, or separate it off entirely. Both strategies evade the fact that art can subvert the fragile coherence we call 'the self,' thereby undermining the ethics which hold us and our society together. To say otherwise is to take ourselves too seriously, while taking neither art nor ethics seriously enough." This was part of a piece called "Death, desire and dangerous art," that Beckie was reading at breakfast. Afterwards, we bought a copy of *The Independent* on the way home because we both wanted to remember parts of the article. When was the last time you bought a second morning paper because there was something worth pondering further?

And the end of yet another tradition this week. The London tea auction, held weekly for the past 319 years to set the price of tea, is

no more. The culprit: containerized shipping and Internet shopping. A dreadful pity, if you ask me!

Have begged for some reading time today, instead of touristing. Don't know what Beckie may be up to but she's off to Waverly Station to reserve a seat on the train to somewhere. Grey day (big surprise) but no rain yet. We took photos this morning of local townhouses for Marjorie's artistic daughter to draw. Supposed to be dry and cool tonight. No World Cup until next week so a full slate of British TV at the expected times—"Coronation Street," "EastEnders," "Keeping Up Appearances," and "Kavanagh QC," the John Thaw series that I haven't seen yet. And, there's still Wimbledon, if I get really desperate.

The Scotsman's "Thought of the day," from Hunter S. Thompson: "I wouldn't recommend sex, drugs or insanity for everyone, but they've always worked for me."

Working for you on the Rock,
Martin G-C

Sunday, 5 July, 1998

Am enjoying my Inverness purchase, a Frasers Reserve Christmas bottling of an unidentified Islay malt that was so popular and well-priced they decided to keep bottling it. Very light colour, age not specified, distillery supposed to be a secret, but incredibly smoky and flavourful. Not hard to guess what it really is. A most excellent tipple for a cool Edinburgh afternoon. Really, I did wait until it was slightly after noon!

Beckie swam on Wednesday night, after booking her seat to York. Roman ruins and York Minster on her agenda for a quick day trip. A line she shared from her book (with a completely different context) may be relevant here: "…filled with the rich filth of antiquity." You'll get a full report when she returns.

We are getting into a comfortable routine of outings and life. Shop in the morning, picking out our respective supper pies at the

butcher—chicken and veggie for her today, and mild curry for me. Window cleaner was by today and house cleaner comes tomorrow. We put out garbage in special Council-printed bags (would anyone really steal them if the bags weren't labeled?) on Friday and Tuesday. Twice a week pickup and no garbage cans!

Enjoyed watching Virginia Wade, the last British Wimbledon champ (1977), play in the affectionately named "Old Dears" doubles section. She and her partner (with a knee brace) got beat 6-1, 6-2, by younger women just recently retired from the pro circuit (and she nearly as old as I am). Less mobility these days, but some excellent shot placement all around. And Virginia was still signing autographs.

On one of our walks yesterday, we heard then sighted a rosy finch. Surprisingly low, throaty chirp for such a small bird. Singing her or his heart out, although to what end was not immediately apparent. Enjoyed again the variety and lushness of flowers in even the most unlikely of gardens. How they get enough sun, especially these days, down in window wells or behind thick hedges, is a bit of a mystery. Yet everything has been in continuous bloom since I arrived in May when there was still the threat of frost. At least one wouldn't need to worry about them getting enough water!

Football joke. Q: How do you get David Beckham's eyes to light up? A: Shine a torch in his ear! Another one, from *The Scotsman* this morning. Q: What is the difference between David Beckham—23, earning £8 million a year, about £2 million per brain cell—and an Airfix model? A: One is a glueless kit and the other … (Don't worry about the details, you get the drift!)

Cooked Beckie breakfast this morning—egg and black pudding on toasted French roll—as her train left before our breakfast place opened. Think I'll cook again tonight, especially since the butcher had no curry pies this morning. Scotch beef fillet (8 oz. for only £5!), onion, mushrooms, tomatoes, zucchini and those tiny cobs of corn; a perky, little Italian red; strawberries and Haagen-Dazs for dessert. I know, lack of authenticity—nothing deep fried!

From Nick Cohen's *LRB* review, commenting on the disappointing Labour government here: "Yet for all the compromises, there are still cheering contrasts between old and new regimes. The leftish

Australian writer Richard Neville was quoted with approval: 'There is perhaps an inch of difference between an Australia governed by Labour and an Australia governed by the right, but, believe me, it is an inch worth living in.'" There seem to be many contexts in which life is a game of inches!

And from the same issue of *LRB*, our word for the week: inquorate, an adjective used to describe the House when a quorum is not present. Simple really, but a form I had not seen used before.

Beckie returned from York aboard the Flying Scotsman (train) this evening, with tales of York Minster, the medieval city wall, the butchers' section of the old market (complete with carcass hooks still in the walls), and the hedged fields of my imagination that I missed on our trip north. At the Minster, the medieval "Great East Window" is the size of a tennis court, and the "The Five Sisters' Window" with its geometric pattern in green and grey, survives from the 13th century. She also explored the more recent work underneath, with Beckie-sized bolts in concrete collars to stabilize the central tower's foundation. And plenty of evidence of the previous Norman and Roman structures. Sounds quite wonderful!

"In serving each other we become free." The motto engraved on the roundtable at Camelot castle in the 1995 film "First Knight," on BBC1 Thursday night. Although Sean Connery is still being denied a knighthood—apparently for his support of the Scottish nationalists—he makes a mighty fine King (Arthur)!

Friday morning awoke to bright sun. Blue sky, still thoroughly sunny at mid-day, and too warm for my overshirt. Breakfast, laundrette, completed photo-documentation of our neighbourhood—mews, curved bay windows and slight view of harbour from top of the hill, interior ceiling details—and Beckie is off for a noon swim. Flower shop this afternoon, pick up laundry, World Cup quarter-final, then cook dinner planned for last night. Beckie off to poetry festival after. And she's bound for Glasgow tomorrow (where, we learned this morning, one-third of the population has mental health problems).

