

In the event I believe all our ships that were supposed to be on hand in the English Channel were there and played their part. I was sorry not to be there myself but was well represented by three nephews, two as navigating officers on Canadian ships and one who played a prominent part in the design and construction of the "Mulberry" harbours that were planted on the coast of Normandy. He is a civil engineer who was on the civil construction staff of the Admiralty and was at one time assigned to the naval base at Singapore. He was not responsible for the fact that the 12-inch guns could only be fired out to sea as that was settled before he was on the job. In any case heavy cannon of that type are simply not suitable for shooting Japanese infantrymen out of trees, a mode of attack presumably not anticipated by our pre-war planners.



ONCE THE SHIPS FOR D-DAY were off our hands things seemed a bit flat on the west coast, though the shipyards were fully occupied with new construction of naval and merchant vessels. The date for the invasion of Europe was not known but it was obviously too early for the feeling of tension that I supposed we all felt later, civilians and armed services alike, with Dieppe fresh in memory.

By this time (early 1944) I had a good staff in my department, both in Esquimalt and in Vancouver, and my work was largely in administration, supervision and paper work in my office, with less clambering about ships. At one time we had several Russian merchant ships in Vancouver apparently wanting to be degaussed but there was uncertainty about who would pay for the job, and in the end they went off to the United States where Lend Lease was functioning, rather to my relief. When on board them I felt I was being closely watched every minute and there was no feeling of friendliness or co-operation, only suspicion.

In the spring of 1944 I was in the doctor's hands over some trouble with my back, which I had had before and which seemed liable to recur at intervals, especially if I did something that caused strain. The medical officers attached to the naval hospital suggested putting me to bed. When I asked them if

they could cure the trouble and how long it would take, they said I might be in hospital for a year and they could relieve the symptoms but not definitely cure the trouble.

This idea did not appeal to me at all. It looked as if the war might be finished by the end of 1944 and I could do nothing to help it in hospital. I felt I could do better taking things quietly at home and attending to my personal affairs which had been somewhat neglected for nearly five years. So I propositioned the doctors to give me a medical board and certify me "Medically Unfit" for further service, which would automatically return me to life as a civilian, which was done. The war did not finish quite so quickly as many of us had thought it might, but I am sure that was not due to my absence from active duty in the latter half of 1944! It was much more likely due to the Battle of the Bulge.

The Canadian government had set up an elaborate and I think very good organization, the object of which was to try to make sure that all members of the armed services on returning to civil life who did not have definite jobs to go to, would be taken care of in one way or another, by vocational training or other means.

It had never occurred to me that the good people in charge of this work in Victoria would be interested in me, but there was a prescribed routine that everyone was supposed to go through on discharge from the service, regardless of rank or whether he wanted a job of any sort or not.

They seemed to fairly pounce on me and I had difficulty in convincing them that I really did not want anything they could do for me. One official went to some trouble to try to explain some of the business facts of life that I felt I really knew more about than he did, though I did not want to hurt his feelings by saying so.

I had in fact practically made up my mind not to go back into the kind of high-pressure business life I had led for 25 years or so, but had not come to really like in that time, to put

it mildly. I had been away from it for 8 years including my war service and was 58 years old, and thought of retiring at 60 or as soon after as it was feasible to do so.

Another factor was the matter of health, particularly that of my wife. I had long been convinced that she would be better in a warmer climate than could be found in Canada, and I also had a hankering to try living in the tropics myself, preferably on an island if possible.

We discussed the pros and cons and I wrote letters to sundry people with a view to digging up information about places to which we might possibly go. Choice was limited to a considerable extent by the fact that Canada had currency control, which virtually eliminated the southern United States or any country in which the local currency was in practice linked to the United States dollar though not officially tied thereto, such as Mexico for instance.

We decided to try the Caribbean Islands then known as the British West Indies and for currency purposes included in the sterling area. In mid-1946 the Canadian currency control did not seem to include the sterling area or at any rate not the West Indies.

We decided to go first to Antigua (pronounced Antee-ga) partly because there was a new hotel there, managed by a man we knew who had formerly been in the hotel business in Victoria.

Transportation was a problem because ship services the world over had made very little progress toward returning to anything like a pre-war basis. The Vancouver office of a well-known travel agency told us that the shipping companies did not even bother to answer their letters any more.

So we arranged to fly by way of Seattle, and Chicago to Miami, where we had a reservation with Pan-American Airways to go on to Antigua in one of their DC-3's that island-hopped down the Caribbean en route to South America. It took all day and the plane crews changed at Antigua, the crew

we had travelled with from Miami spending the night in our hotel before returning to Miami.

