

# poet Cohen

**THOMPSON:** Do you see the events that happen in your song as corresponding to the events out there, or as replacing the events out there, or as a way of looking at what's out there?

**HUGHES:** Or part of the events out there.

**WHYTE:** A, B, C, D, or E. (laughter)

**COHEN:** I don't understand the question.

**THOMPSON:** It's a sort of "what's the relation of art and reality" question.

**COHEN:** I think they're exactly the same.

(At this point Dr. Eli Mandel, silent observer and John Thompson's aesthetics prof, interrupts.)

**MANDEL:** See, John, I've been trying to tell you!

**COHEN:** Everything seems to be exactly the same to me. I don't know how anything can be different—it's all here (pointing to his head).

**DONNELLY:** In other words, yours is sort of a subjective reality then.

**COHEN:** I don't know. I don't understand that, really. I'm not being coy when I say that I don't understand what that means, but I... something has happened to my head somewhere... I really have to put myself in some other place when I think about what that means—subjective reality—I just think that in a way we are all part of some other reality.

I mean we are all thought of somehow. Something has forgotten us or something remembers us. I think that occasionally if you tune in on that thing—or if you don't tune in on it, then maybe the world is subjective reality, and a painful one. But when you tune into that other thing that is thinking you, then maybe it is an objective reality, and you feel high.

I really don't know where it is, but it's like this drone going on all the time. It's an electrical drone that exists through all things, and you're hanging yourself on that, or doing your tight-rope walk on that, or you're

doing it somewhere else. But wherever you are it is going on somehow. It is just a matter of whether you want to be delighted by it or not. It's really whether you choose to hear the objective drone or you choose not to. Whether you choose to or not, somehow you are still working with it.

**DONNELLY:** That sounds almost mystic.

**COHEN:** I don't know, uh... could be, could be. But mystic as we use it is a word from the other side of the fence. The word as it is used now is part of the critical vocabulary.

Nobody who is really high says, "I am a mystic." Mystic, somehow or other, is in the vocabulary of robots or other designed machines.

**THOMPSON:** Do you think there is any value in the critical vocabulary?

**COHEN:** I think it's good for people to go through all the changes. I think that enthusiasm is one way of transcending yourself too. Just like walking on coals. And any kind of thing you elect to pursue, any kind of Yoga, whether it's the Yoga of critical apparatus, or the Yoga of defeating political apparatus, it's all just a method of putting your head in some other place...

You can get drunk on practical criticism. (laughter)

**WHYTE:** So Beautiful Losers is the Canadian Y Ching.

**COHEN:** That's right, you can consult it—snowballs—it is a snowball argument. (laughter)

**HUGHES:** In an essay I just wrote, I put in a statement which said good art is like a Danish Vibrator; that is, it feeds itself. Do you think that is a valid generalization to make about art?

**COHEN:** I think any generalization which uses my work as a specific is valid. (laughter)

**HUGHES:** Are you going to sing, and if so where?

**COHEN:** I am going to do what passes for singing. I really feel that everybody has got one song. You know, every poet has got one poem, and every

novelist has got one story, and everybody's got one song, and all my songs are the same one. All my books are really the same poem. I really feel the only way I can excuse the kind of voice I've got is to really write my very, very own song, and it's the one nobody else can do.

**DONNELLY:** What's in the future for Leonard Cohen? Have you got any books in the works now?

**COHEN:** I'm working on a book of prose, I mean a novel, and I'm making a record of songs and that's about as far as the... I don't know, I forget the word. I don't speak English very well any more, and I don't have any other language.

**WHYTE:** One question I ask all sorts of people is: "Would you write poetry on a desert isle?"

**COHEN:** Yes, especially on a desert isle.

**MANDEL:** Like writing poetry in Edmonton.

**THOMPSON:** How would you rate your chances of salvation?

**COHEN:** Very high.

**DONNELLY:** What does salvation mean to you?

**COHEN:** I don't know, I uh... I think everybody has his own church of salvation within him.

I really think if you would consult yourself as you would consult a priest you would get those kind of priestly answers. And if you would consult the priest on the matters of salvation, if that's the way you are really headed, then you'll get those kind of answers.

**WHYTE:** Do you think that LSD is at all necessary for a poet right now?

**COHEN:** I don't think anybody should make himself miserable about taking it or not taking it. I don't think anybody should consider himself cowardly if he doesn't feel like taking it. I don't think anybody should consider himself particularly adventurous for taking it. It's a trip and everybody is on one anyhow.

**DONNELLY:** I was interested in your remarks earlier about a new era for poetry... the fact that the world is becoming

more poetical—what was the word you used?

**COHEN:** I don't think the world is becoming more anything. I really think the world is just about the same as it has always been.

**DONNELLY:** You mentioned something about a trend toward ritualism.

**COHEN:** I have a feeling we're on the threshold of a great religious age. And along with that kind of thing comes a certain disinterest in the political techniques. They become part of a larger sort of vision that is essentially religious—that's the only word we've got to describe it.

