



Poets ponder at Dal

by Donalee Moulton

In an extensive and unusual undertaking the English Department at Dalhousie went to great lengths to conduct what they have termed, a poetry conference. By Friday morning Robert Creely, Jon Stallworthy, Louis Dudek, David Helwig and Joe Rosenblatt were asleep in the Lord Nelson Hotel. But not for long at 10:30 all were gathered in the Arts Center Lounge to hear Creely speak on poetry in the U.S.

The conference, entitled Poetry at Three Quarters, refers of course to the time elapsed in this century, and this was one of the major topics under discussion. The conference was open to the public and enabled one, perhaps for the first time, the opportunity, not only to hear these poets read but also to hear their views on poetry over the last 20-50 years.

Poetry over the last 50 years has undergone significant change. In Canada, as elsewhere, poetry has moved away from the traditional and into a type of verse which allows for much more scope and variation.

Poets like A.J.M. Smith and F.R. Scott characterize the 30's break from convention. The 40's with such poets as Louis Dudek and Irving Layton, is representative of a further break with tradition. However, in the 50's their comes a restriction on these new modes and styles. The 60's era breaks from this, expanding into different and

more far reaching domains than those poets of the 40's ever conceptualized.

In the States it was poets Robert Creely and Allen Ginsberg who broke from the past and began creating less symbolic verse. Creely himself tended to be intimidated by formal patterns...that the people of my time had adopted". There was an intense pre-occupation with formal coherence". The poets of Creely's generation, often called the beat poets, felt as Creely says, "markedly separated from what was orthodox at that time and place".

"My generation or at least many of us, were very hostile to anything that looked like rhetoric...we were realists..." subjected to "...an endless exploration of the symbolic writers, which was charming but not very useful". The irony of the situation is that while there were only 8 or 10 real beat poets (as compared to 400 or 500 thousand of the current Woodstock generation) they managed to create their own lifestyle but today they are "being used as the small flagpole generation".

In England a similar situation existed. The 50's saw a reaction against the realistic, journalistic war poetry of the 40's. But the opposite form of poetry-surrealism did not become prominent. Mr. Stallworthy attributes this to the fact that surrealism is not like the English nature.

What did arise out of this opposition was a group

of poets united in their feelings that were writing poetry about the whole man- the body and the intelligence.

'Poetry is a tap on the human spirit. Something just comes out and it moves you.'

Louis Dudek-Disillusioned Poet

Does Canada have a type of poetry recognizable as distinctly Canadian? According to Louis Dudek we do. The true Canadian feature is an "awareness of stubborn reality that you can't escape". Poets like Pratt and Lampman focused on this austere nature in their nature poetry and when a shift from the country to the city occurred, contemporary poetry still retained this awareness. "We have our own sound feeling".

It would be ludicrous to assume that Canadian poetry developed as an isolated art form. "Constantly we get transfusions from abroad. This whole explosion in the sixties (for example) needed America. "Dudek sees poetry as a natural occurrence similar to the development of the individual personality-surrounded, molded, and shaped, by the influences of the external world. But, "the longer the process goes on the more the unique the sub-species that develops".

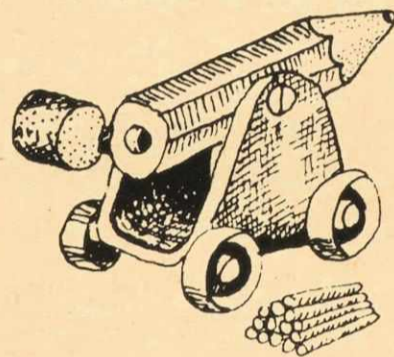
Louis Dudek, presently at McGill, is a well known Canadian poet, critic, and editor. Coming to the forefront of Canadian poetry in the forties he has remained there ever since.

What motivates people to become poets? Mr. Dudek

compares the motivation the calling to, "a release of psychic energy". "You write because of internal and unconscious pressures. It is a result of psychological / bodily state."

The thing happens because you had read other poems and the vocation called you.

Louis Dudek sees himself as "...a poet hidden in the light of thought". He writes to fulfill himself, "I don't have any public, I don't see any public". When it comes to the Canadian public Dudek admits he is disillusioned; he feels all his good work has been ignored. "Perhaps, "he murmurs", if I had succeeded in gathering an audience..."



Greatest Poet: William Shakespeare

Favorite Poet: Ezra Pound

Favorite Canadian Poet: Raymond Souster

A neurotic shits, but an artist shits in patterns.

Joe Rosenblatt-- Poetic Iconoclast

Joe Rosenblatt is a relative newcomer to the poetic scene. His poetry, although structured, is unorthodox, superficially

