

SPECIAL REPORT



COMMENTARY

By JOSEPH CLARK

The 1962 Laval Congress on Canadian Affairs had much in common with the first day of the 1962 Grey Cup football game. The players and positions were the same as in times past. And dominating proceedings was an annoying, and then impenetrable fog.

Among the players at Laval were some of the nation's most eminent: Conservative George Hees, minister of Trade and Commerce; Liberal John Davis, who would like to be Minister of Trade and Commerce; Creditistes Caouette and Gregoire, New Democrats Douglas and Lewis, prophets and planners respectively of different "new orders." Their positions were precisely those adopted for the scrimmage of June 18; depending on the uniform, they spoke of rising G.N.P., or plunging prestige, of social capital, or Social Credit.

The Grey Cup analogy fails in that the fog arising from the entry of cold proposals into that student-warm atmosphere was not strange in its setting. Indeed, impotent dialogue is characteristic of Canada.

Compare discussion of national questions in Canada with that in the United States and in Britain. There, discussion is stimulated either by the press or by men in public office. In Canada, there is no similar stimulation.

Our legislators are encouraged to speak softly by a political structure in which parties are stronger than in the USA and stricter than in Britain. The American system encourages individual legislators to introduce bills and proposals; Canadian practice restricts this privilege to the party leaders. British parties have apparent tolerance for rebels within the Parliamentary ranks; Canadian parties allow disagreement in caucus, but want acquiescence during public "debate".

If this is unhealthy, it can at least be defended as necessary, and certainly is popular. The swelling demand for new laws and provisions, and the public impatience with the amount of talking now done, indicate that Canadians today consider the function of Par-

liament to be legislation, not debate.

There are other reasons for the reluctance of such public persons as the Laval monologists to break from the party line. When a man is elected to Parliament he becomes a little less an individual and a little more a representative. As a party spokesman, he must remember that voters will reward or penalize his party for the things he says. As a national figure, he must rise above the particular concerns of region or occupation to consider the interest of the whole of a various nation.

The original function of the press was to inform by reporting facts. This century has seen sections of the press of Britain and American shift emphasis from the reporting to the discussion of facts. Special viewpoint magazines, *The Nation*, *The New Statesman*, *The New Republic*, *National Review* advocate alternatives to national policy, and thus bring discussion of public affairs into the public domain. Syndicated columns, interpretive of national and world events, have joined Blondie and baseball as regular fare in daily American newspapers. Most metropolitan dailies maintain columnists and reporters of their own to comment upon their state or city. Sunday weeklies in Britain each week examine British and world affairs.

For the most part, this revolution in function has passed Canada by. We have no "little magazines", no national syndicated columnists, no equivalent to the Sunday weeklies. Daily papers in Toronto, Montreal, Winnipeg and perhaps a few other cities, hire writers to interpret the policies of civic, provincial or federal governments; but most of the nation's press is as unimaginative as the "Chronicle-Herald".

Of our publications which purport to be national, only *Maclean's Magazine* is likely to foment pertinent discussion. Despite a *Saturday Evening Post* appearance in past, *Maclean's* seems by inclination a Nation or a *New Republic* (or a *Del Spiegel?*), a sparkle with criticism or latent controversy. But *Maclean's* provides only half a debate; its approach is consistently "progressive" and will join effective dialogue only with the emergence of a journal able to take issue with the "progressive" viewpoint.

As Mrs. Alexander so forcefully asserted in his Laval report here two weeks ago, vital problems face Canada. His concern, it was also the concern of Laval, but the Congress was constricted by its speakers' unwillingness to discuss the economic development. But broad questions other than economic require attention - they are attested to by the flowering of separatism, the "Grey Cup" broadcasting squabble, the Cuba-renewed concern about armaments. Apart from pressure groups like separatism, the "Grey Cup" board-casters, no one outside government seems interested in these matters.

History suggests that Canadians have not always been so silent. Confederation, which was a departure no more radical than the "national planning" and "separatism" and "North American union" now being proposed was hotly debated. So were other early turnings in our national history.

Our system of representative government assumes that citizens will have knowledge enough of national affairs to judge a government's conduct of them. It seems time, to amend a phrase, "to get this country talking again."

MOVIES: Andy Osyany

Seeing Brigitte Bardot decently covered up for most of the movie "The Night Heaven Fell" I can't help feeling that once again we have been denied an unexpurgated import. The whole movie lasted only 80 minutes which is quite a bit considering that all we were offered were the rags without the hag. Evidently the cast was not chosen for acting abilities. Although BB dutifully romps around in bed, and Stephen Boyd does his best to display brawny masculinity for the benefit of the other half, the lack of a credible plot places demands on the "artists" which are not met at all. With the parts depicting the beauty of the human body (to put it euphemistically) scissored, there is not much left in the production aside from the wonderful scenery of Spain. I am afraid this is not a feast for the eyes - from any angle.

"We'll Bury You" is a competent chronological presentation of the history of Communism. It is not marred unduly by editorial comment and some of the sequences are quite interesting. On the other hand it is easy to find fault with the production. To one who is slightly familiar with the theme, the movie is a disappointment. It fails to give a perspective of the massive, costly brutality of the system as evidenced in the political organization, the agricultural problems, the industrial development (or lack of it), the educational system, social welfare, in the light of what has been accomplished.

