

# The Orangeburg Questions

(From page 5)

Police officials, explaining why the troopers used shotguns with the heavy shot used by deer hunters, as well as carbine rifles, told the press the wind was blowing away from the students so that they couldn't use tear-gas.

Lazard says he can't remember any wind. "We were out there a long time," he says, "and we would have been a lot colder if there had been a wind." Two S.C. State faculty members, who were on campus Thursday, also can recall no wind.

A photo taken just after the police barrage shows smoke rising from a fire the students had set earlier. The smoke is rising straight up. Another photo, taken before the police moved in, shows smoke drifting in the direction of students.

Gov. McNair indicated last week that one of the reasons the police had to resort to gunfire was that ROTC target rifles had been stolen by students. This week, the governor's representative in Orangeburg, Henry Lake, admitted that the rifles had been stolen after the police barrage.

These, then, are some of the questions of fact that have generated controversy since last Thursday's killings. They are questions about which any competent journalist would try to collect as much evidence as he could before filing a story. They are not unimportant, as shown by the controversy they have aroused. Yet, even if resolved one way or the other, do they explain what has been going on in Orangeburg.

There are other questions that bear on the Orangeburg shootings, but they are of a kind that can't be readily researched in a two or three-day visit to a town that looks and feels like an armed camp. Some of them:

To what extent is Orangeburg a segregated community? Several residents said that the bowling alley, which was the target of student integration efforts early last week, was really a symbol of a widespread pattern of discrimination in Orangeburg. They cited the city hospital, the movie theatres, the schools and the news media as the most discriminatory institutions.

Were "black power militants" responsible for the student demonstrations? One report, unconfirmed, is that the Orangeburg SNCC representative, Cleveland Sellers, opposed both the demonstration at the bowling alley Thursday and the demonstration on campus Thursday night. (At this writing Sellers is still in the state penitentiary in Columbia, S.C. on \$50,000 bond.)

What part was played by the dissatisfaction of students with the kind of education offered at S.C. State in contributing to their frustration? Last year they held large demonstrations and were about to march on the state capitol to protest the fact that some young members of the faculty weren't being rehired.

These are all important questions, and deserve the kind of research that hasn't been made. But most important of all is a question that defies a pat answer: how will Orangeburg affect the thinking of people in this country?

There is little doubt Orangeburg will convince many black people who have been opposed to violent methods that, at the very least, they should arm themselves for self-protection. A co-ed at the University of South Carolina who is a friend of several students at S.C. State said after Thursday's shootings: "They (the S.C. State students) are coming back armed."

What about white Americans? Presumably most of them will see Orangeburg as another black riot. That's how most of the early press reports described it.

On Saturday, two days after the students were shot, a white newsman named Jim Hoagland was hit on the head with a weighted stick. His assailant was Aaron Pyror, a student at Central State University in Ohio who drove to Orangeburg after hearing what had happened. Pyror was reportedly high on drugs.

Early this week another white newsman, a young and very liberal reporter for a Washington paper, mentioned the Hoagland incident, which was filed as a separate story by the Associated Press. He said to me, "That shows those Negroes can't cry about police brutality," or words to that effect. His words suggest, better than public opinion polls ever could, what may be the significance of Orangeburg for this country.

## A Review

### Poetry is a spoken art - Nowlan star actor

by Eric Thompson

Poetry in Canada today is largely a spoken art. That's the impression left with this reviewer after attending last week's Writer's Conference at the UNB Art Centre.

The poets represented - Alden Nowlan, George Bowering, John Newlove, and John Gill - all publish their poems, of course. And it is through the media of books, articles, and little magazines that their various critical reputations prosper or die. But the real marketplace for poetry today is electronic and tactile; it is the CBC, the campus, and the club which provide the platforms for the poets to sell their wares.

Well, what makes a poet a successful salesman at a Writer's Conference? His Poems? His Personality? Both. But given the time allowed for a reading, and the fact that the bulk of his audience are unfamiliar with his work, the smart poet learns to perform his poems, to show them off to best advantage. In short, he becomes an actor. And, of the four poets, Nowlan, I felt, was the star actor.

A big, shaggy-faced man, who hulks over a lectern like a Moses over his tablets, Nowlan set the tone for his reading by stressing the importance to the poet of having roots in a specific locale. His presence on the platform, and his slow deliberate manner of speaking carried enormous conviction. But all of this would have been for nothing had he not had something to say. He did. His role as a reader was designed to serve his poems, to illuminate by understatement the ironies in a living culture.

