



# THE ROYAL BANK OF CANADA

## MONTHLY LETTER

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### *Outward Bound*

WHEN A SHIP in harbour is ready to sail, outward bound, she hoists the "Blue Peter." Every spring, all across Canada, there are imaginary "Blue Peter" flags fluttering over universities and schools to signal the launching of students upon the sea of life.

These young people have been equipped with formal education, which is comparable to a set of charts. In itself, knowledge is like a chart — of no value except as it is used to steer your ship with understanding and judgment.

Steering is necessary because you can't sail everywhere at once. Life is a voyage during which one touches at many ports. A happy outcome is due largely to the skill with which you pilot your craft from one harbour to another.

Men have progressed all through human existence because of a fundamental drive, a constant pressing against boundaries, and an enterprising spirit that drove them into adventurous searching for what lay over the horizon.

Every young person can look forward to the day when, instead of that cautious coasting which never ventures to lose sight of land, he will turn his helm and hazard a bolder navigation. But he must have provided himself with the required charts and with wisdom in their use.

This is not to say that it is always necessary to sail out of sight of land in order to have adventure. You don't have to go to the North-West Passage or to the South Sea Islands. Bold undertakings are at hand everywhere to the person who is fully alive and responsive to life's challenges.

To become fixed in a job, to tie up at a wharf and refuse to leave that haven in order to continue our growth, is to deny ourselves the development of our potential greatness.

#### *Ambition*

Ideally, the youth leaving school will be conscious of himself as a dynamo: now he must find out what to drive with his energy.

Some people are only creatures of unrest, absorbed in short-term material quests. They remind you of Pellinore, one of King Arthur's knights, who spent his life in armour hunting a mythical beast.

That is not the sort of ambition to make you happy. In fact, Sir Pellinore admitted to Arthur that he was bored.

If the upset state of the world has created uncertainty and tension, it has also brought into being real opportunities and opened up new vistas for young people. The promise of tomorrow is great for those who sail into it prepared in knowledge and in spirit.

The thing is to have a purpose. If you set out for an attainable port you can always sail on to another, but if you keep your chart locker closed while you head toward a mythical island you are foredoomed to eternal failure.

In professional, business, scientific and technological life there is a rule which can be a very good rule for an ambitious young person: find a vacuum and expand into it. What is there that needs doing and is not being done? Assess your capacity for doing things, and let it be your ambition to do the work that you can do best, in an area where it is needed, and then put all your mind into it.

Russell H. Conwell gave a lecture called "Acres of Diamonds" for the first time in 1870. He repeated it by request 6,100 times, and it has been reprinted thousands of times. Why was it so popular? Because it is the confident assertion that greatness and its rewards are within the reach of any man who sees the need of the people around him and applies himself to fulfilling it. Its message was: "Do what you can with what you have where you are today."

Dr. Conwell established Temple University, which today has some 30,000 students. His lecture was reprinted in 1959 in a memorial edition to mark the 75th Anniversary of the John C. Winston Company of Philadelphia and Toronto. Other editions are listed in the 1963-1964 catalogues of two publishers, Harper and Revell.

The meaning of the word "ambition" deserves

attention. The big-souled man wishes to be, not merely to appear, the best. His desire is not to get himself put on display like a statue in a park, which has nowhere to go, but to continue to make progress, and to make a contribution to life and society.

Ambition is not enough in itself. There is plenty of work to do on this voyage. One must pursue one's ambition with patience, vigilance, sagacity and determination. The alternative is to go to sleep in the bottom of the boat, letting the elements take you wherever they will.

To achieve is not merely to gain something. The dictionary says "achieve" means to perform, to accomplish, to carry out successfully. That implies steady purpose and unceasing effort with some artistry of means. It is the feeling of doing things that really pays off... that gives, for example, the pride with which Caxton, the first English printer, imprinted on *Le Morte d'Arthur* in 1485 "Caxton me fieri fecit" — Caxton caused me to become.

