

ELI AMONG THE ICE FLOES
OR: NEVER GIVE A SAGA AN EVEN BREAK

Being a one-shot describing my epic search for a job in the frozen wastelands of Saskatchewan, as well as a first draft for KRATOPHANY and an excuse to try out our new mimeo (a Gestetner 300 which Susan and I bought for only \$60). Available only to a very select list of lucky friends who will then be able to skip vast quantities of the next Krat.

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When we last left our hero, his landed immigrant application had been rejected by the Canadian Consulate for "lack of employment," his job offer was caught in the Canadian postal strike, Regina was flooded, and he was trapped on the bottom of the acid-filled oceans of Venus with every lethal organism mind-programmed by the Galactic Overlord for his destruction ...

Actually, I was waiting for a telegram from my employer, sent to bypass the strike, confirming my job; the Galactic Overlord had been defeated three episodes ago.

Suddenly the phone rang. It was Western Union, and they had a telegram for me. I told them to deliver it instantly, and I was assured it would be in my hands that very evening.

Five days later, not only didn't I have the telegram, but all traces of its existence had disappeared from the Western Union office. Six days later it didn't matter, for the postal strike was over and I had in my hand not just a job offer from the Public Health Dept. of Saskatchewan, but a letter from Jenny Smythe of the Labour Department expressing strong interest in interviewing me for a job as soon as I arrived in Regina.

Let me backtrack a minute and explain something about the Saskatchewan provincial government: There are two kinds of civil service jobs -- Permanent Appointments, which necessitate formal advertisements and selection on a competitive basis, and Temporary Appointments, which can be given at the discretion of Directors for a maximum of 12 months. I had been offered a Temporary Appointment.

Imagine my surprise when the Consulate, in response to my two letters and glowing description of the skills and training I was bringing to Saskatchewan, coldly informed me that I had not offered "sufficient evidence of lasting employment" in Canada, and turned me down again. Since they had also told me I couldn't work without landed immigrant status, it looked pretty dismal.

However, they had also delayed telling me this for long enough that all my plans were made, so I figured I'd leave for Regina anyway and look for a permanent job that would satisfy them.

A SEPARATE AND COMPLETE APPLICATION MUST BE FILLED OUT FOR EACH POSITION FOR WHICH YOU APPLY:

The first interview I had was with Jennie Smythe, who turned out to be a transplanted American with a formerly-draft-age son. I explained my problem with temporary appointments, and Jennie gently explained that she was a temporary appointment. The red tape required by the Public Service Commission for a Permanent Appointment is so horrendous, in fact, that most

of her division consisted of temps -- apparently after 12 months they change all the job titles and rehire everybody, which pisses off the Public Service Commission no end.

She did, however, give me some names to check, as did my almost-employer, and advised me to apply for the Permanent Appointments advertised in the papers. So I spent the next few weeks talking to lots of people (most of them friendly and helpful). And, since the government will not do anything without a Public Service Commission job application, I spent hours writing "Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund, Inc." in little tiny spaces marked "Previous Employer." Over and over again.

Anyway, all this is mere prolog, for in the course of my wanderings I met Ian Potter at the Department of Social Services.

THE LONGEST UNDEFENDED BORDER IN THE WORLD:

Ian was marvelous. He thought a permanent position was a possibility in the long run, but would have to wait until Social Services finished the massive reorganization it was currently in the throes of. However, the E.S.P. project desperately needed someone to put in about two months work...

I explained that Canadian Manpower and Immigration in New York had told me I had to be a landed immigrant to work, that I couldn't be a landed immigrant on the basis of a temporary job, and that temporary work visas were only available in such extraordinary cases that I needn't even bother about them. Besides, I had never done very well with Rhine cards.

Ian handed me a booklet on the Employment Support Program and called Manpower and Immigration in Regina. The friendly natives told him that all that was needed for a temporary work permit was assurance that no Canadians were being displaced -- and they managed to give the impression that they could care less about that, but Ottawa worried about such things.

Everything looked just rosy.

But just a few little details had to be taken care of ...

AND MOSES SAID, "WHY DON'T WE JUST TAKE A SHORTCUT THROUGH THIS DESERT":

First of all, it turned out Ian didn't work for Social Services -- he was a troubleshooter sent over from Central Planning to help during the reorganization. So he had to find someone there to write me a letter of employment.

There ensued a comedy of errors involving Deputy Ministers with necessary signatures being in Winnipeg, and letters theoretically mailed actually found sitting on desks in Personnel, and secretaries leaving early for Election Day; but after a week of slapstick I finally got a lovely letter offering me a (temporary) Research Officer position, and going on about my "unique qualifications." I promptly trotted over to Manpower with it and asked for a temporary work permit.

Let me say that throughout the subsequent two and a half weeks of aggravation and delay, the people at Manpower remained perfectly friendly and gave every appearance of being helpful.