Also learned from the paper this morning that body piercing was quite popular in Victorian times, particularly the "Prince Albert ring" among the menfolk. Seems that unsightly bulges required some adjustment to "ensure a smooth line to the (extremely tight) breeches" favoured in those days. Ouch! (Don't ask, okay?) And,

following up on the repatriation of shrunken Maori heads to N.Z. story, a reader suggests that a number of elderly academics at U of Edinburgh "would be well advised to watch how they go until the transaction is complete." Don't you just love academic humour!

Beckie attended the Edinburgh Poetry Festival Friday night (held at the huge Caledonian brewery) while I was watched Denmark give Brazil a bit of a scare. They played well, especially at first, but the world champs prevailed as expected. Beckie found poetry scene here a bit difficult to access—a lot of historical and geographic specificity, Scots language, WWII, and anti-English nationalism. Enjoyed some beautiful lyrical/musical pieces. Disappointed overall, but appreciated the opportunity to check out another country's poetry. Attendance not as good as, for example, Stroll of Poets in Edmonton.

Saturday morning and Beckie still in bed. Apparently decided to postpone Glasgow—there are trains at least every hour—in favour of catching up on not-always-available sleep. I'm puttering around quietly but definitely ready to go out for morning espresso. (The flat only has one set of keys so we have to coordinate such things.) Will probably run across to the newsagent in a minute to get a start on the weekend paper.

Cityscape—this time, "park" benches. Beautiful, eight-foot-long oak benches, modified Mission style, one-, two- three- and four-inch stock, mortised, screwed, and plugged. Spar varnish and bolted securely to the concrete. Hundreds of them throughout the city, especially on sidewalks downtown, beside green spaces, along paths in public parks, *etc*. Each one has a plaque on it memorializing a military unit or dead person, or indicating sponsorship by a service club, guild, lodge or (living) family. Even the ones from the late-50's are in reasonably good shape although about due for another coat of varnish. They are comfortable, few are damaged, they look great, and people actually use them.

Out for a bit of shopping today, as Monday is a holiday of some kind. Don't know the occasion but first week of July seems like the time for one wherever you are. Saw duck breast on at the poulterer so may plan some more cooking this weekend, depending on where Beckie goes (or not). Fourth day with no substantial rain. This might be the start of a trend!

Downing a wee dram on the Burgh,
Martin G-C

Tuesday, 7 July, 1998

Samuel Johnson was quoted in an *LRB* article on the commercial dimensions of literature: "Only a blockhead would write, except for money." And to think that I do it for nothing. Actually, not for nothing—for all for you! Pay's the same, of course.

Saturday, while shopping, we saw the mounted police again. (I thought they were just out for the festival last weekend so didn't remark on it.) Female officer on a compact black mare, and male constable on a larger grey. Quite friendly but very large batons on their saddles. Apparently they patrol Stockbridge (and maybe all of Edinburgh?) every Saturday around noon. On the lookout for wheelchair racing elders, no doubt!

Trend of sunny weather didn't last beyond Saturday afternoon. Since Beckie didn't go to Glasgow today, I cooked again. Only one small duck breast available so I got some pheasant fillets to saute and serve with leeks, oyster mushrooms, and oranges simmered in white wine. Meanwhile, Holland and Argentina are tied 1-1 at the half. (After a red card each, late in the second half, Holland scored a beautiful goal to win in the 91st min.)

Ran across the origin of school meals in the UK in Richard Horton's *LRB* review of a book on the history of the NHS: "The Boer War was a further jolt to those anxious about the nation's health. The dismal physical state of army recruits threatened the war effort and led to recommendations for improving child health together with the introduction of school meals and medical services." Remarkably similar to the situation in the U.S.A., almost half a century later, at WWII. War does seem to get a country's attention.

Wimbledon got interesting late Saturday—the four-hour-plus men's doubles championship, won 10-8 in the fifth set by the Dutch duo. And then, to the last football quarter-final, with Germany versus Croatia. Beckie still sleeping it off—perhaps too much poetry last night! A member of the usually disciplined German team was red-carded before half-time and, one man short for the rest of the game, they lost 3-0 to Croatia. And I had picked them to maybe beat Brazil in the final. Oh well, no money on it!

Beckie's Glasgow adventure finally happened Sunday. She had chatted briefly with Liz's school friend, but she didn't call back. And no answer at the MacSweans—probably away for the holiday weekend. But sunny again Sunday morning. While at Waverly Station she'll make reservations for us to go to the Lake District — Tuesday and Wednesday, I think. She's promised me a boat ride! This is the part of her visit where time really goes fast—her flight back to Canada is on Friday. Actually, it's accelerating for me, too. My return date is July 18! Seems like I arrived about three weeks ago. Or that I have always lived here. I think I could. Even with the weather, this city could work for me.

Got my first two-pound coin in change today. Silver coloured disk with gold-coloured rim. Slightly bigger and thicker than Canadian toonie, but thinner and no heavier than £1 coin. Round with etched edge and motto engraved thereon, in English, for a change: "Standing on the shoulders of giants". Seems an appropriate sentiment for this land of past (and future?) glories.

Change came from purchase of my favourite pastry here—yum-yums. Scones are fine, but hardly uniquely Scottish. My mother made them in her baking days, calling them baking powder biscuits. I suspect most cultures using fine wheat flour have something similar. But yum-yums are special. A rectangular, flaky donut, about two by six by one inch, given a full twist and iced with a thin, white glaze or icing. Dough is similar to a cruller, but a bit more body. Sweet, greasy, and definitely yummy!

