

Oswald Hall, PhD: Pioneer Canadian Sociologist; 1924–1976

Douglas M. Brown, DC*

At ninety-eight (2006), Oswald Hall is Canada's senior, distinguished sociologist. For several decades Dr. Hall's colleagues have acknowledged his abiding "contributions to the growth of sociology in Canada and his loyalty to the profession."¹ The prime purpose of this paper is to document Dr. Hall's legacy. It begins by briefly looking at Dr. Hall's origins and early training. Then it investigates his graduate and postgraduate education and delves into his varied roles as a teacher, researcher, civil servant, and administrator, as well as his appointments to various advisory bodies, enquiries, boards and associations and concludes with a commentary on Oswald Hall's accomplishments. Throughout the paper, Dr. Hall's major publications are reviewed chronologically.

This study does not include Hall's twenty-seven year involvement with the chiropractic profession (1976 to 1998) because that era has been covered extensively in the December 2005 issue of the JCCA.² Much of the article is based on testimony from colleagues and friends, as well as quotes from some of Hall's unpublished writings and manuscripts. Unpublished Hall quotes are identified in the references by their titles and/or dates. (JCCA 2006; 50(4):271–281)

KEY WORDS: Hall, sociology, chiropractic.

À 98 ans (2006), Oswald Hall est le doyen et le plus éminent des sociologues du Canada. Pendant des décennies, les collègues du Dr Hall ont reconnu sa respectueuse « contribution à la progression de la sociologie au Canada et sa loyauté envers sa profession ». C'est le principal objectif du présent article, qui vise à consigner l'héritage du Dr Hall. Au départ, on aborde brièvement les origines du Dr Hall et le début de sa formation, on parle plus longuement de son instruction et de ses études universitaires supérieures avant de s'étendre sur ses rôles variés à titre d'enseignant, de chercheur, de fonctionnaire et d'administrateur ainsi que ses nombreuses nominations à divers organismes consultatifs, enquêtes, conseils d'administration et associations pour terminer par un commentaire sur ses réalisations. Dans l'ensemble du document, les principales publications du Dr Hall sont révisées par ordre chronologique.

L'étude n'aborde pas l'engagement de vingt-sept ans du Dr Hall envers la profession de chiropraticien (1976 à 1998) parce que le sujet a été couvert en long et en large dans l'édition de décembre 1005 du JCCA.² Une bonne partie de l'article s'appuie sur des témoignages de collègues et d'amis ainsi que de citations tirées des écrits et manuscrits non publiés du Dr Hall. Les citations non publiées du Dr Hall sont identifiées en référence par leurs titres ou leurs dates.

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MOTS CLÉS : Hall, sociologie, chiropratique.

* 281 Ridgewood Road, Toronto, Ontario M1C 2X3, Home: 416-284-1168, E-mail: DBrown4741@aol.com
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Oswald Hall, PhD

Background and education

Oswald Hall was born on January 18, 1908, on a farm in Lily Plains, northern Saskatchewan, which had been part of the Northwest Territories until 1905. His father, Michael Hall, had emigrated from Newcastle, a mining area in the County of Durham, in northern England, in 1900. His mother, formerly Anne Henderson, followed her husband to Saskatchewan in 1904, where she raised nine children, the oldest of whom was born in England.

Oswald obtained his primary education in a very modest, one room school that was closed during the winter months. Secondary education was mainly provided extramurally by the Department of Education. Following grade XI, Oswald completed a four month course in educational philosophy and was granted a certificate to teach in Saskatchewan schools. From 1924 to 1930 he served in four areas of northern Saskatchewan and was persuad-

ed by a school inspector to enrol as an extramural student at Queens University, Kingston, Ontario, gaining credits in mathematics and languages.

Six years of teaching when salaries were high gave him financial stability and in 1931, during the Great Depression, Hall travelled east to Queens University. Here he met Florence Tanner. They married in 1934 and Florence bore them two children, Frank and Mona (Browne).