Ruth and I both loved the warm climate of the West Indies from the first moment we arrived there. We did not stay in Antigua more than a few weeks for sundry reasons. It is one of the Caribbean Islands often called "The Sugar Islands" because the staple crop on which the economy depends is the sugar cane, and it does seem to be the crop that naturally and consistently does best in the soil and climate of those islands.

The trouble is that for many years cane sugar has been what is known as a "feast or famine" or a "boom or bust" crop. It can be grown in a large number of tropical or sub-tropical countries including some in which the wages of workers and their standard of living are very low, as in the Sugar Islands, and world supply of sugar often exceeds demand.

Some of the islands are better suited for producing sugar than others, the more fortunate ones having better or deeper soil and more reliable rainfall. We remained in Antigua less than nine weeks and moved on to Barbados where we lived for nine years, before moving on to Mexico.

Antigua has traditionally been a relatively poor island with uncertain rainfall and soil lacking in depth or quality. In 1946 it seemed to us to be somewhat too "underdeveloped" and with very little fresh water available for gardening or other purposes. Ruth has always been a very keen gardener and wanted to pursue her hobby in the tropics.

While staying in the hotel we met a number of men and women in the British colonial service, engaged in trying to see that the various islands had good government and hoping to help them attain economic self-sufficiency, so that they would depend less on being subsidized by the British taxpayer.

These civil servants knew the various islands well and we learned a great deal from them, to help us decide which would suit our needs and ideas best. The answer was definitely Barbados so we packed our bags and betook ourselves to Bar-

bados, the most easterly of the Caribbean Islands, with a very high density of population which is about 90% negro. The island is approximately pear-shaped, about 23 miles long with an area of 166 square miles, and is unique in being the only one of the many islands in that part of the ocean that has always been British since it was first settled by them in 1625, prior to which it was uninhabited. The others all changed hands, some of them frequently, in the various wars between the Spanish, French, Dutch, Portuguese and British in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

We were fortunate in having a social contact in Barbados with a man who had been at school with me and was the headmaster of a boys' college of about 500 students. I had had no contact with him since leaving the school some 42 years before, but the old school tie is a very strong tie, as I used to tell some of my young friends in Canada who were members of one of the Greek letter fraternities with which North American colleges are infested. The old school tie is also basically more democratic.

My former school contemporary and his family were very kind to us socially and our contact with them helped us materially to "find our feet" and feel at home in Barbados, much sooner than would have otherwise been the case.

As a place to live we liked the island from the first and it did not take us long to decide that it was where we wanted to settle down, which started us on hunting for a house to buy or a plot of land on which to build to suit our own ideas.

We toyed with the idea of buying an old plantation house and modernizing it but were thankful later on that we had resisted this particular temptation. Some of the old houses we looked over had artistic and romantic appeal as well as wonderful views, which were, however, offset by antique plumbing and kitchens, leaky roofs and heavy infestation of termites in the woodwork, every scrap of which would have to be replaced. Some newcomers to the island who bought old plantation

houses and proceeded to carry out extensive alterations, including cutting through the walls to make new windows or doorways fell into a booby trap because the original building, perhaps two centuries before, did not include the use of cement in mixing the mortar. Perhaps cement was unobtainable then or too expensive for ordinary use; some said molasses was used instead. The walls seemed to do well enough till someone began to cut through them, when they would collapse and have to be completely rebuilt, so that the final result would cost a great deal more than the luckless buyer had planned to spend.

We finally decided we must build in order to have a home that we really liked because it suited our ideas and the climate. This seems a simple formula but in our experience it has been amazingly difficult to find a house already built that came fairly close to our ideas of comfortable living, convenience in housekeeping and suitability for the climate, and this applies to all the various places in which we have lived. We have built four "Dream Houses" in different places and in each case they sold quite readily at a good price when we wanted to move away.

Building a house in a strange country is something of an adventure because manners and customs and methods of doing business vary and newcomers have much to learn. One might think the simplest way would be to engage the services of a local architect but we have found that unsatisfactory even in our own country of Canada; perhaps it is our fault.

My wife has very sound ideas on the subject and is quite capable of drawing plans to scale, while I am equally capable of seeing that the structure will withstand hurricanes or whatever is the local hazard, also that the surrounding ground is well drained and so on. Hurricanes are a feature of life in the West Indies and the local history is replete with stories of destroyed buildings, including in Barbados at one time the Cathedral and Government House.

The staple material for walls is the coral rock of which the island is largely composed. It is like a soft rock and is quarried with the help of dynamite and cut into rectangular blocks with saws similar to those used by carpenters and loggers. The coral is hygroscopic and the outside surface must be made waterproof by one means or another, or the rain will quickly leak through the thickest wall and ruin the appearance of the inside surface, making the whole building look and feel very damp, sprouting an ugly black mould.