On a more personal note, as I prepare for a return to my more sedentary Edmonton life-style, I have cut down on walking, sometimes taking the bus both ways. My jeans are already so loose that were it not for the suspenders I would be in danger of losing them. I also intend to modestly increase my consumption of yum-yums to bring me back to my normal proportions. Wouldn't want any of you to fail to recognize me when I return home! Don't worry, I'll still be drinking four or five espresso a day and eschewing warm beer.

Some interesting notes in the paper today. Doctors are being taken to task for working more than one job and often exceeding 100 hours per week—beyond the 72 hour limit agreed on last year "for the sake of quality patient care and doctors' health." Perhaps we should try something like that for non-profit ED's!

I found out what July 6 is, here: Edinburgh Trades Holiday. A sign on the bus this morning indicated that "Saturday timetables will be operated," on the Monday holiday. Hope that this doesn't mean that restaurants will be closed!

Beckie returned from Glasgow earlier than I expected. It was windy and cold there and the best museums were closed. However she visited the Cathedral (just missing the 50th anniversary service for the NHS but bringing me the booklet thereon—inter-faith service sponsored by the Greater Glasgow Health Board and including Jewish, Presbyterian, Catholic, and Muslim, which pretty well covers religion here), Glassford (solar-heated mall), Kelvingrove museum and art gallery, a necropolis (one of Glasgow's 36 hills, with the bodies of John Knox, David Livingston, *etc.*), the main university building, and a few other sights. She has also settled on her favourite beer, Deuchars IPA (pronounced Duke-ers, accent on the Duke). Not bad for a Sunday, and back before supper!

Just in time for jazz at Maison Hector—two guitars playing standards with a few innovations. Quite nice, and ideal for reading and debriefing the Glasgow adventure. Then, back home to our curry pies. We're off to Windermere tomorrow (Monday), 9:20.train, so this Tuesday epistle will probably not be sent until Wednesday—the first time it's late since we started this regular communication. But I couldn't resist the trip. Details will be provided in this space if we get back before it's too late.

Did indeed go to the Lake District yesterday. We missed our first train—not realizing that Track 10 was around the corner and down quite a way—but caught another in a couple of hours. (So nice to have multiple trains, even to obscure destinations!) Meanwhile, had breakfast—espresso, Danish, and a pint—and read the morning paper. Train goes to Oxenholme, then we switched to a local for the 25-minute ride to Windermere. Lovely. Got my fill of fields with stone walls and hedgerows, lots of sheep and cows, even some spruce reforestation. Hay was being cut and a few fields golden, but most grain was still green and pastures lush.

Arrived in Windermere and walked to accommodation centre. Beckie stood in line for a B & B while I scouted restaurants for lunch. Nothing open mid-afternoon, hardly even any pubs. What kind of a country is this?! Checked into the Dene Crest and walked down to the harbour—Bowness, slightly larger twin of

Windermere—to see about a boat ride. Took The Swan for half-hour cruise to Ambleside—at the other end of the lake. Very nice. Sunny, cool breeze, lovely homes here and there along the lake. They call them mountains, but they're really gentle green hills. Quite nice, nevertheless.

Ambleside was a one-street wonder, with huge swans, hungry ducks, and voracious pigeons (who attacked Beckie as she sought to fairly distribute the "Lucky Duck Food" I had purchased for our amusement) as we sat on a stone bench with espresso and cappuccino, watching the clouds, listening to the quiet (except for the blackbirds), and enjoying the lake. Caught the last boat for return to Bowness in the gloaming, and the hike back to our tiny upstairs room. Beckie tried out the embroidered duvet and I went out for supper. Found a grilled fresh trout with new potatoes and herb butter in a 19th century dining room in an old hotel and pub down the street. Pink, flavourful, perfectly cooked—the best fish I have ever had. Finished with a modest glass of The Macallan.

Full English in the morning (including fried bread!), check out, then off to find espresso and morning paper. No espresso in the whole darn town. Even the tea shops didn't open until 11 a.m. A bit of shopping, then a lager with newspaper as soon as the pub opened. Another nice day, with billowy white clouds, train at noon, Edinburgh by 3:30 p.m. Stopped at a nice bistro, Tiles, on our way home. Inside is completely covered in warm-coloured tiles—archways, pillars, walls, ceiling. Very attractive and decent food, too.

Will get this letter off to you all in the morning. World Cup update next letter, probably Friday, after I see Beckie off to the airport.

Your blockhead on the Rock,
Martin G-C

Friday, 10 July, 1998

Exciting World Cup semi-final on Tuesday night, Brazil versus Holland. Holland played very well, holding a 1-1 tie (which they could have broken but for a questionable penalty) through the end of extra time. Bad news again for "my" team—Brazil won 4-2 on

the penalty shoot-out. Darn. And it is unlikely that the winner of tomorrow's other semi-final, whether France or Croatia, can beat Brazil. Oh, well, it's only a game. Meanwhile, Beckie went swimming.

In more important matters—money—the Diana Charity has lost its bid to trademark Diana's face and to get control of the two dozen or so most popular photographic images of it. Still, that may be the least of their problems. And local councils here are moving to restrain or even cut police and fire budgets this year, saying they were feather-bedded by the previous government. They plan to put the additional money towards education and social services. This doesn't sound like any government we know! Needless to say, chief constables across Scotland are not amused.

Good quote from an article in the Sunday newspaper mag. Beckie found it in an interview with one of the two, top, living Scottish writers, Iain Crichton Smith: "Art is a way of protecting us from the meagreness of reality." Useful that, sometimes. Although we aim to bring you a reality far from meager!

Much as we liked Windermere, it is good being back home where we know where everything (like espresso) is to be found. And after the microscopic B&B, our little flatlet here seems positively spacious! The time is going so quickly now. By the next time we talk, Beckie will be gone. And me, too, so soon thereafter. Would that I were staying longer, I do really like it here. It's even sunny more often than not, now!

