

The Department of External Affairs announced today that the Canada-Belgium Literary Prize has been awarded to the Belgian writer Pierre Mertens. Presentation of the \$2000 prize will be made on May 18 during the Montreal International Book Fair by Mr. D'Iberville Fortier, Assistant Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs in the presence of the Ambassador of Belgium to Canada, His Excellency Mr. Marcel Rymenans and of officials of the Canada Council.

Co-sponsored by the Canadian and Belgian governments, the Canada-Belgium Literary Prize is awarded in alternate years to French-language Belgian and Canadian writers on the basis of a writer's total literary work. Canadian participation is financed by the Cultural Affairs Division of the Department of External Affairs and the prize is administered on its behalf by the Canada Council. Previous prizes were awarded to the Belgian poet Géo Norge (1971), the Canadian poet Gaston Miron (1972), the Belgian author Suzanne Lilar (1973) and to the Canadian novelist Réjean Ducharme (1974).

Pierre Martens is 34 years old and, among Francophone writers, one of the most representative of the contemporary novel. In addition to being a specialist in international law and a great traveller, he travelled in the Middle East, in Greece and in various other countries between 1967 and 1974. At present he is the literary columnist for the newspaper Le Soir of Brussels. He has published "L'Inde et l'Amérique" (novel, Prix Rossel, 1970), "Le niveau de la mer" (short stories, 1970) "La fête des anciens" (novel, Prix Del Duca, 1972) and "Les bons offices" (novel, 1974).

Winners of the Canada-Belgium Prize are chosen by a literary jury, the Belgian members of which are appointed by the Belgian Ministry of French Culture and the Canadian members by the Canada Council. The Canadian members of this year's jury were Mrs. Louise Maheu-Forcier and Messrs. Jacques Godbout, Gilles Marcotte, Jean-Guy Pilon and Naïm Kattan. The Belgian jurists were Mr. Jean Remiche, Mr. Roger Brucher, Mr. Jacques-Gérard Linze, Mrs. Jeanine Moulin and Mr. Paul Willems.