

FROG FABLES & BEAVER TALES



Not all cartoons are born and die in the daily press. Cartoonist Roy Peterson of the *Vancouver Sun* and writer Stanley Burke created *Frog Fables & Beaver Tales*, a splendid, moral, metaphorical, analogical, allegorical and impudent story about North American animal life. It begins: "Once upon a time long ago there dwelt a race of Beavers. These industrious animals lived in a faraway Swamp called Canada, where they built dams and cut down trees and were prosperous and happy." The Beavers ran into problems; for there were also "the Paranoid Eagles and the Perfidious Frogs."

The Beavers (perhaps it is already obvious) were the traditional English-speaking Canadians, most of whom lived in Ontario. The high-spirited Frogs who "in ancient times . . . had been owners of the Swamp lived in the shallow end of the Swamp." The Water Rats and Muskrats, who were somewhat poorer than the Beavers, and the Lobsters, who were relatively rich, lived on the far eastern edge. The Gophers lived in a sandy sort of place in the west, next door to the Otters, who lived in the far west, "where the water tumbled through a rocky gorge out to a lovely lake." There were also Turtles, the original inhabitants,

who had been left out of practically everything.

Below the Swamp was the vast land of the Eagles, the "richest and most powerful of the animals," though those who lived in the treetops were more rich and powerful than those who lived on the lower branches.

The chief minister was Peter E. Waterhole, a "strangely attractive" Frog, who "enchanted the Lady Beavers, whose male companions were, frankly, pretty dull." He married a radiant Otter princess. Peter Waterhole's challengers were Lugubrious J. Standfast, a Lobster who was, above all things, "Moderate," and Don Quickoats, who believed that the dam in the Swamp should not be owned by just the rich Beavers but by all the animals.

Suddenly, it seemed, all the animals had definite and conflicting opinions about the conduct of Swamp affairs. So they consulted the oldest and wisest of the Turtles, who told them: "Do you not see that you cannot unite a swamp? Nor can you separate a swamp. You can only live in it. And you can love it — or you can destroy it."



LE...er...CROAK ?