Final Windermere memory—jet planes. One on Tuesday and two more on Wednesday morning. Fast, low overhead, noisy, obviously military. Must be an RAF base nearby. Just thinking about how much a part of life that sound used to be—growing up in the States during the Cold War, with a relatively active military airport nearby. And how infrequent the sight/sound has become in Edmonton—except at airshow time—in these peaceful times, and now with even Namao gone as a military airport. Times do change—for the fortunate, at any rate.

"Two things are infinite: the universe and human stupidity, and I'm not sure about the universe." Albert Einstein, Thought for the Day in *The Scotsman*. The previous paragraph perhaps to the contrary, there is still Kosovo, Northern Ireland, the Alberta Government,

and plenty more in support of Einstein's observation.

Following up on the mention of homelessness in Britain a few letters ago, the government has now progressed to the point of announcing an "official target." Along with the appointment of a "Streets Tsar" this week, the target is expected to be a reduction to one-third of the current number of homeless in three years. The campaign seems to have the backing of Shelter, Britain's main housing charity. They are reasonably confident that government plans won't just repeat old ideas of "running soup to the homeless." And that related problems of street drinking and aggressive begging will get separate attention. Good luck to them all! Perhaps this is an example of the "one inch of difference" that not having a right wing government makes. One can hope, anyway.

And speaking of goodness, one of my childhood icons has finally passed on. Roy Rogers, born in Cincinnati, not far from my birthplace, died this week. His attitude of, "doin' right was the right thing to do," has a fair amount to recommend it—politicians excepted, of course. He had always suggested that, after death, they skin him and set him back up on Trigger, just like nothing had changed. We'll see if those in authority were listening. Anyway, Happy Trails, Roy!

In for-profit service sector news, hotels are moving toward the U.S.A. trend of eliminating mini-bars. They are getting ripped off, royally. Plans to move to vending machines in the hallway are happening, or under consideration, in much of the industry. Of contrary opinion, a spokesperson for one of the higher-end chains here said, "We accept that, to some extent, they're going to raid the bathroom. Even down to the little plastic ducks we put in the baths of our Aberdeen hotels recently. But we often wonder what they do with all those little soaps. After all, two scrubs and they are gone." I guess they don't know that we take the soaps for WEAC, so that women who usually have none can at least have two good scrubs. Must admit though that I haven't had to face the temptation of rubber duckies yet!

The new Scottish Parliament building competition winner was announced today. Enric Miralles and associates', (from Spain) design looks like upturned boats on the roof. Wags are already wondering if it's an historical reference to the fate of the Spanish

Armada or a contemporary one to the fate of Scottish maritime industries. Definitely not the choice of the Countess and me! If it doesn't work out, they can't say we didn't tell them.

As we purchase tiny gifts and souvenirs these last couple of days, and plan our "one more outing" before the airport, we think increasingly of the leaving. Different from N.Z. trip, in ways that are not entirely clear to me. The fact that I am staying on seems hardly relevant because it is for so short a time. Different for me this time, without direct attachment to the Internet and to daily contact with home and colleagues. Still, have settled into a comfortable routine in a city I find quite pleasing. Am even more unsure about how it will feel to be back in Edmonton this time. Nevertheless, soon it will be! (And the end of this series is now clear and precise—next Thursday, with letter number 26. So, DO NOT send me any e-mail after Wednesday, July 15, okay?)

Beckie, too, has gotten used to this city in a way she didn't in Wellington—fresh, chewy buns (and so much more) at the newsagent across the street, the "intimacy" of the lower level of food packaging, the stone buildings, the sense of history, the concentration of the city that encourages walking almost everywhere. She misses social contact with others more than I do, although she found plenty of it today—the woman in the craft shop she visited would hardly let her out! Beckie has even adjusted to the heaviness of the air at sea level—a factor of which I am immediately aware, but which doesn't bother me at all, except when accompanied by heat and humidity. The grey, of course, would take Beckie longer.

A Beckie memory: gazing down into the Roman culverts in York which are still a part of their contemporary drainage system. And wondering if anything from our civilization, except perhaps plastic bags in landfills, will last as long—and still be used?

World Cup second semi-final, France versus Croatia. Lack of incident and conviction in the first half; France overcautious, disappointing, 0-0. Much more exciting second half with a goal each in the first three minutes, a second goal by France later on, and then a France red card, reducing them to 10 players. But France held on for a 2-1 victory and the privilege of getting beaten by Brazil in the final on Sunday. Or so it looks from here.

Went shopping together for the last time this morning—freesias, yum-yums, TP, Scottish interiors magazine for Beckie. No curry pies today because we are going out for a nice "last supper" tonight. Beckie started sorting through her stuff for the big pack later on today. And our final outing—Leith and the old harbour. Quite fun. Walked around the medieval docks, passed the 17th century signal tower (originally a windmill, fortified for the Napoleonic Wars, then used to flag-signal ships in the harbour), and back downtown by the South Leith Parish Church build in 1483, with a sturdy square tower and no spire.

Leith is still vibrant with a considerably wider socio-economic spectrum on the streets than Stockbridge or New Town. Greater variety of architectural styles and ages, too. Dock area is being gentrified with new condos, and the Scottish Office has a large complex there, too. Many interesting restaurants and a nice commercial art gallery. We had lunch at Malmaison Brasserie, attached to the hotel in the old seamen's mission (and later, brothel and biker bar), now quite upscale. Only a couple of other diners—clearly bureaucrats—and mellow recorded jazz. Beckie had Salade Nicoise with fresh tuna, and I, the house fishcake on braised spinach surrounded by a subtle saffron sauce. Not bad!

That's about it. Beckie may make one more foray downtown with a stop at St. Mary's for Evensong or to the swimming baths one last time before our dinner at Maison Hector. After one more sleep, she's on her way back to many of you.