At Queens, Hall began by studying the physical sciences of geology, mineralogy, chemistry and physics but switched to the social sciences and graduated in 1935 with an honours BA in economics and philosophy. At this time he won a fellowship to go to McGill University, Montréal, Québec, to take a master's program in sociology.³ "The move to McGill was not so much a shift from one university to another as a move to a different cultural setting. Kingston was in effect a marooned town, while Montreal was a cosmopolitan metropolis. The economics courses at Queens had made great demands on chains of deductive reasoning, largely divorced from the world of events. By contrast the department of Sociology at McGill was avowedly empirical. The students were forced into contact with the life of a major city." Hall found field research to be "an emancipating experience. Prior courses in economics had been based on self-evident, or at least accepted assumptions. Suddenly it became possible to explore such assumptions, such taken for granted matters, as the market, the state, and rationality. Such explorations led the way into unsuspected bodies of theory which cast a refreshing illumination on dark areas of social life."⁴

Hall remembers that the McGill Department of Sociology comprised two part time graduate teachers, Carl A. Dawson and Everett C. Hughes. He credits Dawson with being a major force in the development of sociology but adds that his contributions were overshadowed by those of Hughes. "Dawson and the students, recognized in Hughes a free-floating intellect of a very high order. As students we had encountered many cultivated minds and many developed minds, but Hughes' mind was different; it was something that was *continually* developing."

Dr. Hall's first publication, "The Size and Composition of the Canadian Family, with special references to Sample Areas of the Metropolitan Regions in Central Canada," was submitted to the Department of Sociology of McGill University, September 7, 1937, as one of the re-

quirements for his Master of Arts degree.⁵ Hall dismisses his thesis as “a dull affair but it introduced me to the field notes of census takers, the bureaucracy of the government in Ottawa, and to the round of life of the civil servant.” S. Delbert Clark, a fellow sociologist and long time friend demurs. “His masters thesis ... scarcely pointed the direction his research interests were to take, but it did offer more than a hint of the kind of sociologist he was to become.”⁶

In the introduction, Dr. Hall states that in 1937 “From the standpoint of social change the most significant process of the present is the rapid industrialization of new areas like the central area of Canada.”⁷ His study describes what happened to the size of families as they adjusted to the upheaval of “being mobilized into vast new aggregates,” following the abrupt shift from rural to urban living. Looking at “Biological Factors in the Size of the Family,” Hall’s regional analysis “revealed the size differentials existing between the various areas of the region, and gave an opportunity of considering the age of the mother one of the factors determining the size of the family.”⁸ This chapter shows an urban trend toward smaller families while, for at least part of the rural areas, the trend was for large families.

Hall now tests his hypothesis that the size of the family is dependent on the occupation of the male head of the family and finds that, “When occupations are arranged in a series, on the basis of status and income, they show variations in the size of the family. In general, the higher the status of the members of a group, the fewer children in the family.”⁹ “Ethnic Factors in the Size of the Family,” takes the thesis on a different course. In analysing families in terms of their ethnic characteristics Hall tries to answer two questions: “How significant are ethnic factors in determining the size of the family? How are these factors modified by the fact of urbanization?”

Two main groups were investigated; the British in Ontario and the French in Québec and these were subdivided into Catholic and non-Catholic. Hall concludes: “Two facts ... suggest that ethnic factors are important in determining the size of the family. In the most rural areas, the French have larger families than have the British. And among the British group the Catholics have larger families than have the non-Catholics. The effect of ethnic factors diminishes as the urban areas are approached. In other words, regional differences work within the frame-

work of ethnic groups. These regional differences will last as long as there is a difference between the rural and urban ways of life.”¹⁰

This early document begs the question, where did Dr. Hall get his in-depth knowledge of statistical analysis? He credits the Dominion Bureau of Statistics in Ottawa with granting him access to unpublished Census schedules and explains that, “I had a background in economics so I had some understanding of what to do with the data. Because there were no courses in statistics at McGill I obtained the information I needed from library books.” [Personal communication, October 2003] Hall was also resourceful in how he used those figures. Originally, he had planned to investigate the biological family, however, the types of data available would not permit him to deal directly with that pattern so Hall changed the object of his paper. “The family in this study is the group living in association, having a marital and/or parent-child relationship. Therefore it is the family remaining after mortality and home-leaving have taken their toll. The family of this study is the *survival family*.”¹¹

Oswald Hall received his master’s degree from McGill in 1937. Jobs were scarce, but fellowships were still available and Hall obtained two, which allowed him to travel to the University of Chicago for pre-doctoral training. In those days the University of Chicago boasted the largest department of sociology in the United States. It was a graduate department with seven full time faculty, closely integrated with the rest of the University as well as state and federal governments. Graduate students were evaluated informally in seminars, in their effectiveness as teaching assistants, and formally by comprehensive examinations. When these exams were passed, students were expected to start their theses and work on them during the early years of their teaching careers. Hall notes: “Although I had spent a block of time in hospital I completed the formal requirements in two years and set off for a teaching post at Brown University.”

