

# The After-Dinner Conversation

Originally written forty years ago.

**Standing on the shoulders of all those yet to come,  
I follow behind all those gone before,  
with the hope, that my contribution  
will benefit the cause of humankind.**

British Columbia's Provincial Government awarded Queen's Counsel appointments for 1982 in the first week of February. James Baker received a nomination for his QC appointment on February 14, 1982. He had not expected it because it could not become an appointment for another year. That evening, he and a colleague, Thomas Crabtree (hereinafter referred to as Tom) had an after-dinner-conversation. Other than briefly answering a question I participated by listening.

The consequence of the conversation has haunted me these past forty years. Its subject matter more relevant today than it has ever been. Following the conversation, I transcribed it, and swear it remains accurate and true.

James had been the guest of honour at a dinner that evening which ended around quarter past nine. He travelled home with Tom; on the way, they stopped off at the home of James Baker's former bookkeeper, Ms. Jenny Mitchel where I was a guest. It was an infamous day for me as it has been an enormous influence over my life for many of the next 40 years, but of course, I had no idea of that on February 14, 1982, Jenny's boyfriend, Jerry, made up our party of four. Jenny shared her home with Angie, my girlfriend. The four of us had spent the evening enjoying a Valentine's Day dinner. At around ten-fifteen a car drove into the carport. Two men got out and one of them knocked on the door. Jenny opened it, and in walked James Baker and Tom. Jenny poured drinks for the six of us and while handing them out she said, "I hear congratulations are in order."

"Ah," said James, "You already know. When did you hear about it"?

"This afternoon, around 4:30. Anyway, this is Tony Hewitt, and this is my room mate Angie, his girlfriend. James looked like an early version of Mr. Pickwick from Charles Dickens, 'Pickwick Papers' except instead of a bald head, he had a full

head of hair with greyish white, salt and pepper sideburns. Jenny said, "I see you're wearing one of your ruffled QC shirts." "I thought I'd look the part for my celebration dinner. I had to purchase this pair of grey slacks; otherwise, I wouldn't have been able to go." He was standing with his back to the kitchen cupboards along the north wall, leaning on the edge of the countertop to the right of where Angie stood. On his right stood Jerry, and next to him stood Jenny, Tom stood to the right of her, and I stood next to him.

I piped up and said, "Wow, what a perfect day for this to have happened." James froze, turned, and glared at me like he had seen a ghost. He asked in a somewhat indignant way, "What do you mean?" I answered "I mean it's Valentine's Day. It's a perfect day for you to be recognised and honoured, you know—celebrated." "Oh, of course," James responded, chuckling. Jenny then asked when he'd found out. "Well, my office took the call late this afternoon, about four-fifteen, I think. I was in court at the time. The judge was told about the same time. He congratulated me then postponed the hearing. The call probably came from the AG's downtown office, or it may have come from an office of one of the Justices. I do have some friends down there you know. Anyway, I wasn't expecting the nomination because they're usually issued before appointments are made, and this year's appointments were given out last week. If my nomination becomes an appointment, I shall not receive it until next year. I think they want to take a closer look at me. You know, see what more I have to offer." (His nomination became an appointment in March 1983.) James turned to Tom saying, "I bet you can't guess what I did to win the case that got me the nomination"? Tom answered saying, "I have no idea, but I bet it was something special knowing you.

Jenny turned to Jerry saying, "I'm not going to hear this. It's too much shop talk for me. Come on." Grabbing Jerry's arm, they disappeared down a hallway.

Angie turned to me and grabbed my arm saying, "Come on; let's go," but I wanted to hear what they had to say, so I said, "No thanks; you go ahead if you like. I want to hear this." Angie left, and I was left standing in the kitchen with James Baker and Tom.

James Baker turned to Tom and said, "I guess this guy will have to do for an audience." Turning towards me James Baker said, "Step back a bit, wont you? There's a good chap. I wish to speak to my friend about a legal matter for a minute." I stepped back and leaned forward. James Baker turned to his left.

Placing his left arm around Tom's right shoulder he pulled Tom towards a countertop. Bending over it, James Baker began to make a scribbling motion with his right hand while saying:

"I typed up a Transfer of Ownership Agreement for a client, then taped his father's signature to the underside of the glass topped table I keep in the office. You know the one in the corner by the stairs. Next, I shone a light from underneath the table to illuminate the signature through the glass. I then taped a copy of the Transfer of Ownership Agreement to the top of the table, so the signature could be seen through the agreement. I walked around the table, so I could see the upside-down signature backwards. A forensic document examiner once told me that if a forger traced backwards over an upside-down signature, the forgery became more difficult to detect. I practiced the technique until satisfied with the result. Over Christmas, I drove to New Westminster and paid one of the registry clerks to stamp and place the agreement inside the courts file. Ha! You should have seen the other side when the clerk found it inside the court file at the beginning of the next hearing. Of course, I put on quite a show. You would have been proud of me. I even protested that I had not been served."