We bought two acres of land with sugar cane growing on it, though it was not really good cane land as the soil was not deep enough for that demanding crop. It proved adequate, however, for the sort of gardening my wife wanted to do, and she thoroughly enjoyed the experience of gardening in the tropics with a negro lad or two to do the unskilled chores. They were not the world's most wonderful workers but were about worth their relatively small wages from our point of view.

The contractor who undertook to build our house was a white man born in the island. The workers were all negroes and at times the total number of men, women and children on the job must have been about 40, though it was not a large house. We visited the site every day and sometimes took a hand in the proceedings, trying to see that the rooms and doorways and window apertures were rectangular. The native workmen had a genius for getting them definitely non-rectangular and were hard to convince on the subject; they seemed to think our predilection for geometric symmetry was a strange obsession of foreigners. I tried to show them how to check by making sure the diagonals were equal but their reaction was that my idea wouldn't work in Barbados. We learned later that this was a very common reaction to new ideas or suggestions and was by no means confined to the coloured Barbadians; I suppose it is a symptom of insularity.

When the house was finished and we had moved in we

found it a very good spot in which to live. Our household staff consisted of a cook and a housemaid and the garden staff at first of one teenage lad and later of two. The idea was that two would do approximately twice the work of one but we had to admit that in this respect Barbados really was different; they did twice as little and spent much time sitting down where they were not visible from the house, chewing sugar cane and talking interminably in the local patois, a curious mixture of seventeenth-century English, bad grammar and missing teeth caused by lack of dental care.

Household help was very plentiful and some of it was good and wages were modest by our standards. Many of the applicants for jobs as housemaid or cook were not trained and some very hard to train, especially the would-be cooks. A written recipe is little use to a cook who cannot read and some lacked any natural aptitude for the culinary art.

Education was not compulsory if only because it had never been practicable to provide schools and teachers to keep up with the rapidly increasing population. Barbados was traditionally noted for its schools, including secondary schools from which students could graduate to universities in England or elsewhere, some with the aid of scholarships. There were also private boarding schools for youngsters from other islands, the curricula of all schools corresponding to those of Britain.

Shortly after we arrived in Barbados in 1946 some drastic political and social changes set in that were destined to revolutionize life on the island for both the white and coloured populations. The Labour party won the election in Britain in 1945 and went to work to effect changes in the Colonies, with the object of bringing them up to date according to socialist ideologies.

Prior to that time Barbados did not have universal suffrage. The vote was limited by an income or property qualification that disfranchised most of the teeming negro population. There was an elected legislative assembly of 25 members only two

of which were coloured. When we left the island nine years later only two white men were members. The governor and commissioner of police and the first secretary and attorney-general were still career men in the British Colonial Service, but it was obviously only a matter of time till that changed.

It is a tribute to the way in which the island had been administered by the British that this revolutionary change was accomplished smoothly, with no vestige of violence. This did not alter the fact that with 90% or more of the total population coloured, the whites had become politically negligible, and this condition prevailed in all the islands of the British West Indies, plus the continental enclaves known as British Honduras and British Guiana.

There was much discussion of a federation of all these units and the British government was in favour of the plan, probably I should think in the hope that the prospect of them becoming economically self-supporting would be improved thereby, instead of taking it for granted that they should be supported by the over-burdened British taxpayer, through a substantial subsidy on the cane sugar they produced or in other ways.

Trying to get them all to agree on federation was like trying to get a large family of problem children to sink their differences and mutual jealousies, and work together for the common good. It finally reached the stage of being attempted with some of them "opting out," but federation had a very short life and then collapsed completely.

There was also much talk of expanding tourism which offered promise if only on account of the climate in the months of winter in the northern hemisphere, when the weather is excellent in the Caribbean Islands and especially so in Barbados, which has no malaria or snakes and relative freedom from other pests found on some of the other islands.

Not all Barbadians were in favour of more tourists. Members of the old established plantation families recognized that

most of the tourists would come from the United States or Canada, and would bring inflation of the currency with them, especially the Americans, by overpaying the negroes and their generally lavish way of living wherever they may be.

It was deemed urgently necessary, however, to diversify the economy by any means possible, instead of continuing indefinitely to depend on the old unreliable cane sugar, subject as it was to long periods of price depression. Efforts have been made to produce other crops such as cotton or tobacco but without success. To judge by my wife's efforts at horticulture it seemed evident that Barbadoes was meant by nature to produce the sugar cane efficiently and very little else of commercial value.

With much effort and irrigation and constant battling with pests we managed to produce a few vegetables for our own consumption, but we also bought tinned stuff. We did grow bananas and avocados which we consumed with relish when they were not stolen at night by dark complected predators with bare feet, invisible and inaudible.