### *Making your choice*

The crown of life is the exercise of choice. To choose wisely you need to know what is important and what is unimportant for you.

Young people still at school may say: "How do I know what I want to be? Maybe they haven't invented my job yet." Within a century the careers beckoning to young men and women have increased a thousand-fold. There is opportunity for the expression of every talent we possess.

There are more top jobs than ever before. Companies are expanding rapidly, electronics is wiping out routine jobs, corporations are decentralizing, research is adding new products and opening up new markets. There is no lack of opportunity for the youth whose education has prepared him to move in, perhaps to specialize, and to climb with the company and the product.

We live in days when, in terms of quantitative knowledge, a youth may know more than Plato or Aristotle. What needs to be done is to increase the *quality* of our knowledge by applying our thought to situations and problems. It was thinking that put Plato and Aristotle ahead.

No matter what position a youth takes up he must use his brain. The scientific and economic truths of yesterday, on which we would have staked our lives, are not the truths of today. Not only the boss, but every man on the team, must advance.

This is why effort should be made to exhaust every opportunity of gaining basic knowledge at school so as to have a good range of choices. It may appear to be a bright idea to leave school early and join the wage-earning force in this prosperous society, but it is an idea that requires a second look.

The immediate wage may meet all your needs as a

single person, but, unless you have the qualifications given by education for understanding increasingly complex problems and new situations, your first wage may be somewhere near the top of your earning capacity. Taking a long view, would it not be better to stay at school, brushing aside the temptation to own a car and stereo set and enjoy high life at once in favour of what is best for you in the long run?

Do not make a small choice. It is deadly dull to be mediocre. You may, for a time, be content with a steady job, membership on a bowling team, a car-by-the-month, and sports on television. Such a life can be smugly lived for a time. Yet for the man with any gifts, how empty will such days appear when later years suddenly close the door to alternatives. Then it becomes clear that the better part of life has been spent, and your backward look shows only a trivial round of routine affairs.

A man must prepare himself to greet opportunity, a haughty goddess who wastes no time with those who are unprepared. The drill is told simply in Dr. J. F. Johnson's book *Business and the Man*, one of the Alexander Hamilton Institute textbooks. "Can a man prepare himself for opportunity? Can a man of average intellectual ability hope ever to fit himself for large opportunities? Both these questions can be answered positively in the affirmative. Here are the things he must do: work, study, read, think, observe — and then do more work."

Don't be afraid of making a small beginning. Just to learn the alphabet is to start on the way toward becoming a writer of prose, poetry or the nation's laws. Prince Philip put it this way when speaking to a sports association about forming a football team: "All you want is a reasonably flat piece of ground with sufficient grass on it and some goal posts, and if you get these you are half-way home. Put on the fancy waistcoats later."

### *Ability*

Three sorts of ability need to be cultivated: ability to do things, adaptability to cope with new things, and reliability to do things well.

It is a sad but indisputable fact that most human beings go through life only partially aware of the full range of their abilities. Some do so because they lack real interest in their jobs. A man may hide himself from you, or misrepresent himself to you, in every other way, but he cannot in his work.

He will use his muscles in order to live, and will drudge to maintain a roof over his head and some food in his cupboard, but he will only work with his heart when he has an interest in his job. Then he will habitually do well what he has to do, discovering the beauty of craftsmanship and pursuing the most ordinary task as if it were a liberal art.

Some may say that the coming of machines has made craftsmanship obsolete, but it is not so. Ma-

chines do not destroy the need for skill, but change the character of the skill needed. Over the past hundred years the proportion of unskilled workers has decreased steadily while the proportion of skilled workers in the labour force has increased. Instead of artist craftsmen we now need artist engineers, men of ability backed by knowledge.

