

book reviews

Canada 70 challenges—

THE CHALLENGE OF CONFRONTATION, by the Toronto Telegram's Canada 70 Team. McClelland and Stewart Ltd.

The editorial team of the Toronto Telegram has probed the nation's attitudes to 16 Canadian issues in this box set of six pocket-books.

Over 4,000 Canadians from Prime Minister Trudeau to a Nova Scotia lobster fisherman were interviewed and questioned.

And after hearing their diversified opinions on the monarchy, about French-Canadians and about their nation in general, it's amazing how this country ever sticks together.

Separatism is talked about not only in Quebec but in God's country west of the Rockies. And there isn't a province and the people in it that feel they have had a fair deal from Confederation—except maybe Ontario.

So God knows what keeps this country together and the Canada 70 team didn't find out—though they did say the provinces had a common enemy—the federal government. We all seem to keep our hats in the ring to get as much out of the "raw deal" as we can.

The question of Quebec separation brought some very contrary responses — from apathetic: "Let

them go, we can get along better without the Frenchies," to "We should get in there and give them another licking." But the Quebecois made it evident they did not want total separation; they desired the right to determine their cultural destiny in an English majority.

Unfortunately, the Official Languages Bill has wrought tremendous prejudice against the French Canadian and his language. One B.C'er said: "It makes me throw up when I see French on the corn flakes."

Most questioned were not so bigoted, but after reading these six books, the barriers of understanding from region to region in such a vast place come to the fore.

Many Canadians think the east-west pull is not strong enough to fight the magnetic power of the United States. But most want to keep their identity as Canadians and keep the Confederation faith.

However, it is disheartening to read the comment from a Liberal Member of Parliament who wrote: "We would be better off with the U.S.A. financially, socially, educational - wise, and development-wise."

Reading through these diversified opinions does get a bit monotonous—though the '70 team have written in light, journalistic style. The books will quickly become out of date, comparatively, but they are revealing studies of the population we mingle with.

Alberta is lumped in with "The

Prairies" in the book titled "Alienation and Anger." The study includes a concise history of the Prairies and tries to explain why the wheat farmers think as they do—and perhaps why this city and campus are so conservative.

The book set is available now—but, so far, not in French. La prejudice?

—Miriam McClellan

—Such fallout as this

FALLOUT, by Peter Such: House of Anansi.

This is reported to be the best of the five recently-published "Spiderline Editions," a new series of first novels. *Fallout* is not bad, but if it is the best, I am not inspired to read the others in this first batch.

The novel gives us glimpses into the lives of a dozen people during the boom and collapse of Elliot

Lake, Ontario's uranium town. Peter Such affords us no more than glimpses into these lives; however, there is no attempt to construct a *Middlemarch* of the north woods.

What worries me most about the novel is the style. We seem unable in this country to get away from a kind of disjointed, semi-Joycean prose which, in the wrong hands, becomes nothing more than a simple failure to communicate. At times the metre is suited to the matter, as in Gibson's *Five Legs*, but by and large we are heartily grateful when someone like Margaret Atwood gives us graceful, straightforward prose with the speech between quotation marks and the narrative in understandable order.

The fact that Such occasionally relapses into mumbo-jumbo is made all the more infuriating by the fact that he can, when he likes, write like hell, and has a good eye for situation. Consider the non-sensical syntax of the first half of this paragraph, and compare it to the easiness of the second:

"Always is dark here. Out now; they can see the railroad close by. A train is moving it fast but they are overtaking it slowly. They wave to the fireman who toots at them. Then he leans into the cab again. He suddenly leans out with a straw broom and begins paddling over the cab-side with it. He grins seeing them all laughing."

On the credit side, it should be said that Such has a marvelous feel for the landscape, and one of the most compelling aspects of the book is the sense it gives of the vast, rocky forests of Ontario being violated by impermanent civilization. And at least one chapter, that describing the Indian Robert's encounter with the fish-god, raises Such above the level of apprenticeship.

A word about the Spiderline series generally: God bless Anansi for bringing out first novels in a cheap format. One can afford to spend two dollars on a pig in a poke, and surely some of those pigs are going to make the investment worthwhile.

—Terry Donnelly

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