

**Lucifer revealed as York prof**

# The devil you say — Matthew Ahern in disguise

By SUSAN COOPER

The devil walked on stage and coolly told God what was wrong with his operation down on earth. The smooth-talking, scheming Lucifer, clad in a black kaftan and pants was really English professor Matthew Ahern in disguise.

Actually little had to be done by make-up artist Kate Armstrong to transform the wild and woolly professor into the philosophical devil of Arthur Miller's play "The Creation of the World and Other Business."

Did the bushy-bearded professor share any philosophies with Lucifer? Ahern thought for a moment and decided: "I'm for a lot of freedom as Lucifer, but there's something about the old traditions that still make sense... You get to see the truth to what the guy is saying — I think I do... I do, but not overly."

The words of Keats: "Beauty is truth, truth beauty", are a more apt description of Ahern's personal philosophy.

Ahern, who has written a number of

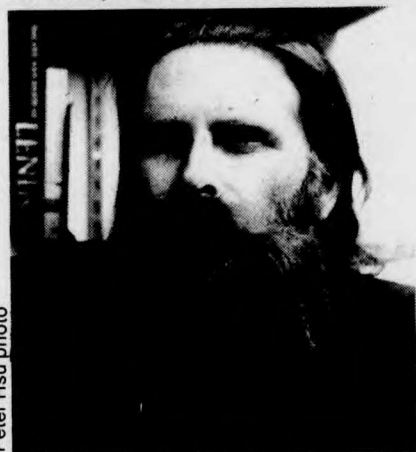
tragedies, finds the medium an ideal form for the expression of truth. Asked if his preoccupation with tragedy (he has three in the works) reveal a pessimistic outlook on life Ahern replied, "not pessimistic, just dark - else why write plays?" He added that he had turned out one very fine comedy - a farce on the business world, but unfortunately the manuscript was lost.

His relations with the business community go back to 1959 when he was a technical writer for the Atomic Energy Commission in Albuquerque. There he wrote their quarterly and annual reports and served as a writing assistant to scientists wishing to publish articles in national periodicals.

After a two-year interlude as a professor at Antioch College, he returned to the non-academic world to become editor for Chemical Abstracts Services.

Purely out of financial motivation, he took a three month IBM course in computer programming. It paid off.

Ahern soon landed a job as Senior Associate Programming Engineer for Univac in Hanover, New Jersey. However, handling all of the writing for a major computer branch, did not



Matthew Ahern

satisfy his creative instincts, so Ahern left Univac to try to make it as an actor in New York.

When that didn't work out he applied and was accepted for a posi-

tion as an assistant professor of English at York University.

Although he enjoys teaching here, Ahern is happiest when directing plays. He has five productions to his credit, three at York: "A Thing Called Love" (which he wrote), "A View From the Bridge", and "After the Fall", (both by Arthur Miller).

Ahern would also like to be a politician. He actually ran for the presidency of the United States in 1968 for his own party, New World. Had he been successful, his first priority as president would have been to redirect a sizeable portion of the military budget into social welfare programs, slum reconstruction in particular.

He also would have tried major government figures, such as Johnson, for war crimes, and reopened the investigation into the assassination of Kennedy.

The US however, wasn't quite ready for Ahern so he returned to

Canada where he did a one-year stint as a Toronto cab-driver.

The next year he was back at York and was promoted to associate professor in 1972. He has just completed a three year term as chairman of the English department at Atkinson.

Teaching nights allows him to tend to his farm in Stouffville where he lives with his wife and 1½ year old daughter, Sarah. The Aherns own four heifers, a small flock of sheep and eight German shepherds.

Sounds like a peaceful existence, but not for long. The 41-year-old professor, a Canadian since last November, plans to re-enter the frenetic world of politics - federal of course. Ahern likes "to be in a position where you're relating to people who are on top of things." At present however, he is lying low until he becomes more established as a Canadian.

## Book Review

### Striker's view of 1919

By GEORGE HEWSON

Winnipeg 1919: Norman Penner, editor; James Lewis and Samuel, publishers; Toronto 1973.

The origins, events, and results of the Winnipeg General Strike of May-June, 1919, are complex and still under debate. Professor Norman Penner of Glendon College has rendered a fine service by making available one side of the story as written by actual participants.

In Winnipeg 1919, edited by Penner, there is reprinted the strikers' own history of the labour dispute that crippled Winnipeg and disturbed the whole nation. The workers' account is lively and has a sense of urgency resulting from its preparation by several of the strike leaders while awaiting trial in the immediate aftermath of the confrontation.

Winnipeg was split into pro- and anti-strike factions, and the persistent class divisions in our society became especially clear. The Citizens' Committee of 1,000, representing the bourgeoisie, reported what was essentially an orderly, disciplined mass walkout seeking the right of collective bargaining, as a potential Bolshevik coup.

The strike totally tied up the city for six weeks, and everyone was forced to recognize which side of the struggle he was on. It was finally suppressed in bloody fashion by the Mounties, who killed one demonstrator and injured many others.

Too much history is written from the top. Historians have often concentrated on economic and political elites as their focus of study, both because

they found these elites of more intrinsic interest and because source material relating to them is more readily available. But the plebs do have voices and do not necessarily require an aristocratic tribune to represent them, as evidenced by the strikers' own description of the strike.

Besides the reprint of what was originally entitled the Winnipeg General Sympathetic Strike, Winnipeg 1919 also contains excerpts from a defence speech delivered by W.A. Pritchard, one of those on trial, and an address made by Peter Heenan MP in 1926 which indicated the Tory government's complicity in prolonging the strike and suppressing it with violence.

And the 40 excellent photographs provided by David Millar, a graduate student in history at York, tell much of the story in themselves.

### Akron computer rejects swearing demands apology

CPS-CUP — Students at the University of Akron will no longer be able to use obscene language in giving instructions to the computer.

Computer centre director, John Hirschbuhl said the computer has been programmed to demand an apology if certain four letter words are used. If the student refuses to apologize, said Hirschbuhl, the computer will turn itself off.

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Mix 1½ ounces of Southern Comfort with the juice of a quarter of a lime. Add some ice. Fill the glass with lemon-lime drink.

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