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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Island Man In N.B. Makes Unusual Goal

By NEIL A. MATHESON

OUR PUBLIC LEADERS talk at times about the "Brain Drain" from this province. They make much of the loss that is to our province, and it's easy to agree. But last month we saw a smart young Island man here with the New Brunswick delegation to the conference on Maritime Union. Frederic J. Arsenault is now assistant to Premier Hatfield of New Brunswick and he is here in that capacity.

My long-time friend, J.J. Coyle, who is now professor of English at UPEI tipped me off some five years ago to this bright young man who was born in Mont Carmel. Jim was interested in the fact this Islander had been elected president of the Students Union at Oxford University which comprises 35 colleges in all, I was told at the time. Jim told me of some famous men who had never achieved that goal for themselves.

So highly regarded was this son of Mr. and Mrs. George Arsenault that two dozen of the colleges attended the meeting to elect the Union president and Frederic got solid support from sixteen of them.

It is most unusual Jim told me at the time for a Canadian to be voted into that office. For one to be elected with that kind of backing was even more unusual.

Skipped Three Grades

Frederic skipped three grades in his home school in Mont Carmel. He graduated Cum Laude, with distinction, from the University of Moncton and his ability in debating was largely successful in winning the debating title for his college during his undergraduate days.

Frederic, then 21, was in Russia when I visited his mother and father back in May 1965. He had just recently spoken to a group of Russian students in Moscow, he told his parents in a letter they were kind enough to let me read. He was working on his Master's degree at the time and was putting most of his attention on philosophy and political science, my column of May 22, 1965 stated. "Not surprisingly," I observed at the time Fred had won the "Gold Medal" service at Moncton during his student days. He went to Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar.

I liked his story that told of the social night when he and his fellow Oxonians spent in Moscow with Russian students. "We could not sing in Russian and they couldn't sing in English, so they compromised and sang "Alouette" in French" and practically everyone can sing, knows and likes that lively French song. So both sides were happy.

We Could Use Him

IN THESE DAYS when we are bringing in so many people from outside the province to work on the much heralded Development Plan, it seems to me that we could use a young man like Mr. Arsenault.

I have nothing against people coming in from outside if they can really do the job, but I'd like to see a worthy son of this province get the chance to help the province that gave him birth.

Blackout In Province

THE FOLLOWING item will be "Old Hat" to those of my own generation, but younger readers should find it interesting to know that we had a total blackout in this province during the days of World War Two.

An old clipping from the Guardian of March 10, 1942, caught my eye this week when I was rummaging through some old papers in my filing cabinet.

The blackout all over the Island started about 9:30 when the Charlottetown Street lights were turned out and, this item said, the black out over the whole Island was a really good success.

The blackout had been advertised in the press and over the radio, there was no TV here then – and this was necessary because the air raid sirens had not arrived, the Guardian story said.

The city was to get 25 sirens to call blackouts later without prior warning.

We had a fairly elaborate Air Raid Precaution setup at the time and the letters ARP were heard about the province.

We even had a civil defense committee and a Morell man, Hon. H.H. Cox was the head of this organization.

Mayor B. Roy Holman was chairman of the Charlottetown section, and Mayor T.E.H. Inman chairman of the Summerside Sub-committee.

Food Gasoline Rationing

In Summerside they had young ladies equipped with stretchers and several times during the blackout, stretcher bearers went out and picked up casualties and took them to a designated point.

Of course the whole operation was a make believe one, and everyone was happy about that.

If that sort of thing seems unreal now to younger readers and it does, it did not seem so uncalled for then when every citizen was pretty well preoccupied with the war and often feared concerning the outcome during the darker days and 1942 was one of those darker periods.

FOOD RATIONING also seems pretty farfetched now, but we had that too. I'll talk about that feature of the war days here in a future column, also of gasoline rationing.