

Mrs. bentley case essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Mrs.

BentleyThe speaker is Mrs. Bentley, the protagonist of the novel "As for Me and My House" (1941) by Sinclair (James) Ross (1908-96). Mrs. Bentley is the wife of the local clergyman in Horizon, in the Saskatchewan region of Canada. From the words of Mrs. Bentley, it can be understood that she and her husband were "pinched" meaning they were finding it hard to live within the pay they were given, which happened to be \$15 that week.

They obviously had large outstanding amounts as debts and sizeable amounts of their salary were spent in repaying/servicing these debts. For example, Mrs. Bentley had to pay \$10 towards servicing the loan for the car. Furthermore, she was worried that she had other mounting debts at "the butcher's shop and Dawson's store" presumably, the grocer. Additionally, the postponement of buying "shoes and a hat" though her husband did need it, indicated that they could not afford the cost of the two accessories at that point of time.

However, the author does give the readers a glimpse of Mrs. Bentley's indulgent nature, in the justification of her ordering a "spring hat" for herself, as it just cost "a dollar forty-five" which was not much! Regarding the time period of the story, as indicated in the document, is in the 1930s, when Canada was still mainly dependant on its agricultural produce, fishing and fur-trading as its major economy-supporting businesses. Industrialization had not yet touched Canada and British North America, and thus, money circulation and employment opportunities depended largely on the vagrant weather conditions. This is indicated in the words "I sit thinking about the

dust, the farmers, the crops..." Partridge Hill, the place wherein their Church and an associated missionary school was located overlooked the prairies or the grasslands of North America. The region seems to be dry and arid, and extremely windy. Throughout the document one comes across references to wind and the power with which it blows over the region as, "dust goes reeling"; "whimpering and strumming through the eaves"; "dry hard crackle of sand against the windows" etc. It had also been very dry in the previous years, and probably crops had failed due to drought as she wonders "what another dried-out year" would mean to them. As for the audience, it is a fiction, and is meant for reading by all interested in the history of Canada during the highly nascent period of 1930s.

However, within the document, date and time is marked at the top end of the page as "Sunday Evening, April 30". This indicates that it may be some sort of a personal diary, or a notepad maintained by Mrs. Bentley, purely as a personal record, and meant for no outside audience. The purpose of the document appears to be personal record-keeping, noting daily events, petty expenses as well as events, personal feelings etc. The ultimate effect that the document produces is one of a picture painted in the rural settings of Saskatchewan, Canada, portraying the life of the middle-class immigrant missionaries in their endeavor to educate and spread the message of Christ. Adding color and richness to the portrait are the vivid details of sound, color-tones, and emotions, of the characters that fill the canvas, with their internal conflicts, external appearances, and the vagrancy of climate, and difficulties of economy.

Source: Sinclair Ross, "As For Me and My House" (1941) New York.

Reprinted(Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1970), 37-9.