Reality in all its meagreness on the Rock,
Martin G-C

Sunday, 12 July, 1998

Describing a story that was melodramatic but true, John Bossy in an *LRB* review last week, reminds us: "As Aristotle said in a rare witticism, there is nothing to prevent something which is in accordance with the laws of possibility and probability from having actually happened." And don't you forget it!

I was saddened to read on Friday that Tina "Stalin in high-heels" Brown is ending her controversial reign as editor of *The New Yorker*. Although I shared with many a concern about her remaking of the magazine five years ago, I am also part of the consensus described in the article: "Although fans of the old *New Yorker* winced at the new style, most came to admit that it was a more interesting and sexier read." Whether new or old, it is a publication I have been enjoying and learning from for three decades. And I don't intend to stop now.

Before she left, I asked Beckie for some observations about "here" that I could include. Coming out from our final dinner at Maison Hector, she remarked on how much Stockbridge feels like a small European town while Princes Street, with its press of humanity, felt like a real city. Only 20 minutes apart, by foot, and Edmonton unlike either. Secondly, as a result of reading contemporary Scottish short stories this week, she has come to understand fiction as: isolating everyday details (boring in themselves) and putting them into some sort of structure that imposes order and dignity on the randomness of life. This from decidedly post-modern stories set in the bleakest of landscapes.

Since I mentioned it, I should fill you in on our last supper at MH. We started with pan-seared wood pigeon breast on a bed of neaps and sweet potato mash with a dark, pungent sauce. Then Beckie had Thai lamb with spicy basmati rice and perfectly cooked veggies. I had pumpkin and Parma ham ravioli with an aromatic basil and tomato sauce and shaved Peccorino, accompanied by mixed greens—not an iceberg in sight—and colourful, diced peppers. We chose a perky Spanish (Rioja) red—smooth and warm—that worked perfectly with both our mains. We toasted a holiday that was too short—nevertheless better than the alternative.

Friday morning before posting e-letter 23, saw Beckie off on the airport bus wearing a very full pack and carrying a couple of small bags. A real traveller. Hoping KLM-UK cooperates this time so she makes her connection in London. If not, I'm sure I'll hear about it. And the airline and our travel agent, too! It will be different, this last week of mine, without her. May do some short train trips—to get my money's worth from railpass—or may just sit around here reading and living. Will try to decide tomorrow. I do have most of a bottle of Scotch to finish before I leave. Or the next day.

Pace. The British word for speed or fast. Have heard it most in a sporting context—football and cricket. Although "fast bowler" is a particular style in cricket, he may need more pace on the ball. And an aging footballer may be replaced by a younger one so the team can have more pace on the right side. So, there can be more or less of it, as with speed, but the usual reference of pace is to more. Walking home in the rain from afternoon espresso, gleeful cries from a tiny girl sitting on a large skateboard, careering down the sidewalk with a lot of pace.

Weird bush (rosemary-like leaves) in the front garden wall is in full bloom. Two by one-half inch cone-shaped clusters at the end of each branch, made up of tiny individual flowers with a touch of lavender, although the overall impression is white. The bees love it, whatever it is. No fewer than five or six at a time whenever I look. Deep yellow rose bush starting to bloom, replacing earlier pinks and lighter yellows. Still a few small, bright yellow poppies, as well.

With nothing but golf on the tube until the third place football match tomorrow, I'm longing for boring old Wimbledon. I reviewed all the local arts publications for the coming week this afternoon. Less happening on that scene than any time since I arrived. Like a collective sigh or holding of breath before the festival season begins in earnest, about the time of my departure. Oh, well. I've seen and heard more than a year's worth—based on my schedule of the past 10 years—already.

Match these quotes about Edinburgh (from Albert Morris' column in *The Scotsman*) with their writers, listed below:

1. "the most beautiful town in the world"

2. "meteorological purgatory" and "It is what Paris ought to be."

3 "Enchanting. It shall make a delightful summer capital when we invade Britain."

4 "I am not sorry to have seen that most picturesque (at a distance) and nastiest (when near) of all capital cities."

5 "This accursed, stinking, reeky mass of stones and lime and dung."

- Thomas Carlyle

- Thomas Gray

- Joseph Goebbels
- R. L. Stevenson
- Benjamin Disraeli

From a story about the government in Saturday's *The Scotsman*: "Without inhibitions about wealth, the Labourites exploited this for all it was worth. And a new class of Mercedes socialists was born." I like that—"Mercedes socialists." Still, better than no socialists at all!

In response to a reader's inquiry about proper usage had all the sheep cloned from Dolly also been named Dolly, which they weren't, *The Scotsman Weekend* suggests the following protocol: "Technically, a field full of Dollies would be known as Dolly the Sheep, since the name remains constant and the sheep are plural. However, this would give no indication that the speaker was aware of a multiplicity of woollybacks…To say Dolly the Sheeps is unacceptable, except in Fife. Thus we come to a compromise which…is wrong, but seems right: Dollies the sheep. When using this formulation, make clear that the word "Dollies" is not a verb, to avoid offense in rural areas." Now, aren't you glad you know?

Am off to Waverly Station to inquire about trains to places I have never been—on the few remaining days I have left here. Although the weather is more conducive to a scone and espresso at an outdoor table. Just one of the sacrifices I make to bring you the delights of the countryside!

Oh. The authors (above) are in reverse order of their quotes.

I booked a Berwick-upon-Tweed trip for Sunday, Oban on Monday, and Dundee on Wednesday. But, since a train to Berwick was leaving shortly, I decided to go Saturday instead. Will have a full report for you on Tuesday. Maybe Oban, as well! Saturday night I enjoyed deep-fried take-away as dark-horse Croatia beat a disappointing Holland 2-1, for third place in the World Cup. I almost hesitate to favour France tomorrow as my record is not all that good!