And when you have that kind of vision words like democracy and fascism... tend to lose their weight. And they stop moving us in the way they did before.

**DONNELLY:** Do you think that accompanying this religious renewal we're going to have a new age of poetry as well?

**COHEN:** All the disaffiliated, and painful novels and poetry of our recent past will be the sutras and mantras of this new religion that's coming. Everything that we tell each other is a kind of prayer, a kind of sutra for those people who can organize their experience in a way that teaches or in a way that illumines...

I think we're creating our liturgy now. There isn't much on the other side yet—there isn't much of the joyous liturgy yet. But I think that's what we're about to see: great joyous poems and great illuminative experiences.

**THOMPSON:** Do you think you'll be able to contribute joyous poems?

**COHEN:** I think I already have... I consider myself in the rabbinical tradition. I don't think I'm Moses... I might have been a 16th century rabbi that has been forgotten. I have my tiny area. People who have gone on my kind of trip will be able to consult me, perhaps.

**HUGHES:** Will you be their Moses?

**COHEN:** I don't know if I'll be anybody's Moses—I might be their Leonard.



I, Owen Anderson of the University of Alberta, think that I could benefit a lot from my proposed Alberta Association of Students.

## ASS strikes back

The Key Persons Conference in Banff has definitely started the ball rolling in the direction of an Alberta Students' Society, or any name which you want to give it. Up until this time the organization was an idea with no future. Now through the efforts of persons at the conference the name can be put down on paper and have meaning.

Just what type of organization it is to be is still a question mark. We are worried that it will become university dominated with administration closely controlled and picked mainly from

*This editorial comment and the cartoon above it arose from a gathering of university, junior college, and technical school students in Banff to talk about the proposed Alberta Association of Students. The meeting was held from Nov. 11-13, and both the cartoon and the comment first appeared in The Royal Reflector, the student newspaper at Mount Royal Junior College.*

U of A and U of C. If this comes about the junior colleges and technical institutes are better off to stick it out with the sports-minded Western Inter-Collegiate Conference. At least this organization is running for the best interest of the members it serves.

The University of Alberta delegates spoke very eloquently in favor of the association but somehow we got the feeling that it was more to their benefit than to ours. Why the push so soon after quitting CUS?

They suggested that the best points of CUS be incorporated into the Alberta Students' Society, but with no close rapport between CUS and Alberta students. Their reasons for abandoning the sinking ship "CUS" are very fine, but shouldn't an attempt be made to get the good ship into dry dock and the repairs made so that they are satisfactory to all?

The University of Calgary is in favor of a students' association in Alberta but having close ties with CUS. The speaker, Roger Timms, president of the University of Calgary Students' Union, realizes the problems which CUS is faced with but it is fully willing to remain in the organization and see it through this time of crisis.

Most of the smaller institutions which attended the conference are in favor of a provincial organization. Although no concrete proposals were passed, final decisions and the setting up of the new body should be made in January at another meeting to be held here in Calgary.

Time and talk has already gone into the organization but more hours are needed before the Alberta Students' Society can become a working body which can satisfy the needs of all its members at any level, whether junior college, university, technical institute or nursing association.

## Resignitus

from C-1

Are editors compensated for all the headaches caused by disagreements among staff members, squabbles with council and quarrels with the administration?

Usually they receive only a small honorarium—small enough reward for the conscientious performance expected from them.

The pressures build—and these, combined with the editor's personal problems—often provide the discouragement needed to write a letter of resignation.

"It is with regret..." etc., etc., the letters go, and another campus newspaper editor has resigned.

Carol Schollie, former editor of The Manitoban wrote one of those letters.

So did John Tomlinson of the University of Windsor Lance, John Lynn of The Georgian, and John

Adams of the Glendon College Pro-Tem.

Len Coates, former editor of The Daily Ryersonian, resigned twice over disputes with the administration. But Coates, still in the ball game, is attempting to establish a second student newspaper at Ryerson.

Tim Glover, present editor of the University of Victoria Martlet, succeeds two editors overcome by resignitus this year.

Early in September, Frank Reynolds walked into The Badger office at Brock University to discover he was the only staffer at the first staff meeting.

The "organizational collapse", precipitated by the original editor's resignation, was remedied when business manager Reynolds assumed the role of editor-in-chief and enveigled 60 students to work

under him.

Fortunately, he wasn't susceptible to the deadly infection which threatened 'thirty' The Badger.

Just recently, Fred Stevenson, co-editor of The Carleton, handed in his resignation, shifting the burden of responsibility on to Carol Anderson's shoulders.

Lou Soroka held the position of editor-in-chief for the briefest time in recent annals of Canadian student journalism. Immediately after his appointment as interim editor of The McGill Daily Nov. 21, Soroka resigned.

He didn't even get to see his name appear at the top of The Daily's masthead.

All tolled, university newspapers have lost 13 editors since September, not counting large numbers of senior staff members who usually accompanied them.