Tom's reaction was like that of a scolded cat. In an automatic manner, he bent further at the waist, spun to his right, and pulled away—as if he had been punched in the solar plexus. He straightened up, and with tears in his eyes, he exclaimed, "You can't do that! That's illegal! That's fraud! You can go to jail for that! What have you done? Look at the position you have put me in! I'll have to report you!"

James Baker: "No you won't. Besides, it won't do you any good. They already know, and besides, it's not illegal anymore, or it won't be once the Charter comes on board. It will be up to the other side to catch me. I've even heard they might use the case as precedence for the new Charter of Rights and Freedoms once it comes on board. There's nothing to worry about. I'm going to throw you more work than you've ever seen. Everything is going to be different now."

Tom: "I know, but not like that. That's fraud!"

James Baker: "No it's not! Don't blame me! It's not me! It's that idiot (Pierre) Trudeau! He's the one whose opened up the whole damn system. I'm telling you. Everything is different now. It's going to be a wide-open system. In a few short

years, everybody will be doing it, right across the country. Weren't you at the Law Society's annual meeting last week?"

Tom: "No."

James Baker: "I was. You should have been there. They had quite a turnout. The place was packed."

Tom: "I heard something about it, but I was too busy. I used the time to catch up on some paperwork; you know how it is."

James: "Oh well, anyway, they had to delay the keynote address for close to twenty-five minutes whilst extra seating was brought into the auditorium. That new up-and-coming deputy Attorney General, Bryan Bud Smith or it may have been Brian Bud Williams, I'm not sure which one gave the speech. You know the chap though. I hear he likes his marijuana amongst other things; if you know what I mean. Ha! Ha! They say his nickname is Bud. I guess he's everybody's bud now. He gave an excellent speech, and although he couched his words in legal jargon, his message was very clear. Common people will no longer be able to hide behind the rights of the individual. From now on, every person's individual civil right will be held inside the courtroom as a collective right. Then we'll be able to manage them. You should have heard him. He even said the AG's office is taking control of the public purse through the courts. He received several standing ovations."

James Baker turned towards me and asked, "So, what do you think of that young man?"

I answered, "I suppose it'll be okay, as long as the courts are still able to find the truth. James Baker laughed and said, "Ah, the truth, don't worry about the truth. We're going to look after the truth." Rubbing his hands together, he did a little skip across the kitchen floor and continued in a gleeful voice. "There's money to be made—lots of it. This Charter thing is the largest money making work program we've ever experienced. It's a huge white elephant. Of course, in return we'll have to look after the government's money. You know, that's the real problem. They're losing too much money, and they're worried. This democratic system is far too expensive. If they can't turn the tap off soon, the whole damn thing is going down the toilet, and they're not going to let that happen. We are the brightest and the best educated. We've read more books than the rest of them,

so it only stands to reason that we should be in charge. When the Charter returns, everyone will have collective rights which we will hold inside the court-room. Then we'll see. The poor buggers, they think it's going to be business as usual, but it's not. The morons, they're all bloody morons. You know what they're like. They're like cattle in a pen. If we use the right prod, we can get them to go anywhere. Following last week's meeting, a few of us were asked to volunteer for a special program that's being put together over at the AG's office. It's all very hush-hush. We're going to assist them in the development of strategies that will help them manage special cases inside the Supreme Court. I've already been asked to join, and I've said yes. Would you like to join us? I could put in a good word for you."

Tom: "I don't know. I'll have to think about it. How would a special case work?"

James Baker: "Well it hasn't been put together yet, so I'm not certain, but the rules of engagement will probably run something like this. A QC will be given a file and allowed to pick a team. Then he'll be allowed to do whatever he likes to get the file through the courts as long as he doesn't get caught. Mind you, if he does get caught doing something wrong, the office will have to disown him, and he'll be punished and publicly disgraced. Then, whatever he's been caught doing wrong will never be allowed to be used against the public again. Of course, there's not much chance of that ever happening. By the time we get the program up and running, we'll have our own people staged throughout the system. If you want to join us, you'd better hurry. Our first meeting will be held in Victoria next month or in the first week of April at the latest. They've got to hurry. The Charter's arriving back from England in twelve, or sixteen weeks. I'm not really, sure. Then we'll have to begin in earnest. You should see the changes they're considering. They've been exploring it for months. Nothing's off the table. We're going to start in the corporation and see what works there. Then, whatever works there will be carried over into some of the other portfolios. They're really concerned about big-ticket items like the Ministries of Health, Education, and Social Services. It's all costing too much, and nobody can prove that any of it works, or that there's any real payback. Take the Ministry of Education, that's really got to change. There's far too much waste within the system. Besides, some of us believe that an uneducated populace will be easier to manage than an educated one. The immigration doors are being thrown wide open to increase the tax base. Some believe the family has become too powerful at the ballot box, so we're going to create some new ideas for them as well. You know, divide, and conquer and all

that. Of course, what we'd really like to do is have one of our own elected to a seat in government. Then we'd really be able to manage the system, but that's more of a long-term project, fifteen to twenty years I'd imagine. (Twenty-two years later Mr. Justice Wally Opel resigned his seat in the Supreme Court and became the Attorney General of British Columbia.) James Baker continued: We understand there will be some chaos, but we'll have the resources to manage it, so it won't matter. I've even heard the think-tanks have been asked to look at some of the really big questions."

