

HUPPENNY-TUPPENNY

CANAJAN. No, it's not the trade name for a jar of preserves, nor is it the latest parlour game. Well, perhaps that's not strictly accurate, as it has almost become a game. "Canajan", some people are beginning to say, is what is spoken by those of us who live north of the 49th parallel on the North American continent, and insofar as it is a game it involves identifying those linguistic patterns of Canadian English which distinguish it from American English as well as English English. What keeps the game interesting is that with a modicum of effort almost anyone can track down even a few "canajanisms" but they haven't proliferated to the point where it isn't any fun any more. One of my favourites is the *Shadow* (that's the Chateau Laurier Hotel in Ottawa). Replacing *t* with *d* is a widespread North American linguistic development and one of the many ways in which American English has influenced Canadian, sorry, Canajan.

Actually, Americans think there's no difference in the way we speak, which may explain why Canajan is becoming so popular. There are, in fact, a number of words we can't agree on the pronunciation for. Americans claim they hear us say "oot" and "aboot" for "out" and "about". (Of course they say "aoot" and "abaoot".) Announcers working for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation are instructed to say "shed-

yule", "clark", and "tomahto" while south of the border they say "skedyule", "clerk", and "tomayto". Actually, a great many Canadians also use the latter pronunciation, which illustrates again the great Canadian penchant for compromise, or schizophrenia, depending on your point of view. Most Canadians prefer "billboard", "muffler", and "hood", to the British "hoarding", "silencer", and "bonnet", but at the same time use "blinds" and "tap" rather than the American "shades" and "faucet". Sometimes, magnanimously we use both: "rubbish" as well as "garbage", "parcel" and "package".

There is a theory, of course, that at the time of Confederation Canadians went around speaking Victorian English and that this English purity was gradually polluted by contact with American English. Fortunately this myth has been exploded, but as the examples I have given illustrate "Canajan" is distinct from American English in both pronunciation and vocabulary. This is not to say that we simply steer a somewhat haphazard course between our British heritage and our American present. We have contributed a number of new words to the language, and not surprisingly many of these were sponsored by the tremendous Canadian geography—"muskeg", "splake", "goldeye", and "caribou". Different regions of Canada have made their own contributions: a "puffup"

is child birth in Labrador, and "pucklins" are small boys in New Foundland.

There are at least ten specifically Canadian ways of speaking English, though they don't strictly correspond to the ten provinces. Some of them are so different from general American English they sound like Irish or Scots by comparison. The Scots were prominent among the early settlers of Canada and in fact they still are. Jack Webster, a Scots immigrant, has parlayed his gravelly brogue into a \$100,000-a-year job as Vancouver's bestknown news commentator over the past 20 years. He couldn't have done that with an English public school accent.

Of course, this same variety exists in Indian English. Indians share with Canadians the experience of having been given something (the English language) which each has subsequently changed to suit his own purposes. What's huppenny-tuppenny in India is two-bits in Canada. In different ways both countries have cut the apron strings with Mother England. Huppenny-tuppenny is a cocked snook at the English language and English money to boot (it's what happened to tu'penny-ha'penny). Two-bits (25 cents) is the result of Canada's decision to adopt the dollar as the unit of currency and to spend, if not always speak, American. However, if our vocabulary swings erratically between American and