

arts

Davey builds new library

Indian government asks York professor to set up learning centre

By JASON SHERMAN

The government and universities of India have established programs which will dramatically increase the country's study of Canadian life and culture, and York creative writing professor Frank Davey is providing an important first step: he is establishing a Canadian library at the University of Baroda. Several universities, under the project, have been specifically designated for particular areas of study, with the Baroda institution receiving the hotly contested nod for Canadian literature.

Davey, who taught a month-long workshop on CanLit in India two summers ago, cites a number of reasons for the sudden interest. Foremost is the startling growth of literacy and education (due largely to compulsory education laws), which is triggering a correspondingly large number of new scholastic institutions.

This, in turn, means that Indian students are scrambling for these topics for their M.A. and Ph.D. papers. But British books, which have been the most heavily studied (English being the unofficial second language in the country), are providing fewer and fewer areas untouched by the graduate students. Books from the United States and, in particular, Canada, are thus being sought by the universities in order that new ground may be broken.

Why Canada in particular? Davey speaks of the "curiosity" of Indians to understand how another commonwealth nation managed to overcome an inherent inferiority complex to the motherland.

This, then, was the setting for the

university system to approach Davey and ask him to undertake the gargantuan task. Davey in turn sought help from the government by asking the Canadian High Commissioner in New Delhi to arrange for book donations. Davey recalls that the official was "very sympathetic," and felt that such a program might encourage trade links between Canada and India, which was the Commissioner's primary task.

But Ottawa was reluctant—apparently India's misuse of the Candu reactor and her ties with the Soviet Union were enough to discourage Canadian support. "But," says Davey, after recounting how the American government actually built and stocked a library, "most educated people in India have cultural ties with the Commonwealth. Canada, for them, is a very important country because of their parallel situation." But Ottawa wasn't interested.

Davey's next idea was far more successful. He sent out letters to Canadian publishers large and small, and received an overwhelmingly positive response, collecting thus far some thousand mint condition books and periodicals, largely from such firms as Douglas and McIntyre, McClelland and Stewart, Coach House Press, and Oxford University Press.

Davey's next problem—shipping and receiving the books—solved itself when he was sent a letter quite by coincidence from the Canadian Organization for Development through Education (CODE), an outfit which receives donations exactly like those Davey was collecting. Through its newly established Committee on Overseas University Library Support, CODE will ship the books to Bombay, insured. There, the shipment will be picked up by a bonded company and moved 200 miles up the coast to the University.

"Projects like this accumulate energy," Davey says. "If there's genuine interest, it will become worthwhile."

Novel hopeful gets bum steer



Steerpike: evil genius.

By JASON SHERMAN

Whatever happened to democracy at York?—that's the question being asked by the Committee to Elect Steerpike for President (CESP), after their members were denied permission to put up posters in Central Square.

"I don't understand," said Stuart Rosspoke, CESP publicity manager. "It's not as if we were doing anything illegal. I mean, sure, we got his nomination in late, but this is supposed to be a free country, isn't it? Isn't it?"

Steerpike, who is being billed as "The man with no conscience," could not be reached for comment. "He's uh... sick—yeah, yeah, that's it, he's sick," said an unidentified person at

CESP headquarters.

James Crossland, the Chief Returning Officer, also could not be reached for comment, but an aide of his said "I don't know who the (expletive deleted) these people are trying to fool, but we're trying to run a (expletive deleted) election here, not a circus."

CESP, which claims to have support from "all kinds of people," will be filing a request to have the election declared nullified, in light of what they see as out-and-out discrimination. "Okay, so he's evil," said one CESP member, "but at least he's got some ideas."

When asked what those ideas were, the member declined to comment.

Eastern European Film Festival boosts Romanians

Eastern European Film Festival at Harbourfront, March 20-25 (two films reviewed, *The Contest* and *Ipu's Death*) All films subtitled in English

By IAN CLARKE

In 1912, celebrating the 35th anniversary of its independence from under Ottoman domination, Romania produced the film *The War of Independence*. Back in the USA, D.W. Griffith was busy warming up for his magnum opus *Birth of a Nation*. Since then each country has developed a brand of cinema following the poetic maxim, "East is East and West is West, and ne'er the twain shall meet."

