
New Treasurer

By Hamish Cameron

When David Tupper takes office as Treasurer of The Law Society of British Columbia in January, 1987, he will be following in the footsteps of his father, Reginald Hibbert Tupper, Q.C. who was Treasurer for two years from 1949 to 1951, and his grandfather, Sir Charles Hibbert Tupper, Q.C., who was Treasurer in the nineteen twenties. David's great-grandfather, also Sir Charles Tupper, being a physician rather than a lawyer, was not eligible to be Treasurer and so contented himself by serving as a Founder of Confederation and as Prime Minister of Canada for a brief period before the Conservatives went down to defeat in the 1896 elections.

That defeat sent the elder Sir Charles back to retirement in England, whence he had come to lead the Tories, and drove his son, Charles Hibbert, who had been a cabinet minister in his father's government, to emigrate to British Columbia where he established the law firm of which David is a senior partner today and in which David has practised vigourously and continuously since graduating with the first U.B.C. Law Faculty class in 1948.

David's education before law school was hit-and miss: expelled from Crofton House kindergarten for an overly strident protest against a classmate's appropriation of his pencil box, David became a day-boy at St. George's in Vancouver. Later he was sentenced, for sins long-forgotten, to "serve time" (David's phrase) at Shawnigan Lake School for Boys. He was reprieved by a serious illness after four years at that school and he returned to St. George's. After senior matriculation he spent an hilariously happy but scholastically undistinguished year at Queens University. By this time, the Second World War was in full swing but, because of a hearing impairment which had resulted from his earlier illness, David's services were not in great demand by His Majesty. However, after taking a pre-enlistment course at Vancouver Technical School as a radio operator-mechanic, David was accepted into the R.C.A.F. and took basic training in Toronto and Montreal before being shipped to Gander, Newfoundland for a year and a half and to Summerside, Prince Edward Island for another year or so. Then, desperate to join his friends overseas, David signed up for a radar course which successfully re-introduced him to the disciplines of scholarship but did not get him overseas. The war ended while he was still in Canada and in the fall of 1945 David started law school where he became interested in politics, serving as president of the campus Conservative Club with Les Bewley as secretary.

After graduation from law school these two led a ginger-group that mounted a campaign to remove Hebert Anscomb as leader of the provincial Conservative Party and replace him with W.A.C. Bennett. Bennett lost the leadership race, crossed the floor to join the Social Credit Party and the rest is history. David and his group had, however, managed to destroy the provincial Conservative Party for generations to come and David wisely abandoned politics for good.

David's positions on issues are not always what you might expect from a fourth-generation Tory. The Benchers are already aware of this, and no doubt during his year in office, the profession and the public will come to the same understanding. Most of us know of David's earnest defence of the government-funded legal aid system, but few know that some years ago David discussed legal aid with Ivan Illich, the world-class sociological maverick, during a three month stay at Illich's institute in

Cuernavaca, Mexico. Some may remember that R. H. Tupper led the Benchers' charge against Gordon "Heggie" Martin and thereby managed to keep our Law Society free of the menace to our free institutions created by at least one member of the Communist Party. Few know that David Tupper, our new Treasurer, wrote a long and (almost certainly) impassioned plea to the Benchers on Martin's behalf.

As you can see, David Tupper brings to the office of Treasurer a history of service, a sense of the importance of the rule of law and of an independent bar, and a mind open to new ideas and solutions. In addition, he has a fine ability to weigh the merits and worth of an individual against the merits of an accepted principle or a piece of conventional wisdom. His love for the tranquility and unspoiled natural beauty of Hermit Island, his family retreat in Howe Sound, may not add to his fitness for this high office but it is, along with his love of family, a major part of his life and, in many ways, the true measure of the man we, who have worked with him, regard with such affection.

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