

## JOHN THOMAS CULLITON, 1905–1963

JOHN CULLITON had been a member of the teaching staff of McGill University for just over thirty-six years when he succumbed, after a gallant fight, to cancer. At the time of his death there were none in his department and few in his faculty whose period of service to the university matched his. He will be remembered with affection by all those who, as students or colleagues, knew him in his time at McGill.

He was born of Canadian parents in Englevalle, North Dakota, on April 23, 1905. His grandfather, who had won the Victoria Cross in the Crimea, had migrated to Canada from County Cork, and settled in Dunnville, Ontario. Born in Dunnville, John Culliton's father was one of the many in his time who sought a career on the railways. While he was telegrapher and station agent in Englevalle he met and married a schoolteacher, a Canadian whose family had settled originally in Orillia. But the new family did not remain long in North Dakota. The year John was born his father led an unsuccessful strike, and moved to Saskatchewan, where he joined the CPR and later took up land at Harbert. All of these matters had some bearing on the subsequent career of John Culliton.

He graduated from school in Elbow, and entered the University of Saskatchewan in 1921, working his way by tamping ties on the CPR. In 1926 he took his BA in Economics and Latin and entered McGill. Both McGill and Chicago had offered him graduate scholarships: he chose McGill on his father's advice. In 1927 he completed his MA and was appointed lecturer in economics by Stephen Leacock. His thesis, which Leacock had directed, was entitled "Assisted Emigration and Land Settlement: with Special Reference to Western Canada", and was subsequently published in the McGill Economic Studies Series. In 1931 he received a Royal Society Fellowship which took him on a tour of universities in the British Empire, ending with a year of study at the London School of Economics. On his return to McGill in the autumn of 1932 he was appointed Assistant Professor of Economics. He was to remain at McGill for the rest of his life, save for wartime service as an administrative officer in the Royal Canadian Air Force. In 1952 he became Associate Professor of Economics.

His early research on his thesis not only began his friendship with Leacock—a relationship which meant much to both of them—it also nourished his interest in the fields of economics which were to occupy him for the balance of his life. He was a westerner and he saw Canadian economic development through western eyes. His early life on the farm and the railroad gave him an intimate grasp of the great themes of transportation, land settlement, and wheat which dominated the Canadian economy for so long. To his teaching he brought a masculine earthy sense of reality which made the stuff of economics come alive to generations of students.

He was discharged from the air force just in time to plunge into the heavy teaching burdens of the veterans' bulge. For three years he taught throughout

the summers as well as through the normal terms. He never complained, his enthusiasm for his students never wavered, and countless veteran students found him a reassuring presence in a university world which was new and strange.

In December, 1955, he married Agnes Helen Middleton. Not all confirmed bachelors find marriage congenial. But marriage brought a new warmth into his life. He bore his illness with great fortitude. For much of the last year of his life he worked with all the energy he could summon in revising Leacock's *Montreal: Seaport and City*, which the publishers had decided to reissue. Nothing could have given him more pleasure than to revise the work of his old friend and mentor. And the work was finished, though the page proofs came back when he was in hospital. John Culliton had finished the work he had begun with his MA thesis. Few men of his time at McGill will be remembered with so much affection.

J. R. MALLORY