Teaching and research

Teaching and research are combined in this section because they were intertwined in Dr. Hall’s career. Professor Clark observes: “Hall established himself as one of the most influential teachers of sociology in Canada and one of the country’s most productive research scholars. Teaching and research never became divorced in Hall’s

practice of the sociology trade ... If his research interests gave direction to Hall's teaching, his teaching, in turn, spurred and broadened his research activities."¹²

In 1939 Hall began his five year stint as a lecturer at Brown University, one of the prestigious "Group of Ten," in Providence Rhode Island. Canada was already involved with hostilities developing in Europe but Pearl Harbour seemed a long way off. Hall recalls that "Providence and Brown were living in a delightful haze, a small island of New England affluence ... University salaries were low (\$1,800 per year paid in ten instalments) yet the standard of living was really high. The latter adjective hardly applied to the academic standards. At Brown "C" was a gentleman's grade, and life in the fraternities was of more relevance than the life of the mind." This placid atmosphere was shattered in 1941 when the United States entered World War II, and the campus was rented to the military for a naval training program. Hall failed to meet armed forces health standards and "was dragooned by Brown to teach mathematics to naval officers." By the time the war was half over sociology had almost vanished from Brown University.

Hall did not decide on the subject for his PhD thesis until after he arrived at Brown. Providence, Rhode Island, was sheltered from depression but neighbouring areas were not. For example, in Fall River, Italians and other recent immigrants were affected by massive unemployment. Some of Hall's colleagues were studying the problems caused by unemployment. Hall saw things differently and "was stirred with inquiring how a group of immigrants, such as the Italians, found a niche in the social structure of a New England community. The question was: what are the adjustments and adaptations that permit an immigrant group to find a foothold and climb to higher steps in the work world." Hall began by studying how Italian lawyers survived but was quickly persuaded that such an investigation would be "unhealthy." Instead he turned to a study of Italian doctors where he discovered "that some were identified as 'olives on an apple tree,' who made a living, in part, by performing health services that their more dainty colleagues refused to provide." He soon realized "that *all* members of that occupation faced comparable contingencies, as they cast their lives into their selected work. Eventually I studied Yankee and Irish doctors as well as Italian doctors; highly successful practitioners and near-failures; independent

solo practitioners and those holding comfortable hospital posts, as well as positions in group practices." The result of this enquiry, far removed from its original intent, was the thesis which won Dr. Hall his 1944 University of Chicago Doctorate, "The Informal Organization of Medical Practice in an American City."¹³ Underlying this thesis were two important assumptions: that sociology could help unravel complex issues regarding the work world; and that sociology would benefit more from the study of organization than disorganization. In his doctoral study Hall firmly rejected the problems approach to sociology and offered instead, one that looked for solutions.

Providence, Rhode Island contained one main medical system. Two thirds of the doctors were integrated into this arrangement, which revolved around one dominant hospital. His paper "is based on one central question: What are the various ways of practicing medicine current in a specific community." Subsidiary questions are: what are the various types of clientele; what are the means by which a clientele is acquired and controlled; what is the nature of doctor-patient and colleague-colleague relationships; what are the informal and non-institutional relationships within the profession; what are the stages in a medical career; and how does an ethnic group within the medical profession develop?¹⁴ Hall answered these questions by sampling and analysing a variety of data. A major part of this information came from interviews, sometimes structured but more often casual, which he personally conducted with approximately 50 of the 468 doctors selected for this project, along with a number of medical students and some patients willing to share their experiences. The documentation and interpretation of these discussions posed difficulties for Hall in that he had to preserve doctor/doctor and doctor/patient anonymity and confidentiality, while revealing the essence of what was said. "Although the function of sociology is not to expose, yet it proposes a kind of analysis which requires the use of facts often hidden from the public and sometimes even from the conscious thinking of the individual actor. Exposé must be used insofar as it is necessary to analysis, but for reasons mentioned above the sources cannot be identified ... This is particularly the case in the study of the medical profession in a small community where many of the niches and positions are unique and discussion of them would involve identifying specific functionaries."¹⁵

Under “Conclusions” Dr. Hall explains, “This study was exploratory by nature; the conclusions accordingly, neither prove nor disprove a set of crucial hypotheses,” and summarizes three findings. “The Inner Fraternity,” notes that total conventionality is the price of membership in this body. New recruits to the fraternity gain entrance to the various levels of hospital service. Because modern medicine is intimately tied to hospital care, “The most important single factor affecting the success of the doctor is his relation to the hospital system of the community.”