The legal term for this is praedial larceny and it was evidently an old problem in the island. The plantation houses coped with it by keeping dogs of a large, fierce breed loose about their premises at night but we did not think it important enough for that remedy. They were known as plantation dogs and were sometimes referred to as Bull Mastiffs and seemed a very effective answer to the problem.

Some householders kept a flock of guinea fowl which roamed the garden in the daytime and roosted in trees at night. They were said to be more sensitive to the presence of nocturnal prowlers than the best watchdog, and made a terrific din if anyone came around.

We liked the climate of Barbados better than that of any of the various places we lived in before or since. In Latitude 13' North it is well within the tropics but the temperature is modified by the easterly trade wind, so that the mean tempera-

ture throughout the year is 80°F. and the seawater is the same. Air temperature very seldom varies more than 10° above or below the mean, which makes it the most equable climate of the many in which I have lived.

The sea bathing is very good especially on the west or lee coast, with some excellent sandy beaches. On the east or windward coast the wind is too strong and the sea too rough for safe bathing most of the time.

The island has another advantage in a good supply of fresh water from underground though there are no lakes or rivers. The waterworks are operated by the government and while we were there a large subterranean basin of fresh water was discovered, and measurements were being made to determine the quantity of water that could be drawn from it daily without exhausting the supply. It was several hundred feet above sea level so the water would flow to most of the island by gravity. It was recognized, however, that continued increase in both population and per capita consumption would create a problem in time.

Some of the Caribbean Islands depend on catchment of rainwater from the roofs, as in the Bahamas, Virgin Islands and others, but this system has drawbacks, one of which is keeping the storage cisterns clean and the water free from pollution. I gained the impression that many householders solve the problem by ignoring its existence.

We found no lack of social life that was congenial to us. Most of our friends were British, Canadian or American but we were on visiting terms with a few of the plantation families, some of which had been in Barbados for 200 years or more, and were regarded as "old Family" by themselves and others. Some of them did not really approve of their personal paradise being invaded by intruders like ourselves, and did not like the idea of the universal suffrage that came from the socialist government in England, at about the same time we arrived

from Canada; but there was nothing much they could do about either.

Owing to the extent and quality of education there is no doubt Barbados was better prepared for self-government than many of the under-developed countries. It was still true, however, that the illiteracy rate was quite high and illegitimacy about 60% of the population as many of the negroes had a definite preference for a tie less binding than that of legal marriage, especially when no social stigma was incurred.

The first election held with universal suffrage resulted in a negro lawyer becoming premier. He had qualified as a lawyer in London and was therefore a well-educated man, but that did not mean that all the members of his cabinet were of the same calibre, in fact that was far from being the case. It did not seem very sensible for a small island with a total population of about 220,000 to have a premier and cabinet with all the paraphernalia and complications of government as a parliamentary democracy and bureaucracy. One thing certain was that taxes would increase considerably.

While this was going on I began to have misgivings about continuing to live in Barbados. It seemed to me that white people being only 10% of the population would be in the position of second-class citizens and the idea lacked appeal. I gathered that some of the "Old Families" would leave if they could, much as they would dislike selling the plantations that had been owned by their ancestors for many generations. It would probably be easy enough to sell the land but that did not solve the problem of where to go in view of the restrictions imposed by the currency control of the sterling area. The idea of going to live in England with the doubtful climate and high taxation was not popular.

As a matter of fact we had a taxation problem in Barbados that we had not anticipated before we went there. We were taxed by Canada as non-resident citizens, a straight 15% with no deductions or exemptions allowed. We were also liable for

income tax in Barbados with much smaller exemptions than we had had as Canadians domiciled in Canada. The tax tables were based on smaller incomes than in Canada so we were in a relatively higher "tax bracket" in Barbados.

When we first enquired at the tax office to find out how we stood, we were told that there was then (1946) no agreement between the governments of Barbados and Canada about non-duplicating of taxes, but that it was fully expected there would be one within a year or two. In the meantime as an act of grace they would make some allowance for the fact that we were taxed by Canada.

Actually it worked out between the two taxes that we paid just about 30% of our entire income, which was a heavy "bite" for people of modest means. We could have offset this to some extent by putting more of our hard-earned life savings into annuities which are only partly taxable, as the taxgatherers distinguish between "return of ~~income~~ ^{capital}" and "interest." The older one is when the annuity is bought the better it works, but we did not want to do this at the time as a matter of policy.

One thing and another added up to make us think of going somewhere else to live in spite of regrets at leaving Barbados. So we decided to explore Mexico after selling our house and furniture and car and saying farewell to the friends we had made in our nine years in Barbados.