A judicious use of maps and graphs would have been extremely helpful to show the advances that have been made since the November Revolution in comparison with other Western countries, and under-developed nations such as India that faced somewhat the same problems. As for what happened in the satellite nations the movie was inexcusably scant.

A worthwhile study of the two Germans since the war would have added considerably to the 20 minutes which the editors chose to allocate to the problem of Communism. It would have served as an unforgettable and outstandingly graphic illustration and indictment of Communism.

That the editors were handicapped by lack of movie material is fairly obvious. The happenings in Cuba since the Castro take-over have been more fully documented than other similar revolutions, and for this reason I hope that a movie presentation may be forthcoming in the near future on this topic. It might possibly have a greater appeal to North American audiences because it brings the menace closer to home.

"We'll Bury You" is recommended for all who are interested in joining Bertrand Russell's group.

Gazette Guide

Moments of high resolution in the critical period of Canadian history when five men took their stands for representative government and equality before the law are portrayed in a five-part series on The Formative Years.

The programs, produced by the National Film Board, show people and events at the boiling point of young Canada's struggle for self-government, and will be seen Wednesdays at 11:30 p.m., starting December 12, on the CBC-TV network.

The first program, The Impossible Idea, is about Sir John A. Macdonald. Other programs in the series are: Dec. 19-The Stubborn Idealist (Alexander Galt), John Vernon plays Galt. Script is by Charles E. Israel; Dec. 26-The Lion of Quebec (Georges-Etienne Cartier), Paul Hebert plays Cartier. Script is by M. Charles Cohen; Jan. 9-The Big Man (Charles Tupper), William Needles plays Tupper. Script is by Joseph Schull; Jan. 16-Mister Lafontaine (Louis-Hippolyte Lafontaine), Jean Coutu plays Lafontaine. Script is by Lise Lavallee and Pierre Patry.

Other productions in December will be Verdi's Aida, (Dec. 15), Der Rosenkavalier, by Richard Strauss (Dec. 22), and Pelleas et Melisande, by Debussy (Dec. 29).

PROSE and CON

by SUSAN LORING

This year, for the first time, most of us can look forward to Christmas undisturbed by the prospect of examinations? This is a relief for those who have to mark as well as for those who have to write. But marking papers and themes for English I and II has its brighter moments: many books have been published which illustrate schoolboy howlers but first and second year Dalhousie English students are worthy contributors to any collection. Here are some examples collected during the past year.

Theology and History students will be interested to know that, according to one freshman "Christianity was brought to England by Julius Caesar in 56 B.C." There was also some confusion about the Tudors. One student suggested that they were "a group of writers in the time of the first Elizabeth, Shakespeare was one of them". William Langland fared even worse. "He was a critic in *Sound and Sense*. He helped to establish John Donne." Someone else thought he wrote *Pilgrim's Progress* and another thought *A Christmas Carol* (this was also suggested as the title of a play by Shakespeare in which a ghost appears).

Was it a pound of flesh that Shylock wanted or was it, as someone suggested, a pound of fish? A sestet is apparently a line in a sonnet which has six words. "Prufrock's position is ironic". Petrarch was one of the Canterbury Pilgrims. Chaucer seems to like him quite a lot. "Amor vincit omnia" was a highly ambiguous remark and especially for a nun to carry. "I swear I am not making these up!"

Spelling howlers range from "certificated" to "samwidges". And there are some delightful examples of mixed metaphor. There was the hero who "was determined to be on the winning side, even if it meant changing horses in midstream." Only last week I learned that "if a man does not dig below the surface and attain the meat which is in the middle, the mind dies of malnutrition!"

THEATRE: JANET COFFIN

The Nova Scotia Drama League's *One Act Play Festival* was held in Dartmouth on November 23 and 24. Stuart Baker adjudicated. Nine plays were entered in the festival. They ranged in quality from pitifully poor to excellent. By far the best production, according to both the audience and Mr. Baker, was the Travelling Players' presentation of "A Resounding Tinkle" by N. F. Simpson, and directed by Michael Sinelnikoff. The play itself was delightful, and this group gave a rounded, integrated, sparking performance of professional calibre. John Hobday, in the role of Bro Paradox was unforgettable and deservedly received the best leading actor award. Helen Roberts received the best supporting actress award for her polished characterization in this play. "A Resounding Tinkle" easily took the "Onlookers" trophy for the best production in the festival.

None of the other players even approached the level of the winning production, but they were interesting and often ambitious attempts.

The award for the most promising director was given to Faith Nicolle who directed the Cathedral Players in "Dust of the Road". Joan Evans received the best actress trophy for her portrayal of Kate in J. M. Barrie's "The Twelve Pound Look", presented by the Theatre Arts Guild. The best supporting actor award went to Erskine Smith for his old man in the Cathedral Players' "The Ass and the Philosophers".

Mr. Baker's major criticisms in the public adjudications were that many of the actors were consciously "acting" rather than "being" a character, and that not everyone bothered to listen to what was being said by his fellow actors. Several of the plays would have benefited by further rehearsal, but it was gratifying to see so many plays entered.

If the groups that participated in the festival will take advantage of the adjudicator's suggestions and comments, and apply them to future productions, next year's *One Act Play Festival* should be really worth seeing.

FROM THE MONASTERY WINDOW:

ALAN ABBOTT

ARGUES ABOUT



MR. ABBOTT IS STILL ON LEAVE OF ABSENCE.
HIS COLUMN WILL RETURN WHEN HE DOES.