“Types of Practices,” describes three kinds. “Institutional practices” are concentrated in the best residential area of the city. “Without exception these doctors carry on specialized practices.” “Friendly practices” are usually found in the same locations as those with institutional practices. “In their cases bonds of loyalty to persons take precedence over loyalty to institutions ... Doctors with friendly practices do not emphasize specialized work, though some have gone into such.” “Individualistic practices” are spread widely around the city. “These doctors have relatively few hospital appointments, and those are predominately with minor hospital posts.” For the most part, they “carry on general practices, and have had little or no specialized training.”

“Sponsorship” is Hall’s third conclusion. “This study documents the existence of a sponsoring process among many of the doctors with substantial practices. Officially medicine is a free profession; much evidence came to light which indicated that medicine, in the community studied, comprises a closed system. In effect, access to medical institutions and effective access to patients are both narrowly restricted. Admittance is by sponsorship.”

Hall’s final observation is that “It seems pertinent to suggest that the concepts of the inner fraternity and the sponsorship process could be applied to advantage in the study of other professions and related institutions. In so far as established social forms maintain their stability in a social order marked by competition it seems profitable to search for these mechanisms which function to select recruits, allocate status, and control conduct.”¹⁶

Hall was overjoyed to learn that the Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College (CMCC) library had retrieved his MA and PhD theses. “When you told me that the Chiropractic College had unearthed the originals of both my theses that was the best news I had heard in forty years. McGill had wanted to publish them but nobody could

find a copy of either one, at McGill or the University of Chicago. You may not know this but my PhD thesis was almost destroyed. I had submitted a single, hand-written copy of “Informal organizations in the Medical Profession” to the University of Chicago where it was to be typed. The woman typing my manuscript ran off with a soldier and fortunately, the original document and the parts already typed were found in her apartment before they were thrown out.” [Personal communication, October 2003]

In 1944 Hall came back to Canada as Assistant to the Director of Research and Statistics at the Department of Labour in Ottawa. “There, with no previous experience in administration, I was second in command and for a time head of a staff of almost three hundred civil servants. Much of the work was pedestrian but we did design and present studies relating to the relocation of soldiers in peacetime and the re-employment of war workers.”

In 1946 Hall returned to McGill University as an Associate Professor of Sociology and remained there until 1955, rising through the ranks to Professor and then Chairman of the Department of Sociology. He found a post war climate of “infectious enthusiasm” between students and staff similar to the one he had enjoyed during his McGill studies in the 1930s. Professor Dawson was still active, effectively attracting new members to the rapidly expanding department and supporting their efforts. At last, Dawson’s long campaign to make sociology respectable at McGill had succeeded. Hall observes: “For the whole of the decade I spent at McGill the atmosphere was one of interdepartmental collaboration.” In addition, seminars brought sociologists together with geographers, architects, engineers, philosophers, economists, psychologists, psychiatrists, lawyers and business leaders. “Such an environment and atmosphere, not only made interdisciplinary collaboration easy and pleasant but it opened doors readily for those attempting research projects.” Sociological studies expanded into the larger world of health, military organization, business life, and hospital and school administration, while Hall’s major teaching courses focussed more on formal work organization and the study of specialized occupations, of which the professions were a substantial part.

Evidence of Dr. Hall’s influence as a teacher at McGill can be found in the numerous scholars he trained on the staff of Canadian universities. For example: Frank Jones at

McMaster, Bruce McFarlane at Carleton, Rex Lucas and Leo Zakuta at Toronto, Kaspar Naegele at the University of British Columbia, Jacques Brazeau at the University of Montréal, and Audrey Wipper at Waterloo. Professor Clark lists two areas where Hall excelled in the development of sociology at McGill. "The first was his capacity to gain for sociology recognition and respect from large segments of the university faculty ... He got to know people throughout the university and to win their good regard." Second, "He brought sociology down to earth, yet not in a way that diminished its scholarly significance. He could participate in conferences with fellow academics, businessmen, labour leaders, educationalists, welfare workers and gain a favourable response to whatever ideas he was advancing without in any way compromising his position as a university scholar."¹⁷

In the spring and summer of 1953 Hall was a visiting associate professor in the Department of Sociology, University of Chicago and in 1955 his "itchy foot" carried him to Tulane University in New Orleans, where he spent a year as a visiting professor of Industrial Relations.

