

Writers discouraged ...

... feedback needed

Tough times Canadian publishing



York writer-in-residence Clark Blaise

By Laura Brown
It's "rough as hell" to survive as a professional writer in Canada these days, said C.B.C. executive producer of literature, Robert Weaver. Weaver's remark was just one of many discouraging statements about the pitfalls facing aspiring Canadian writers of the '70's, which were made during a panel discussion at the Atkinson Canadian Literature Conference last week.

The talent and the market is definitely out there, but policies in the Canadian publishing system contribute to the unsteady future of our writers.

The publishers, Weaver said, "Give

writers all the reasons in the world why they can't come up with respectable advances". But their business system is designed for an American market and not their home market. "What is required is a whole group of graduate students from Business Administration to move into the communications field", he remarked.

Tom Hadley, executive editor of *Toronto Life*, and consulting editor of *Look* magazine, complained about the lack of editorial assistance in our publishing system.

"The dialogue between editor and writer is lacking," and the author's work cannot develop without this kind of feedback, Hedley said.

American company". "The talent and the market is here, but you're up against a stone wall from the start," he continued.

The aim of many beginning writers is to get their works published anywhere they can, thinking this will set them off on the road to success.

But according to York professor Barry Callaghan, "this is a country in which it is almost impossible not to get published." Between the Ontario Arts Council, the Canada Council grants and the numerous journals in the country, "we have become the 'yes' country of all times", he added.

Callaghan pointed out that hordes of poets and writers are being promoted because they are Canadian, but "this is misleading" about the talent we have here.

NEED OTHER JOBS

Many writers take on other jobs, such as becoming university writers-in-residence, so they can meet their bills as they pursue their art.

York university's writer-in-residence Clark Blaise said, "In 1978, I'll earn less money from my writing than I did in 1968... ten years ago there was a 'national splurge' and I got more for my stories".

Further criticizing the Canadian publishing system of this decade, Blaise relayed a past experience with one publishing company.

After recently finishing a book, he took it to a Canadian publisher, "but they turned it away because they said they wouldn't make money on it. It was later accepted by the American publisher *Doubleday* but I found the agencies here would not supply publicity for my book because it was published by an



Atkinson professor Barry Callaghan

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