Alone again in the Burgh,
Martin G-C

Tuesday, 14 July, 1998

Sunday morning. Steady, pouring rain. Gusty, chilling wind. Unremitting. Umbrella upturns, and then back, as wind change directions. I'm soaked from knees down and shoulders down, unable to keep all of me under the imperfect circle of semi-dry. If ever I needed a wee dram! My only consolation as I waited for the bus back home was seeing several bound for St. Andrew's and thinking how lucky I was NOT to be on a golfing holiday. Also had brief wonderings about what the weather must be like here when it ISN'T summer! Decided not to linger there.

Pleased that I made the Berwick-upon-Tweed trip yesterday instead of today. Sun and billowy clouds yesterday for the 50-minute train ride through E-burgh suburbs and gently rolling farmland. Railway separated from sea by sloping headlands with no end in sight, a clean field or lush pasture, a large factory, a small town, only the height of the red, stone outcropping or, in one case, a modest trailer park. A few small boats and large tankers visible in the distance. A couple of sizable ruins and a small villages along the way. Sheep and cows, green grain, and cut hay.

Train station is on the original site of the Great Hall of Berwick Castle where, in 1292, the claim of Robert the Bruce to the throne of Scotland was declined. Castle ruins remain. Likewise Elizabethan (replacing medieval) town wall, harbour, and three bridges—17th, 19th, and 20th century—all still in use. Eighteenth century town hall with street market in front—apparently a feature of life in Berwick since the 13th century. Borders Regiment giving rappelling demonstration down side of the old town hall. Bystanders invited to participate in exchange for contribution to charity of the week. I watched, and later had a sandwich and beer. Two hours is just enough to see it all.

Sunday paper reports on a survey of Scottish employers indicating that they expect to find ways to get around the new British minimum wage. Will likely involve split shifts, short-term layoffs, and more "home-based" workers. In all, they expect to keep their wage costs at current levels. Only alternative, they say, would be significant job losses. This could affect up to 200,000 workers currently making below the new minumum wage. Such creativity on the part of Scottish industry must surely be rewarded!

Jazz and espresso at MH Sunday afternoon—guitar, bass and sax. Standards quite good. Then home to watch final game of World Cup. France looking pretty aggressive and Brazil somewhat flat. Long way to go yet. Rain has mostly stopped. If it stays this good, *i.e*., only this bad, I probably will make the Oban trip tomorrow. Will have morning espresso before I decide. France scored first, from a corner, and then again, just before the half. Quite unexpected! Second half a bit more-spirited Brazil had some good chances. France a red card and still no Brazil goal. France, with 10 men, also got a goal in stoppage time. And a most convincing win, 3-0! Based on shots of outside the stadium, even Parisians are getting into the football (or at least party!) spirit. An amazing event to watch these past few weeks. Unlike anything else—duration and intensity—in my experience.

In the David Fallows *TLS* review of Frank A. D'Accone's *The Civic Muse*, about music and such in Siena during the Middle Ages and Renaissance, we hear about an unusual situation. "In the Palazzo Pubblico, the grand fresco of Ambrogio Lorenzetti depicts music and dancing among the virtues of good government: the Republic as patron of music and the arts." We often think of the old days as a time when the Church or royalty or wealthy individuals paid for culture. Here we see institutional rather than private patronage, subject to democratic scrutiny. What an interesting way of paying for public goods!

Mark Lilla's review in the same issue of *TLS* discusses two books about the "Lumieres"—their times and their views—in a piece titled "Qualified Optimists." According to one of the authors (Baczko) the central preoccupation of the Lumieres was the intractability of evil in the face of human rationality. "The more the human condition sees itself promised happiness," he writes, "the more reason it feels challenged by the ineluctable return of evil. The Lumieres had a sense of the irreducible divide between the promises of happiness and the fatalty of evil, even as they began their obstinate quest for means of reducing it."

More Lilla: As Baczko points out, the more conscious of Enlightenment thinkers became of the capacity to shape human destiny free from God, the more pessimistic they became about our ability to master the vicissitudes of nature and chance. "We are neither free, nor wise, nor strong, nor healthy, nor rational except

in a small degree," Voltaire wrote. Man is not born evil, and he certainly does not suffer under the curse of original sin, but neither is he created originally good as Rousseau assumed. Man is imperfect and probably imperfectible, Voltaire believed, and awareness of this fact weighed heavily on him. In the Middle Ages, God justified man; in the age of theodicy, Voltaire's own, man tried to justify God. But Voltaire sensed that soon man would be forced to justify himself, a nearly impossible task.

According to Baczko, Fontenelle's point was "to show that there is no paradise in the past or future, there is only nature which man can cultivate well or badly at any time. Utopian thought is an experiment meant to remind us of our responsibility for our own condition, not a blueprint for building paradise on earth." And, "the human mind is less capable of error once it knows at what point and in how many ways it is capable of it. It cannot study too much the history of its own errors." Utopian writings, Lilla summarizes, "help to expose human beings to their own ignorance and make them responsible for overcoming it progressively in the here and now, not in the hereafter."

Lilla concludes: "Ignorance, prejudice, passion, fate—these are the recurrent themes in Baczko's elegantly written study, just as they were the preoccupation of his Enlightenment heores." … Perhaps because ours is not the darkest of times, we need his scepticism and pessimism to remind us why the Lumieres are still worth reading at all."

Whatever your theology or lack thereof, can we not agree with Fontenelle about the need for us humans to "cultivate well"? And would it be so bad if that made us "qualified optimists"?

Illuminated by an errant floodlight
Seagull alights on darkened roof
Ghostlike—silent and silvery.