During his tenure at McGill, Hall taught summer school at the University of Toronto where he met Delbert Clark and Vincent Bladen, a political economist. In 1957 Hall accepted their invitation to join the University of Toronto Department of Political Economy. One of the main attractions for Hall was the interdisciplinary character of this department since it included economics and political science as well as sociology. Hall remained in this department until shortly before his retirement in 1974.

Immediately upon coming to Toronto, Hall produced a paper, "The Social Consequences of Uranium Mining."¹⁸ In 1953 a huge ore body of uranium was discovered in the Canadian Shield, near Elliot Lake and in 1955 the Provincial Government created the Planning and Development Department of the Ontario Ministry of Housing to ensure its development as a viable community, rather than having it turn into a "shack town." [www.cityofelliottlake.com: Jan. 7, 2005] In mid 1956, Hall headed one of six groups of people into the field to investigate areas surrounding Elliot Lake and Blind River. Several days later these parties convened for a "Round Table" discussion titled "Man and Industry."

Hall summarizes four noteworthy conclusions of his parent group at the reconvened Round Table. "The first was the powerful influence that a newly growing commu-

nity can exert on its older but weaker neighbours ... A second impression reported was that the visiting team had been impressed, and indeed surprised, at the potentialities for a good life in the small and somewhat isolated communities of the province ... The third impression was that the farther one travels from the political centre of the province the less awareness there is of the kinds of services that are available to communities in the remote areas ... And finally, there seems to be a need for a programme of adult education to permit the citizens of the remote communities to share in the abundant life that the forces of industrialization are making available on an ever widening scale." Hall concludes that, "The very differences of opinion emphasize vividly the fact that we are carried along on the tide of industrial change faster than our knowledge of these changes accumulates ... If this Round Table manages to reduce the gap between what is happening to us as an industrialized nation and our understanding of the processes and consequences of industrialization, it will mark a significant milepost in our social history."

Hall had warned that the community of Elliot Lake "will face an unpredictable future, for its fortunes and misfortunes will parallel those of atomic power ... it will be a classic example of the one-industry town ... When the uranium discoveries were made in 1953, the present town-site was a bit of almost unknown wilderness. By the end of 1957 it is anticipated that a community of twelve to fifteen thousand persons will be established in all its essential aspects." His predictions were accurate. By the late 1950s the population of Elliot Lake had peaked at 25,000 and it was called "the uranium capital of the world." In 1996 its last active mine was closed and by 2005, Elliot Lake's population was 20,000 and it had evolved into a retirement community and summer recreation area.

While at the University of Toronto, Hall maintained his contacts with the American College of Hospital Administrators and later taught some of these students courses in Toronto. He also worked with people in the USA who were planning health services for the 1970s. In Toronto, Hall joined the advisory body of the Addiction Research Foundation and the Ontario Mental Health Foundation. His main involvement was dealing with scholars from other Ontario universities, which helped identify Hall as a student of health. In addition he had several informal

opportunities for study and writing which included the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, the International Sociological Association, the American Hospital Association, the accrediting of Canadian hospitals, Canadian nurses' groups and the national association of social workers.

In 1961 Hall collaborated with one of his former pupils, Bruce McFarlane, then with Carleton University, in producing a report for the Canadian Department of Labour, "The Transition from School to Work,"¹⁹ This study has two purposes: "to report how Ontario educational institutions, at all levels, sort and sift the young people who are fed into them; and to inquire how these youngsters fare subsequently in finding places in the work world.. It was designed in such a way that we could follow a designated group of young people (those born in the year 1940) through their school careers and into their work careers."

The paper ends with several startling conclusions. One of them is, "that the University in this community does not secure the cream of the crop. Of the high-calibre students entering high school (the top ten percent) only one in five carries through to university. On the other hand, many of the poorly qualified students reach university. This community presented the high school with 56 superior students; of these 12 continued to university; in all it sent 41 students to university, of whom two-thirds were of average or below average academic promise." Another concerns employment. "In general, the youngsters studied had little or no difficulty in finding a job. However, boys were more likely to suffer subsequent unemployment than were girls, and experienced longer periods of unemployment. Boys with minimal education had only one chance in five of finding continuous employment; for girls the chances are equal. By and large, the girl is likely to find a job at a higher level than that held by her parent; here again the girl seems to secure advantages over the boy."