By contrast, Newlove's posturing left me cold. Clearly, he had the best voice of the four; smooth, rich, with-it. A kind of guileful Lennie Cohen insinuating his way in sweet monotony into the hearts of impressionable co-eds. His hands and feet kept up a gentle, rhythmic beat while he read, which too often distracted one from the words he intoned. Newlove has good material, but he reads too fast for comprehension.

Bowering proved to be a very practised actor of his work. His stylized pauses (for punctuation) emphasized the dynamic quality of his best poems, but tended to make a poor poem read better than it said. And his criticism of the West Coast Group in poetry, with which he was once intimately involved as a former editor of *Tish*, was a model of clarity and gave substantial evidence of poetry's place as a spoken art.

Gill offered a very weak talk of "trends" in modern poetry, and read poems of little merit.

In sum, the Conference - ably organized and run by Prof. Kent Thompson and his committee - was a qualified success. It showed us a group of lively, eclectic poets, obviously enjoying the give and take of reading and talking. But it left, I suspect, many listeners audibly concerned about the state of a modern poetry which seems to promote theatricality over poetic density.

One hopes the lesson won't be lost on the half-dozen or so student poets who read their work at the concluding meeting.

## Poetry Competition To Be Held

The UNB English Society reminds all interested poets, undergrad and post-grad, of its annual poetry competition. Deadline for entries is March 7. Submit entries to English Department office.

A cash prize of \$25.00 will be awarded to the poet with the best group of six poems. Each group of poems should be signed by a pseudonym, and the poet's real name should be enclosed in a sealed envelope accompanying his material.

A panel of judges will select the best five or six poems, and they will then be asked to read their work at the final meeting of the English Society for the current year, on March 28.

Enter now. Fame (and dollars) are the spur!

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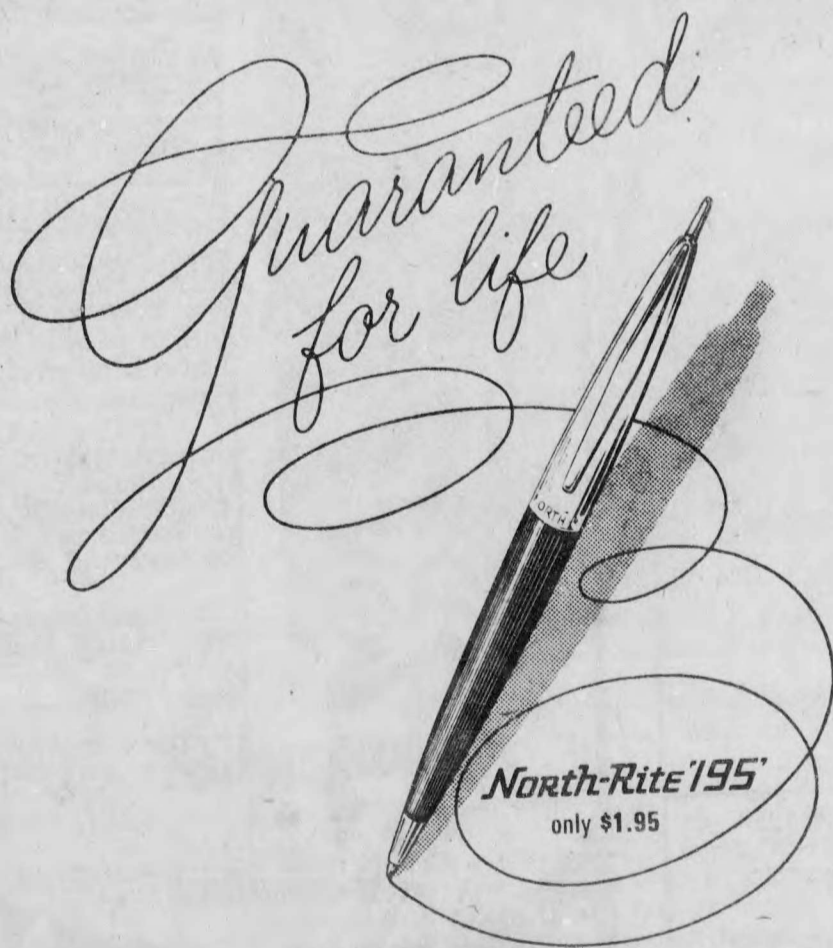
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