These lines came to me while waiting for a very late bus after my whirlwind trip to Oban and the Isle of Mull. Train to Glasgow Queen Street this morning to catch the 1242 to Oban. Chatted up local who said the one site not to miss was the round, arch-walled ruin up on the hill. Considered climbing up but the ferry terminal was just across the street from the train station and the boat to Mull was leaving in 15 minutes. With return just in time to catch the 1812 back to Glasgow. I took it. Beautiful day with lots of clouds

but sun breaking through frequently. Fifty-minute trip in large, smooth car ferry. Just time to walk off the pier and set foot on Mull before joining the boarding line for the return trip.

Nicest scenery of the trip so far. From Glasgow, suburbs quickly gave way to farming. Lush fields, more cows in this direction. Soon, real hills. Most of the trip was through a large valley with pretty convincing mountains, although green all the way up. Mostly pasture land with a few sheep, stone walls part way up, and occasional towns, ruins, and farmhouses. All in all, less dense population than rural Alberta. Couldn't tell if hills had originally been forested and then logged or just too high or rocky for trees. Thick forest and bush along river and tracks. Ferns everywhere. Some reforestation on lower level of hills—spruce trees in neat rows. For the most part, there didn't seem to be anything economic going on—not even sheep—just beauty. A particularly lovely ruined castle in the middle of a lake. Although it may not always have had such a big moat! The lake appeared to be a small reservoir.

Oban is a lovely town with old commercial buildings along the centre of the harbour, then stone residential. Aforementioned ruin on the hill. The odd lone house on various points and fingers of land along the coast. Mostly just rocks and green hills with low vegetation. Peaceful place. Definitely the end of the line, except for the ferry, but served by at least three trains daily. Now, that's the way to run a railroad—actual trains that go places at convenient times! And nearly full. There's a nice highway, too, but why would you want to drive unless you had a car-full? The train stops pretty well everywhere.

Ride back was a little longer, slightly more than three hours.

Beautiful sunset most of the way, with layers of clouds in peaches and pinks. Glasgow has more high-density public housing, including blocks of high-rises, than Edinburgh. But not an unattractive city, at least along the railway. Some industry but not overwhelming. Except for the public housing it seems also to be a city of human scale. Still, good to be back in Edinburgh!

Laundry, post office, and arrangements for return of cell phone tomorrow. Final shopping and decisions about one last place to visit. The time remaining is short. I'm not ready to leave.

Alone, but on the move, from the Burgh,
Martin G-C

Thursday, 16 July, 1998

This is the end of my epistles from The Rock. It is tempting to summarize everything and put it all in perspective. I suspect, though, that it would be counter-productive (to say nothing of difficult) or at least antithetical to what I have been trying to do. By focusing on the particular, generalizations emerge and are found wanting—only to re-emerge, or not. And you, of course, can provide your own perspective, if that's what interests you. Nevertheless, I would be remiss not to thank again all of you who kept me in touch with events at home, or who responded in some way to what I have been writing. It has been both a useful discipline for me—giving structure to my weeks here—and some fun! It has certainly helped me to be more attentive to my surroundings and to their effect on my thinking and feeling—as I package both for our mutual interest and occasional delight.

Beautiful day, Tuesday. Sunny, breeze, crisp morning, warm afternoon. However, snow is being predicted at higher elevations this week—a rarity for July, apparently. Weather folk are saying that the "winter" weather will continue through the end of July. And everyone here knows that next winter can start in August. Oh, well, at least I won't be here for that. One winter a year is enough for me!

Continuing to reflect on my trip to Oban, I feel I have not said quite enough about the landscape. It is truly beautiful—in a gentle way quite different from the beauty of the Rockies. It also seems that humans have trod lightly here. Except for the considerable effect of logging in some distant time, if indeed this happened—there are no stumps or other visible evidence—the hills look as if they have always been just like that. The valley is clearly inhabited—though thinly—with cultivation, grazing, and stone walls marking fields. But further up the hills there are not even sheep or any evidence of human presence. No roads, power lines, oil wells, billboards, microwave towers, paths, structures, ruins.

The population density, even in the valley, is low. The occasional ruin stands out because there are so few abandoned houses or decayed outbuildings. And the small villages are as far apart as in the most rural areas of Alberta. As far as I can tell there never was even one family per section here. And yet, the trains go there, and these few people are connected, in real time, with the rest of the

country—with Glasgow, Edinburgh, London. From tiny Oban, even from the Isle of Mull, you can get to more than one European capital in a day, on the ground. I think this is why I sometimes feel so isolated in downtown Edmonton. It might as well be New Zealand, moored on the far edge of the vast and lonely Pacific.

Life goes on. And death. Drumcree has been making the front page for more than a week here. My silence is a reflection of my inability to comprehend the whole Ireland situation and why this keeps happening. It is definitely not religion; it may not even be politics, so counter-productive it seems to any public purpose. Conspiracy theory is pretty tempting although I eschew that explanation for most untoward things. I suspect it has something to do with that sense of history that seems to be everywhere in the world—except North America. If so, it is the dark side of precisely that which I have found most compelling and most beautiful here. But at least a couple of people were making sense yesterday: "No road is worth a life." "No walk was worth the lives of three children."

Which Scottish sailor will be celebrated next month—with a visit to the Edinburgh Festival by the Central Band of the Russian navy—for "transforming the Russian fleet from a flotilla of herring boats" into a force capable of defeating the pesky Swedes during the reign of Catherine the Great? (Answer later.)

In other news, a young Briton was seriously hurt Sunday when gored by a bull during Pamplona's running of the bulls festival. I see this as further evidence that Einstein was right (see a previous letter). Darwin, too, one hopes. The fellow is 21 but apparently has not bred yet. We are thankful, as always, for little things.

On the collective "evolutionary unsuitability" front, the British government has announced creation of a body of "crack troops" to combat benefit fraud. They expect to save £7 billion through the program. Public education, better central-local government cooperation, ministerial strategic group, published annual fraud audit, and computerization. Much as one would expect. When will they ever learn? Or if they still feel the need for crack troops, couldn't they find another island to invade or something?