First off, as to what the New York Consulate said: Not only was there nothing extraordinary about work permits, there was a regular procedure and (of course!) set of forms, and everyone gave the impression that such a thing was quite normal and commonplace. A Ms. Quirk took my name, address, and a copy of the letter, asked some questions about my qualifications, and told me I'd know by the end of the week.

Now, I'm not blaming her for being out for two days -- anybody can get sick. And I suppose it's normal in a large, busy office for a person to have to call twice in three hours, and be assured each time that someone would call back immediately. But the second time the guy told me (after I explained my problem) that he'd call me back in ten minutes, as soon as he found

my file. And the call I got ten minutes later was a result of my first call, which was OK except the caller in question had no idea of what the problem was (he had gotten back from lunch and found a message to call me), and after we'd straightened that out, he offered to call me back in ten minutes as soon as he found my file ...

Anyway, I eventually got hold of Ms. Quirk, and she apologized all over the place and said I would know in just another week, because they had to search for available Canadians. So while they scoured the continent looking for Canadian citizens with graduate degrees in statistics, programming experience, and writing ability, who wanted to move to Regina for a temporary job, I sat back and chewed my fingernails.

CALGARY ARRIVES AT THE LAST MINUTE:

I have to hand it to them; it took a little more than a week, but they did manage to come up with what they thought was a suitable resume -- a chap from Calgary, only about 800 miles away. So it was now up to my employer to decide between us. Ian assured me it was a mere formality. But Manpower had to go through the motions, so all we could do was get it over with as quickly as possible.

Except... remember that Ian didn't work for Social Services. The actual offer of employment was signed by the Deputy Minister for Personnel, and by God, Manpower had to talk to him. Of course, since Deputy Ministers are hard to find, this took a few hours, and he just said he didn't know anything about it and they'd have to talk to Ian, who by this time was in conference... (The third time I called Ms. Quirk to check on progress, she confided to me that it had been a very frustrating day. Amen.)

Ah, but eventually everyone got together, the motions were gone through, I got my permit (it took about five minutes once the decisions were made), and I am now employed in the Saskatchewan Department of Social Services with a work visa good until July, 1975.

I have a chance of a permanent job with them, I still have half a dozen job applications out, and Immigration here offered to expedite a landed immigrant application if I cared to make one. (The trouble with that is I have to sit out some of the processing from outside Canada, and even "expedited" at this end, it could take a while.)

But as you can see, things look a bit more hopeful now.

If any of the preceding seems far-fetched, I'll be glad to talk to you and explain all the stuff I left out because it sounded too unbelievable.

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By the way, despite all the frozen North comments, Regina has been almost uniformly sunny and warm in the 70's. They even have some kind of arrangement whereby it only rains at night. It is, however, just as flat as I was promised, so Susan and I have named our third-floor apartment Gobrln Heights. (That's from the Gobrln Ice Sheet in Left Hand of Darkness.)

I expect to be in New York for a few weeks around Worldcon time. Cheers.

my wife. And the call I got ten minutes later was a result of my first call. I had the call I got ten minutes later was a result of my first call. I had the call I got ten minutes later was a result of my first call.

anyway, I eventually got hold of Mr. Galt, and she explained all over the place and said I would have to get another week, because they had to search for available candidates. So while they searched the candidate looking for Canadian citizens with graduate degrees in statistics, programming or foreign, and writing ability, who wanted to move to Regina for a temporary job, I sat back and chived my fingers.

CALGARY OFFICE AT THE LAST MINUTE

I have to hand it to him; he took a little more than a week, but they did manage to come up with what they thought was a suitable person -- a chap from Calgary, only about 300 miles away. So it was one up to my employer in the end. I'm sure that the person was a sure bet, but I'm sure that to go through the process, as all he could do was get it over with as quickly as possible.

Anyway... remember that last time I got for Social Services. The actual offer of employment was signed by the Deputy Minister for Personnel, and by the Deputy Minister for Social Services. Of course, since Deputy Ministers are not to talk to the public, and he just said he didn't know anything about it, I had to wait a few hours, and he just said he didn't know anything about it. (The third time I called Mr. Galt to check on progress, she confided to me that it had been a very frustrating day. Amen.)

At that eventually everyone got together, the parties were given through. I got my results the next day about five minutes after the decision was made, and I was employed in the Saskatchewan Department of Social Services with a start date of July 1, 1975.

I have a chance of a permanent job with them. I will have half a dozen job applications out, and I'm sure that they will be offered a number of permanent positions if I come to make one. (The trouble with that is I have to get all out of the processing line outside Canada, and even "expedited" at this end, it could take a while.)

But as you can see, things look a bit more hopeful now. If any of the processing seems far-fetched, I'll be glad to talk to you and explain all the details I take out because it sounds too unbelievable.

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