The new environment must be taken into consideration, because it is only when ability is attuned to its surroundings that it shows itself truly effective. Business and technology are changing so rapidly that a good general education is necessary to qualify a youth to face brand new situations and problems. The personal rewards are substantial for the young person who has taken the care and put forth the effort to so prepare himself.

Twenty-three hundred years ago Plato said in his *Republic* that the ultimate aim of education is the training of character; a few years ago Dr. W. E. McNeill said the same thing in a Convocation address at Queen's University. "Character" includes reliability; a man is only as good as his actual performance proves that he is.

Character is not the product of lectures or sermons. It arises not from obstinacy or from following rules blindly, but is the product of firmness derived from a conscious evaluation of alternatives. It leads a man to endure, to do what is disagreeable if he ought to do it and to refrain from doing what is agreeable if he ought not to do it.

To be reliable is to know about just and unjust, good and bad, noble and disgraceful, so that one likes and dislikes instinctively what one ought.

## Work

Once your course is set, get sailing. Ideas and ambitions must be given life.

Somewhere the high priests of publicity have absorbed the idea that the goal of life is happiness through comfort. They make work seem repugnant. They sell their goods and gadgets on the idea that labour is man's punishment for the wickedness that he did in his first garden.

A man needs, sometimes, to pour wax into his ears as Ulysses' sailors did, so as not to hear the songs of sirens luring them to an enchanted island where they might loll in ease.

Someone is always offering in an advertisement or by demonstration an easier way of getting on in the world than by study and labour. But the people who make their way from obscurity to *Who's Who* do so by hard work. Success is not won without effort. Bernini, the Italian sculptor of the 17th century, was among the first to bring this out in art. Before him, statuary and paintings had been tranquil and wishy-washy. In his great statue of David he showed the muscles strained and the jaw set, as David swung his

sling ready to cast the stone that felled the giant Goliath.

Only through action do we become part of the setting around us; only then are we participating in the transaction of living. The world is not finished; it is in the process of being made, and we are workers engaged on the job.

The first thing to do is to try. It is only by trying that you will find out the stuff you are made of, and become aware of your possibilities.

The human animal, like others, is adapted to a certain amount of struggle for life, and if by means of wealth or because of inertia we gratify our whims without effort we remove from our lives an essential ingredient of happiness. Jeremy Taylor, the adventurous son of a barber who became chaplain to King Charles I and later a bishop, stated bluntly: "No man is more miserable than he that hath no adversity." This is not a doctrine for olden times alone. A writer of our own decade, Colin Wilson, says in *The Outsider*: "Thought alone is no use. Action is necessary." Trying through work to realize our ambitions is a necessary part of our zest for life, and it is basic to our belief in ourselves.

Character and self-reliance demand principles. All attainment is perilously fragile unless it is based on enduring principles.

No high level of living, no amassing of stuff, and no collection of status symbols, can compensate us for four hungers which are based upon the fulfilment of principles: the hunger to feel contented and at peace with the world; the hunger to feel worthy and noble; the hunger to feel effective, adequate and equal to events; the hunger to feel significant, a co-worker in the great ongoing process of life.

The knights of France and England wrote this into their code of chivalry whereby they spurred themselves to heroic and generous actions. They believed that courage is splendid, that fidelity is noble, that distressed people should be rescued, and that vanquished enemies should be spared.

As King Arthur discovered, you cannot play this game without rules. You must believe in the fundamental principles of conduct learned from persons you respect and from sources which appeal to you as being fine and true. Thus you acquire self-discipline, which leads to self-respect.

## Courage and tenacity

You must learn to take knocks. He who dares to look his destiny steadfastly in the face, to measure his strength with its difficulties, to give up what does not count in his life and to seek with zest what will contribute to his self-fulfillment: that man has already ceased to be miserable.

Courage becomes a living and attractive virtue when it is regarded not as willingness to die manfully but

as the determination to live decently. A moral coward, one who is afraid to do what he thinks is right because other men will disapprove or laugh, is never a confident business man nor a valuable member of any community.