Much of Dr. Hall's time in Toronto was spent on outside interests, including almost three years from 1964–66, which he devoted to the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism.²⁰ His role was similar to the one he had played for the Federal Department of Labour; more administrative than scholarly. "But there were differences. In this case my helpers were trained sociologists, some my own students. So the research and

sociology seldom strayed far apart. But while the work for the Department of Labour was often ignored by those in authority, such was not the case for the work of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. The research findings soon became grounds for political rhetoric and political activism. Indeed political action took hold before the scholarly work could be completed." The research Hall directed focussed on documenting ethnic disparities in education, income, wealth and power.

When the Royal Commission on Health Services was established in the early 1960s Hall was invited to prepare a paper on the, "Utilization of Dentists in Canada."²¹ This study "is an attempt to describe the organization of dental practice in Canada with specific references to the kind and amount of services provided by various kinds of dentists, the kinds of clients attracted to each type of dentist, and the costs and incomes associated with various forms of practice." Although these sorts of facts can only be secured by personal interviews, and over two hundred dentists across Canada participated, the data was collected "and the whole project was brought almost to completion in the space of an academic summer."

The main assumption of this article is "that dental services in Canada are inadequate in quantity and are poorly distributed into the bargain." One of the solutions posed is to increase the number and range of dental assistants at various levels. Hall points to the employment of dental nurses to staff the New Zealand School Dental Service since 1921, as an example of the successful use of auxiliary personnel.

In 1966 the Committee on the Healing Arts was established in Ontario and Dr. Hall was named one of its original members. In 1967 Hall was asked to produce a report on "The Paramedical Occupations in Ontario."²² This paper deals with "some of the less spectacular workers in the health field ... What they have in common is that they are a product of the modern hospital, and are intimately tied up with the problem of putting new knowledge to work in the hospital setting. It investigates ten allied, mainly technical professions from three viewpoints: through the eyes of the people in them; through the lens of technology; and through the perspective of organization." Hall lists a number of inequities that must be considered for developing strategies of recruitment and training of paramedical workers. Some of them are: "the profound prestige gap currently existing between the

medical profession and the paramedical occupations; the one-sex imbalance in the paramedical field; the relative ineffectiveness of worker associations among paramedical workers;" and "the relegation of most paramedical workers to the status of 'employee.'"

In 1975 the Ontario Economic Council launched a series of studies to explore the relations of education to the economy. One of the Council's underlying concerns was that current training in "basic skills" might be inadequate for the needs of an industrial society. This "uneasiness" was the focus of research conducted in 1977 by Hall, in collaboration with another of his graduates, Richard A. Carlton, which culminated in the book, "Basic Skills at School and Work."²³ "Our inquiry was designed to assess basic skills by probing two related problem areas. First, how well prepared, in the skills of mathematics and English, are the young people who enter the work world directly from the secondary school system? Secondly, since many young people now make a detour through post-secondary institutions, how well prepared are they, in such skills, to handle the requirements of post-secondary education?"

Although the questions seemed simple, the answers proved complex. The authors discovered, "Among students at all levels there is a widespread sense of malaise regarding their competence in the basic skills ... teachers too, at all levels, report dissatisfaction with student competence ... The most obvious gap in perspectives, however, is that between the world of employment and that of education. The job opportunities available to secondary students require only a minuscule part of the basic skills that schools try to provide ... Moreover, employers deplored the kinds of work habits displayed by the students who came for employment. Between the world of work and the world of schooling there stands not a gap but a chasm."

On the positive side they found that, "The schools of Albertain, like others throughout province, have succeeded in retaining most students for the duration of their programmes. By comparison with the earlier rates of retention in our schools (Duffet, 1960) this has been a notable achievement." The paper closes with a ringing call to revive academic excellence. Education is essentially the sort of enterprise that involves the continuing effort to raise it above the routine and the ordinary. At one time these goals would have appeared incongruous, given the lowly status and low incomes of teachers, and the meagre

budgets of school plants. In the context of the current rewards of teachers and the elaboration of facilities, it is appropriate to foster a sense of the importance of education to society and the possibilities of excellence at all levels. The avowed pursuit and reward of such excellence should be made respectable once more."

Throughout his professional life, Hall's allotted time for academic endeavours during the regular school year was packed with activity. Despite this, he seldom took vacations, preferring to spend his holidays conducting field research or teaching summer school. This work ethic allowed Hall, while at Toronto, to hold sessional appointments at the University of Chicago, Illinois, the University of British Columbia, the University of Calgary, Alberta, the Universities of Waterloo, Guelph and Trent, in Ontario, and Memorial University in Newfoundland.

