



Literary Page

The Queen's English

By GOPAL NADKARNI

Being an East Indian educated in the Queen's "Indian English" for sixteen years, I wasn't prepared to become a stranger in Canada when I first arrived here. However, to my utter chagrin, I was not only at a loss to understand 'Canajun', but I was also much misunderstood. I have, over the course of my stay managed to gather a few tips for my brother and sister foreigners on the fine art of deciphering 'Canajun'.

First and foremost, learn a few standard words that are never misunderstood. An example is the word 'beer'. Even if you had an accent that would put a native Gotwanian to shame -- don't despair. The word 'beer' is one of the first words that our Creator intended us to learn in our first days of University life; learn it, use it, and be assured of comradeship wherever you go. All the Esperanto you knew or the sign language you have mastered will not help you as much as this four letter Canadian word.

Over the beers you can practice your English on your unsuspecting friend. The average North American abhors talking about the the days activities after his eight hour stint in the office. Talk of hockey games. Throw a few Gretzky's into the conversation. Talk of politics. Better still, condemn it for it's inadequacies and it's failures. You see, it doesn't really matter what you speak about as long as you stick to subjects you can wholeheartedly put down without undue emotions on either side. It doesn't matter if you mistakenly thought that the Oilers thrashed the Blue Jays two to one on their home turf. Uttering the magic word 'Gretzky' is sufficient for a long and fruitful monologue on the relative attributes of Canadian hockey players. It will also make sure that your beer stein is always overflowing.

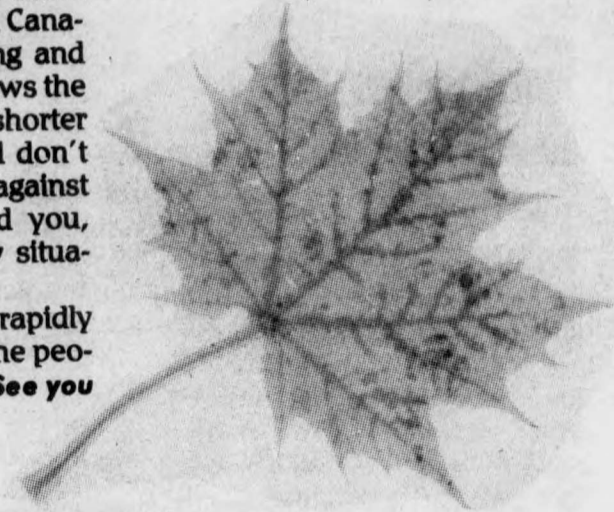
However, to achieve a sense of total comradeship you have to learn something that even the British have not perfected but the native Canadian has. This is a daily ritual called 'Cursing-the-weather'. The universal greeting that goes by the phrase 'Good Morning' in other countries around the world has been replaced by a rather eloquent expression called "Lousy Weather, eh?". Instant rapport is achieved with strangers in the bus stop, cashiers, gas station attendants, clerks, officials and profs by putting down the weather in succinct terms. Friendships are made or broken on the way the two persons look at the weather. It is very obvious that two people are not going to get along if one says "Lousy weather, eh?" and other says "Oh, what a beautiful day".

When you part company with people that proper thing to say is "See you later". Even if both of you know that you will never see each other again as long as you live, this expression, "See you later"; must be used. Don't commit the mistake of saying "Godbye" or "Adios" or "Toodle-do" or such expression implying that you are parting company eternally.

There is yet another word that is a must for the non-Canadian. This is the word 'Because' which when used properly can get you off the hook. It is a word with infinite possibilities and meanings and only the Canadian can understand why you did what you did when you mutter "Because...". Anytime, anywhere you are in a situation that calls for a lot of explaining to do, use of this magical Merlinesque word will save the day. You can get away with anything except murder. (There have been people who have got away with that too). In my opinion, this word is a must for everyone of us and we should master its usage.

One last suggestion; cultivate the use of double negatives until your jaws ache. A standard phrase that comes to mind is "I don't know nothing". If you use this expression Canadians will understand that you don't know anything and you are to be left alone while the rest of the world draws the incorrect conclusion that you know everything. A shorter and more useful phrase for university students is "I don't know" which can be used as an effective barricade against your prof's questions. (Your prof. will understand you, because he too relies on it to get him out of sticky situations).

With these helpful hints I have outlined you will rapidly make inroads in your day to day relationships with the people around you. I wish you all the luck in the world. *See you later.*



Katahdin Series

3. Treeline, Cloud, Spheres

First the smells: fir, spruce; the dark close smells of moss and earth and roots. And hard and sharp on the air, frost.

Then the part felt: bark, rock. The same tough roots, clutched. A double handful of puddled cloud, held cupped.

The visible next: a bright absence: mist. Glimpsed, an orange slope, a white sun, when the cold air shifts.

And what's heard: wind in the tuck; sleet; one chill bird. A furtive, stubborn tune that goes on long past the last word.

Randy Campbell



I've walked beside the river
On pebbles all speckled and white,
While herds of multi-coloured cows
Graze on dewy grass beside
The early morning mist that swirled
Twirling around in the grass
Skirts billowing,
Hair flying,
Eyes shining ...

K.L.J.

*We only have to be lucky once
You have to be lucky all the time.*

Is written in front of my face
as I straddle the dirty urinal.

And my friend Francis
saw a school mate on the television,
he was dead on the street
in South County Armagh.

Malcolm McDonald

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