Tom: "Like what».

James Baker: "Well, it's been decided to transfer the wealth of the west to the east around the turn of the century. They don't know how they're going to accomplish it, or to whom it will go, although both China and India are looking pretty good right now. Anyway, they've been discussing it over at the AG's office."

Tom: "But, who's decided, and why?"

James Baker: "Oh, you know, the usual suspects, the Royals and others like them. Mind you, I don't know if that includes the Royals of Europe or just the British Royals; they are always involved. Too many of us will be retiring soon, and the government has already spent a lot of retirement funds on social programs they could ill afford. I mean let's face it; too many of us have been at the trough of plenty for far too long. It's too bad really. They've known for years, this day was coming, and now it's time to pay the piper. They've been discussing it over in the White House library for years but haven't been able to find a solution. The G group has gotten hold of the problem now, and they think they may have a solution. They are really concerned. If they can't find a way out of this mess soon, they're going to run out of money, and the whole damn thing will go down the toilet. We've no other choice. We can't tell the public because we'd end up with a rebellion on our hands. The Royals and others like them have agreed. We have had the money this century, so it should be somebody else's turn next century. That's not all. They're really concerned about world population growth."

Tom: "What do you mean?"

James Baker: "They believe, by the year two thousand and fifty, the world's population will have climbed to around nine billion, and they don't think the

planet will have the resources to sustain that number of souls. They're wondering if they'll be able to find a different way of managing the problem, or if they'll have to use the same old method. Think-tanks have been brain-storming the idea of another war. Their latest estimates suggest up to two-thirds of the planet's population would be lost in the next war. Mind you, they'd be able to begin again. We're going to go all the way. Why, even as we speak, we have one of our own flying south to talk to the other side."

Tom raised an eyebrow in a somewhat quizzical expression and asked, "What! You mean the criminal element?"

James Baker: "Yes. Exactly. Our man, well I say our man, but he is not actually one of us. He's an attorney who is well known for playing both sides of the fence, so to speak. It's all very unofficial of course, and nothing's in writing. Anyway, he has instructions to enter into some high-level negotiations with some of the more respectable crime families down there. The government wants to know if there are any areas of commonality where government and organised crime might work together for the benefit of the common good. The government wants to create a more balanced society. Some believe it's been too one sided for far too long. Anyway, as it stands, the criminal element is too chaotic. Some in government believe we could manage it better than it's being managed now. Mind you, I'm not sure how they'd accomplish that. Perhaps, they could run a shadow government. You know, democracy during the day, and the criminal part at night. I mean they have that huge building in Victoria. Its empty all night. Nobody ever goes there; Christ, nobody would even know. Apparently, the criminals in South America have been getting too much heat from the Americans, so they're looking for a safe haven for their distribution networks. I mean let's face it; crime has always been with us. It's never been defeated, and it never will be. Besides this whole democracy thing has never really worked properly either. What harm could we do? We are the brightest and the best educated, so it only stands to reason that we should be in charge. Besides, it's about time we started giving the people what they really want. We're serious. I'm telling you. If we don't do something soon, we're going to run out of money, and they're not going to let that happen."

Tom: But where will they get the ideas to put it all together.

James Baker: I don't know. We'll probably have to ask our friends in the Masons; they usually have some good ideas.

Tom took a step forward; using his right hand, he grabbed James Baker's right sleeve and nodded towards me. James Baker looked at me and snickered.

James Baker: "What are you talking about? Hell, he's drunk; come morning, he won't even remember what we were talking about. Besides, you know how the office looks after things like that. Russia's not the only place where you can get a knock on the door in the middle of the night. You wait and see, with incremental steps over the next five years, or so, we are going to plant people who think like us throughout the system. Just think how much money we'll be able to save. Can you imagine the kind of games we'll be able to play with our trust accounts? You know what we can do with them already, don't you?" As he spoke, James Baker tapped his right nostril with his fore-finger; sniffed hard and said, "If you know what I mean." A short time later, the conversation ended, and they disappeared into the night.

Today, forty years later, much of the world's wealth has been transferred from the middle class to the one percent and their new markets overseas. Now, the world struggles to survive the Corona virus which has taken hold. This is such a disgrace. You whom we trusted so much have failed the world. Your manipulation of circumstances causes delay; it is increasing the number of people who die. I believe the G7 are entering the final stages of the five-part program their predecessors developed so long ago. They are presenting their case, and when they have finished presenting their case, they are going to have another world war to manage the world's population. When they've accomplished that they will begin their monopoly game again; however, the next time, common people will be living in a free and open society without services or protections. I pray the common people will hold them to account.

Tony Hewitt

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tony Hewitt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the beginning and a small checkmark at the end.

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