

APPENDIX B

A GIFT FROM GRANDAD VERNON-WOOD

Recounted by his grandson, Harry W. Gow

I HAD FOR SOME TIME wanted to go to McGill University and at the same time improve my French-language skills, so while my move to Montréal at age 17 was what I wanted, it was a long way from my home base in Eastern British Columbia. I was therefore glad to get a compact package from Windermere in the mail; it had the heft and dimensions of a book. Opening it, I found a note from Tex. In it, he thanked me for the gift of a model river steamer I had sent him, described a local event, photos of which were included, and presented his gift book.

Tex wrote that reading the book, a National Geographic Society research publication of the 1920s *Hacienda and Latifundia in Chile* would give me to understand all there was to know about the functioning of Chilean society. I did so in the following months, and learned about the very subservient condition of the rural population of the country. I learned that there was “a great gulf fixed” between the wealthy landowners and the rural farm workers and peasants. I understood the lesson Tex wanted me to learn, that social inequalities were real and determined the fate of millions of people in the Americas.

When I was staying with him and Joan in the summer of 1946, I had mentioned something about what I thought was Canada’s colonial status vis-à-vis the United Kingdom. The war had meant a growing together of the two countries, and the common war effort had meant some

apparent sacrifice of sovereignty, something that was apparent even to a seven-year-old. Tex shot back that Canada was an independent country, and that Canadians did not have to ask Great Britain for permission to do anything! This surprised me, but I remembered this lesson in constitutional law from someone I had thought of as an unrepentant Englishman. I later had confirmation of his views when I found out that he had a subscription to what was then the *Manchester Guardian* (now *The Guardian*), the British left-liberal newspaper.

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