Divergent forms of expression have been nurtured under the whims and woes of conflicting political ideologies. Financial constraints have kept East European cinema distinct from the pyrotechnic spectacles of Hollywood. Instead, what we see from such countries are films which concentrate on a small collection of people who are representative of concerns which extend beyond the group's perimeter. Symbolism runs rampant through these productions, utilizing exterior references for plot development. *The Contest* and *Ipu's Death*, two films presented in the Festival, are entertaining examples of this tendency.

The Contest explores the darker connotations of a "group mentality." Eight members of an orienteering club gather one weekend, fully prepared with a compass and survival supplies, to race through the forest and claim the intensely coveted first prize. But the team is short one person and is forced to quickly recruit a young spectator, simply referred to as "the kid."

Never before have so few people yelled so loudly at each other over so little. Constant arguments erupt over petty problems and bruised egos. The kid (if he were any more of a Christ figure he'd be hauling a cross) is a ubiquitous blanket over the confusion. The eight members are set up in the role of "apostles" and each exercise a little Judas-like envy. The kid not only achieves victory for the team but causes each individual to re-examine his life and relationship to society.



A scene from *Ipu's Death*, one of five Romanian films on tap at Harbourfront.

It sounds like plodding stuff but director-writer Dan Pita infuses the film with an off-beat style of kinetic energy. In the fashion of a Passion Play, each character is a "type," from the corpulent boss and his raving incompetence to the fanatic bureaucrat who must put every action into writing to have it approved. Through it all the kid drifts like a holy vapor, cleansing and healing as a pop messiah.

John Mills' performance in *Ryan's Daughter* indelibly stamped an image of how a village idiot must appear and act—alternately mumbling, weeping and limping about the countryside. *Ipu's Death* successfully presents a much different dramatization of such a sorrowful character.

Set in World War II Transylvania, an orphan boy befriends Ipu, a middle-aged tramp whose chief occupation is lazy fishing by a stream. Together they race through fields playing "war" with stolen machine guns and helmets. A German soldier is murdered in the village and the Nazis demand that the local people produce the killer within a 24-hour period or the entire population will be annihilated.

The intelligentsia of the village, a priest, notary and a lawyer, decide to proffer Ipu as the murderer. They are the microcosmic group representing a cowardly society. Ipu's level of mental retardation has not precluded him from an acute child-like ability to perceive hypocrisy. He exposes the true nature of each individual. With booze and false promises the group convinces Ipu to sacrifice his life.

Director Sergiu Nicolaescu has crafted a compelling narrative which is never infected with the insincerity of melodrama—given the content, this is a formidable accomplishment. Ipu is a big kid but with a powerful sense of dignity, elevating him above the fearful squabbling of the crowd. *Ipu's Death* has a twist ending which leaves no doubt as to who the actual idiots are.

With most films the attitudes and concerns of a culture shine off the screen like so many illuminated history lessons. This collection of rarely seen films acquaints one with a perspective on the state of modern-day Romania. The ideas and styles are exciting in their novelty and favorably contrast with the predictable banality of Hollywood.

Mucho trendy book for those in the no

Megatrends by John Naisbitt, Warner Paperback, 333 pp, \$4.95

By KAI MAHABIR

"Trends, like horses," John Naisbitt says, "are easier to ride in the direction they are already going." Naisbitt is not referring to fads, but to "megatrends"—major directions North America is moving in.

Naisbitt's book, *Megatrends*, deals with ten of these new directions based on his analysis of what is happening today, and his belief that we are undergoing some fundamental changes. This book is unique because it removes much that seems mystical, yet it stretches concepts. It will appeal both to the layman and the scholar. For example, Naisbitt discusses the largest transformation—the shift from an industrial society to an information society—and shows how society now mass-produces information the way it mass-produced cars. "The new source of power is not money in the hands of a few, but information in the hands of the many," writes Naisbitt. "In the future, editors won't tell us what to read. We will tell editors what we choose to read."

Subsequent chapters deal with related themes. Chapter two looks at the change in our technology and how people will cope with high technology. Naisbitt shows how the computer will by virtue of its design allow us to retain our individuality.

The shift from a national economy to a world economy is a section that may sound only appealing to economics majors, but the simplicity of Naisbitt's presentation will entice any reader to learn something new.

Unlike most "future" books, which tend to science fiction or speculation, *Megatrends* is based on thorough analysis. John Naisbitt's quarterly *Trend Report* has earned him the reputation of being able to examine newspaper clippings and magazine articles which will tell what is happening now, and predict what will happen in the future.