A courageous man will keep his faith in himself in the face of buffets which lay his weaker companions low. He will know when to avoid and when to fight. He will not be upset by having to wait, but will be brave enough to know that while it is not always wise to wait it is always desirable to have the courage to wait if it should become advisable.

There is an old-fashioned word, not often used nowadays though it was one of Shakespeare's: "mettle". In Scotland, they use the word "gumption" in much the same sense. "Mettle" means more than courage. It carries in it the sense of an ingrained capacity to bear up under strain and stress in a manner suggestive of a finely tempered sword blade.

Great men in the world's history have had mettle. It is not inappropriate to recall the lesson in perseverance given in the log of Columbus' first voyage across the uncharted Atlantic. Day after day he wrote: "This day we sailed on."

The chief characteristic of a great man is that he is heartily in earnest. He keeps on believing in what he is doing. He has the tendency to persevere in spite of hindrances, discouragements and impossibilities. He knows that to his natural ability and his grasping of opportunities he must add resolution and concentration.

### *Getting on with people*

Life does not consist of everyone living in his own little corner. There needs to be contact between people, not merely bodies pushing one another through a revolving door but mental and spiritual exchange of ideas.

Young people who associate with others their own age and no adults except their parents and their teachers are deprived of much that would be good for them. If they were brought into touch with adults who had no authoritarian relationship with them they would widen their outlook and cultivate their discrimination. It is, as Dr. Donald A. Laird said in *How to Increase Your Brain Power*, "inductive suicide to have most of our human associations with those who have the same interests and are engaged in the same work as we are."

Advice should be received willingly, but discretion should be used in assessing its worth. It is not wise to accept advice on swimming from someone who has never gone near the water. It is said in the Talmud: "If thou seest a man of understanding, get thee betimes unto him, and let thy foot wear out the steps of his doors."

One may listen, appraise, weigh and consider. This

is a time when kind and tolerant common sense is needed, a time when it is wise to know many sides of every question before reaching a decision.

We should not look disdainfully upon people outside the fence we have built around our way of living. Our ship will call at many ports in countries where customs, religion and education are different from those in our home port. In our own interests, as well as in the interests of society, we must get along with people of many sorts.

To do so is a sign of maturity. Knowledge of the world is not something that can be taught in school, but a desire to receive it and wisdom in assessing it should be developed early in life. Maturity involves having willingness to listen and look, sensibility to what is real and what is illusory, ability to discriminate and choose.

### *Beginning the journey*

When you stand at the helm, outward bound, you will do so with your eyes fixed on the compass and the stars to guide you on the course you have set.

It is well, at this point, to make a self-appraisal that will help you to keep a log showing your advancement. Ask yourself:

Am I sound physically, or am I doing what seems to be advisable to become so, remembering that good health is fundamental to happiness?

Have I examined my mental qualities in comparison with those of other people whose success in business, the professions or technology has been demonstrated?

Have I reflected calmly upon what I should do from here on to achieve self-fulfilment?

Do I know my good qualities, so that I may make the most of them, and my weak points, so that I may strengthen them?

Do I know what my ultimate aim in life is, and what I am going to try for next year?

Have I settled in my own mind that whatever work I take up must contribute to my happiness, and that this can best be attained by doing the job at hand to the best of my ability?

Have I determined to accept responsibility for the course I set?

Do I realize that for success in any undertaking the necessary programme includes hard work?

Have I determined to keep my mind alert, to keep feeding my mind by study so as to contribute to my up-to-dateness and the germination of ideas?

Life is a sea upon which the proud are humbled, the shirker is exposed and the leader is revealed. To sail it safely and reach your desired port you need to keep your charts at hand and up to date, to learn by the experiences of others, to stand firmly for principles, to broaden your interests, to be understanding of the rights of others to sail the same sea, and to be reliable in your discharge of duty.