Disappointments

The two decades Dr. Hall spent as a professor at McGill University appear to be the most satisfying years he spent in academia. Hall has said that "at the work level, in departmental collaboration, as well as in an informal seminar that spanned many faculties of the university, there was a great deal of intellectual give and take. McGill was a university where other institutions were becoming universities." Of course there were some drawbacks. Following World War II and in preparation for the Korean War, Hall collaborated on studies of the Canadian military and post-war adjustment of immigrants, which still remain classified and so were never published. Hall realized "the post-war euphoria of McGill" would not last. "Prof. Dawson and his contemporaries retired in the early fifties and staff members in other departments resigned to go elsewhere. A rift developed between the teaching staff and the administration, and the emergence of a staff association deepened the tensions. The provincial government refused to countenance federal aid for higher education, and the financial problems of the university worsened perceptibly. In the background the tensions of Francophone-Anglophone relationships were heightening."

Although the interdisciplinary nature of the Department of Political Economy had been one of the main attractions for Hall joining the University of Toronto, that too would change. "The department had grown to a very large size, and relatively soon it split with Sociology the first to leave. The new department of Sociology was

shifted away, physically from the other social disciplines, and this isolation was compounded by the addition of new teaching staff whose major preoccupations were solely sociological interests. Eventually their preoccupations would isolate the new department from the mainstream of university activity.”

Hall appears to have found pleasure in teaching University of Toronto students in fields other than sociology. However, while he “enjoyed teaching a course on social organization for the second year honours students and a more specialized course on work institutions for the fourth year (and a couple of graduate seminars) none of these courses grew into a really satisfying form. Perhaps I became involved in too many competing activities ... More probably the fact of sudden growth in the university created its own distinctive consequences.” Hall mentions that the entire student body and faculty increased “astronomically,” creating a dramatic fault “in the polarization of students and staff, at both the graduate and undergraduate levels.” On several occasions in the early 1970s, Hall had to throw down barricades of chairs at the entrance to his classroom, erected by student activists trying to prevent him teaching his course.²⁴ “Eventually a comparable polarization developed among staff members themselves creating a new pattern of relationships of teachers and students that surfaced all across the continent. This created excitement in academia which became a veritable wasteland, in the sense of waste of time and effort by both teachers and students.”²⁵

Accomplishments

Dr. Hall has described himself as “naive.” When Audrey Wipper, PhD, editor of “The Sociology of Work in Canada,” asked him what date he became chairman of the Department of Sociology at McGill, he couldn’t remember. “At that time the job and the prestige were of an incredibly meagre dimension. We were unbelievably unconcerned about rank and formal organization in those days ... We thought that teaching and research were the main dimensions of university life. We didn’t realize that tenure and salaries and pensions are the *raison d’être* for a modern university.”²⁶ This helps explain why Hall was such an outstanding teacher and mentor. Frank E. Jones, whose master’s thesis was supervised by Hall, reflects that, “Although Oswald Hall did not believe in close supervision and therefore did not respond with precise in-

structions, he gave great support by taking my work seriously, showing great interest in my field notes, reading them thoroughly and discussing them with me at length. Through his interest, he conveyed a very much needed sense of value to what I was doing, recognizing that this was what I needed more than direction.”²⁷

Richard Carlton believes Professor Hall was a great teacher because the students “knew when he was dealing with one of the ‘big’ issues and we stored up his thoughts for a lifetime of consideration.” One of Carlton’s vivid recollections occurred when Hall directed his class to probe the relationship between theory and data, by discussing Hughes’ classic monograph on French Canada. One of the students “had the temerity to question this tactic by asserting he could find ‘no theory’ in the work. ... Suddenly, that gentle and even humour which was the trademark of Hall’s teaching was swept aside as a giant fist pounded our seminary table like a gavel recalling our minds to order. ‘No theory? No theory!’ ... Patiently now, but with a force and clarity which I am sure none of us has ever forgotten, Hall extolled the intimacy of theory to the fieldwork. By example he taught us to see how theory guided and informed research from within. With wry humour he pointed out the absurdity of those self-conscious ‘theory’ preambles which so often remain extraneous or superfluous to the data which follow.”