Had a lovely little supper on Tuesday evening at the nearby Italian place. Mussels in a rich tomato and basil broth, followed by ravioli with wild mushrooms and cream. Finished with espresso and a very nice grappa from the owner's village. Met a skinny grey cat on the way home who wasn't very friendly. Perfect, five-inch diameter, yellow-tinged-with-peach roses are blooming on our block this week. Sky is clear and still reasonably light at 10 p.m.

Final shopping completed, last laundry picked up, cracked wine glasses replaced, *LRB* for the flight home purchased, toothbrush recharged, article on charitable business ventures revised. Not much left to do. Except pack. Too much stuff. Still don't want to leave.

Trip booked for Dundee today (Wednesday). No reason. Except that it's not too far and appears to be on the coast. I like water. We'll see. Could fit in a final trip on Thursday or Friday—I still have two days of travel left on my railpass—although I have to be here on Thursday morning to await the courier picking up my cell phone. And to send your final e-letter, of course! Bright sun this morning; no doubt a good omen.

Well, Dundee is on the water but I don't like it much. Nice, long bridge over the firth (or whatever) coming into town, but too many contemporary buildings and general ugliness. No action on waterfront except a three-masted sailing ship attached to the dock as part of a paid-admission LeisureWorld thing. Tried to visit the biggest church downtown but a grumpy guy told me it was closed (even though it was open). Too plain and Presbyterian for my taste anyway, so went to the pub instead. Looked around a bit more and then found an adequate place for lunch. Headed back to the train station just as it started to rain. While it poured I was glad for the glass-enclosed overhead walkway that I had avoided when I arrived. Kept me dry all the way to the station where I selected an earlier train home. Trains are more frequent to lots of places here than city buses in Edmonton!

Farming all the way from here to there. Fields are exceptionally clean and every grain plant (or whatever they're called) is exactly the same height. Peas/beans, too, and rape seed—not quite in full flower everywhere. Thick hay, where not already cut and bailed, a few sheep and cows. More densely populated than trip west, with less interesting villages. Some gravel, sand, and perhaps clay being scooped out of the hills south of Dundee. Old brick houses suggest at least some of the red is clay.

Although I have finished all my paperbacks and donated them back to a charity shop, I kept one of Beckie's—a Martha Grimes mystery, *Jerusalem Inn.* Set in Newcastle and environs, I like it a lot so far and it helped pass the time waiting for the train. Don't think it will last until the plane ride to Edmonton.

Titian's "Diana and Callisto," one of the world's greatest paintings, will be back on display tomorrow at the National Gallery after being cleaned and restored for the past seven months. I'll be there as soon as I have posted this letter. "Diana and Actaeon" will be done next, and is expected to be even more spectacular. These two paintings have been highly regarded and influential for the past 400 years—from Rubens and Rembrandt to Cezanne and Picasso. Can't wait!

British government finally announced its spending plans today: an increase of £56 billion over the next three years. Big winners are health and education, with significant increases for housing and social services, too. Local governments will also get a bit more autonomy over their budgets. The expected complaints from the economic right have been registered although quite conservative income assumptions have been used by Treasury. And Labour had continued Tory spending restraints for the past two years. Still this does appear to be real money for important people services. Scotland is in line for about £4 billion of the increase.

Final item from *TLS*: A. N. Wilson's review of two new Diana books uses New Testament categories to explore the (instant) emergence of the Diana cult. "More importantly, these two books reveal that old-fashioned rationalism got things the wrong way around. Agnostics might ask, how can you believe such and such a thing when there is no evidence, or when the evidence, sketchy as it is, would prompt an opposite viewpoint?" Beatrix Campbell and Julie Burchill remind us that it is the beliefs which actually shape the 'evidence,' not the other way around.

"Campbell is more the theologue. If the New Testament parallel is pushed, then her book is an Epistle, rather than a Gospel. She is trying to convince the sorority that the short life of a young woman who did very little except go shopping, fornicate and vomit, is of relevance to the struggle of her lower-class sisters." I wish these British reviewers would tell us what they really think about a book instead of being so darn polite all the time!

Dinner tonight at Maison Hector. Pan-roasted duck breast, quite pink, in licorice and port jus, with chervil. Preceded by a tomato and cream cheese mousiline with smoked salmon and Nonseaweed. And a nice, dry South African chenin blanc. Scottish cooking isn't all that bad!

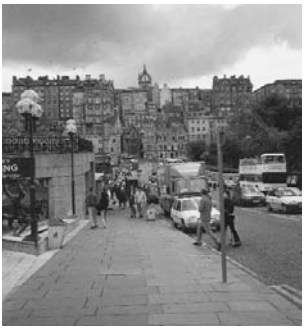
The sailor is Samuel Greig, born near Edinburgh, some time ago.

"Don't care about the stormy weather, as long as we're together" (or words to that effect).

"Happy trails to you, until we meet again."

Signing off from the Burgh,
Martin G-C

Cheers!



Martin Garber-Conrad
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Martin Garber-Conrad has been executive director of the Edmonton City Centre Church Corporation (ECCCC) since 1987. During that time the agency has grown into a $5 million-a-year operation that concentrates on inner-city work providing housing for the homeless and hard-to-house, food for hungry children, and youth outreach and employment training. ECCCC has won three gold Laurel Awards for innovation and creativity in the nonprofit sector during his tenure.

He also is highly involved in sector-wide work, including terms on the Community and Family Services Advisory Committee, Mayor's Task Force on Safer Cities, the board of the Edmonton Community Foundation, and, most recently, chairing Edmonton's Success By 6 initiative. His work has also included appointments to the Capital Health Authority's Mental Health Program Advisory Council and the Council of St. Stephen's College.

He holds a B.A. in Sociology (Honours Program) and Master of Divinity, and has served as a pastor, taught, and written heavy industry training programs.