Ian D. Coulter, a medical sociologist then in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Toronto, worked closely with Dr. Hall from 1977 to 1991. Coulter writes that “Oswald was actually quite a complex sociologist. If you look at his work it is seldom about testing theory and in fact much of it appears not to be theory laden at all. It took me a long time to realize that his work was very theoretical but he did not believe we should bore the reader with the theory ... Oswald thought good sociology was like good sense. Not something you needed to yell about from the roof tops or write home about. He was more interested in what you found out than he was in how you found it out.” Other qualities which Coulter admires are his “curiosity” about people, his ability to use sociological concepts to “illuminate” research findings, and his refusal to “milk” the data. Coulter points out that although he was a superb author who made a substantial contribution to the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, probably Canada’s most significant policy document, Hall never published a single article from it.

Coulter holds Dr. Hall “in the very highest regard ... I cannot think of one occasion when I saw him do an unprofessional act. In all senses of the word Oswald was a gentle-man ... I never saw him do a mean thing ... His attitude to students was superb. Always willing to help, never to belittle them. He treated colleagues with incredible respect. I think you could say of Oswald that he was always kind (a very much overworked word).” [Personal communication, April 2003]

Hall was known for his wry humour and he was not averse to poking fun at himself. He discloses that shortly after the end of World War II his PhD thesis, “The Informal Organization of the Medical Profession,” was “discovered” and other sociologists “gave my work more prominence than it deserved.” Hall’s thesis and articles he derived from it, were soon being published in a variety of journals. “These were republished and translated to such a degree that I lost count, and I came temporarily to the belief that writing was an easy task and publication guaranteed. A few scorching letters from other editors helped me return to earth.”

Memories

Oswald Hall and Delbert Clark have much in common. Besides their close association as colleagues, collaborators and friends “over a great number of years,” they have similar origins for both were born and reared in Saskatchewan. Clark surmises that Hall’s search for knowledge as a sociologist “could not help but be influenced by his experience of growing up in a northern Saskatchewan rural community.” Hall’s early exposure to deeply rooted multicultural prejudices would allow him to later look back and objectively view the changes occurring “with a sympathetic understanding of why people behaved and thought as they did.” He proposes that “Farm life made something of a romantic out of Oswald Hall. It also made something of a radical out of him. There could be no easy acceptance of things as they were when from all sides the farmer appeared to be at the mercy of powerful interests outside.” Clark affirms “that it was at McGill that he made his most significant contribution to the development of sociology in Canada,” and that these “were the happiest of his university career.”²⁸

Hall agrees. “In this sense the two decades spent in Toronto stand in stark contrast to two decades at McGill. The McGill experience coheres across three distinct ep-

ochs. The first was that of the student, meeting with an extremely inspiring set of teachers. Though this lasted for only two calendar years its echoes continued for a long time. The second epoch was the mirror image – the returning to McGill as a teacher to meet a cohort of inspiring and very hard-working students. These were later replaced by others somewhat less concerned about their minds and their careers, but the post war students nonetheless left a continuing imprint on the work of Sociology. The third epoch was that of a very lively association with a band of highly varied scholars – novelists, poets, doctors, nurses, engineers and architects as well as the members of one’s own and cognate disciplines. If these consumed some of one’s time they more than repaid it by the intellectual stimulation they generated. Few of them have survived the ravages of time, but they have not disappeared from memory.

“Of course the McGill context could not long endure. I felt guilty on leaving it, but its own rendezvous with painful changes was at hand. And there was no way to anticipate in 1957 what the future would bring to Toronto. Though most of it was tinged with surprise and dismay, it provided by far the best sort of career I can envisage.”²⁹

Although not covered in this paper, it should be noted that Dr. Hall remains content with the sixteen tumultuous years he spent on the CMCC Board of Governors (1982 to 1998). “The people I worked with on the CMCC Board were unique. They were devoted to the College and committed to acting in its best interests. They sublimated their own desires for the betterment of CMCC. They had persistence and endurance. Many of them stayed on the Board through good times and bad, for years. I don’t think people like that exist anymore.” [Personal communication, June 2005]

During his illustrious career Oswald Hall received a number of tributes. To name a few: in 1974 he was elected Honorary President of the Canadian Sociological and Anthropology Association; in 1977 he was awarded a Fellowship in the Royal Society of Canada; and in 1992 he was made an Honorary Member of CMCC. Those of us who chanced to meet Dr. Hall along the way, feel honoured as well, and cherish our memories of this noble Canadian.

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