

# The humour of Richard J...

## Needham condemned, condemned, condemned but students still had a good chuckle

By GAIL EVASIUK

"Canada now has a national flag on which the red maple leaf represents the dollar sign and the white background signifies the moral purity of George Hees," commented Richard Needham, well-known columnist with the Toronto Globe and Mail.

He spoke on "Canada—Retrospect and Prospect" to the Political Science Club, March 4 in TB-45.

He declared "Oh Medicare, we stand on guard for thee," as Canada's national anthem and "Never on Sunday" as Alberta's cheery chant.

Describing Canada as "the only country in the world where, if one stands on a guy's feet in a crowded elevator, he apologizes." He also defined a Canadian as one who:

- regards other people as being as immoral as he himself would like to be
- puts his empties into someone else's garbage can
- dies at 25 and is buried at age 65

Canadians also put up with "incredible liquor laws, which are absolutely ridiculous" and "stupid laws regarding Sunday," he complained.

For example, a man in Toronto was fined \$10 for selling flowers on a Sunday. Since men who buy flowers for women often have ulterior, sexual motives, it follows that one "can't have sex in Toronto on the Lord's Day," he concluded.

Needham condemned the annual \$1.7 billion spent on defence by asking "against what are we to defend ourselves? If it is against the U.S., not even Judy LaMarsh could stop her."

Canadians are too sad, he worried. "If we touch another person, we apologize.

"I would like to see more joy and ordinary, simple expressions of human life" and "more places to go to be just human," he stated.

Canada has the choice of playing a house-keeping role or a creative role in her second hundred years, he said.

The former involves the further accumulation of material "junk". "We tend to hide our natural talents just to preserve them," he said.

To create a better Canada, the BNA Act should be taken to the top of Parliament Hill and burned, he said. One hundred intelligent men and women should then be locked up in a room with no water, food, or toilet facilities. A constitution a good deal better than the one now would emerge, he predicted.

Since "people are the only real wealth in this world that is worth a damn," he proposed a huge immigration of people to Canada.

Because of the high standard of living "we're living in a fool's paradise here," he said.

To build a better Canada he suggested we "choose the side of youth rather than age, change rather than tradition, courage rather than fear, risk rather than security, action rather than passivity, rebellion rather than conformity, love rather than hate, and life rather than death."

More attention should be paid to young people so they can move into the mainstream of Canadian life and be allowed to grow up, he asserted.

"The reason kids are not interested in Canadian affairs is because they have no way to



—Lyll photo

**RICHARD J. NEEDHAM**  
... we live in a fool's paradise

express an interest. The voting age must be lowered to 18."

"Every university should have its own seat in the legislatures and the House of Commons," he advocated. "If you have doubts as to what would be milling around there if this should occur, you should see the people there now."

Needham commented a Canadian woman is "as feminine, as charming, as interesting, and as intelligent as any woman in the world, but the Canadian man does not seem to appreciate her as such."

He was accompanied by his three seeing-eye girls: Nancy Beckett, Treasa Green (who hails from Hardisty, Alta.), Anita Hymers, and Wayne Burns, a former U of A student.

**and learn at the same time**

**You should travel**

## Is his idea of an education better for himself—or everyone?

By RICH VIVONE

Richard J. Needham had spent the warm Alberta morning doing nothing in particular. He had begun with an early breakfast at a downtown restaurant and it consisted of bacon and eggs plus two cups of black coffee. He did not look up but merely nodded when a visitor sat down.

Not a word was exchanged as Mr. Needham, a smallish, grizzly figure, cut the bacon, then sliced a chunk from the eggs and put both on a slab of toast. He demolished the remainder of his meal in exactly the same procedure.

He made little effort at small talk but wanted to discuss plans for the day. He was informed of the schedule and continued his nodding throughout the discourse.

The day would consist of four sessions with University of Alberta students—three would be informal and the final, late in the evening,

would be an open lecture of sorts in which he would talk about Canada.

Little did Mr. Needham realize that, throughout the course of the day, he would anger, alienate and cause a large number of his readers to suspect his philosophies and motives for living. This was something few realized would occur.

Mr. Needham is the most popular Canadian journalist in the eyes of high school and university people essentially because he is on their side. He rebels against the system which he considers a bare notch above worthlessness. He has used his column to denounce the examination system and hint that there may be something better to accomplish in this life rather than spend too much time sitting around collecting and memorizing meaningless facts. Like he says, who cares how many polar bears run loose in Brazil.

For these and numerous other reasons, Mr. Needham brought the pseudo-educated of this country into his world. He wined them, dined them and then, in one day, returned them to the shakey sphere of the university.

As is the case when anybody is suddenly jarred from a pleasant dream, the reaction was not kind. It was, ho, ho, ho, indeed uncomplimentary.

Possibly the adverse reactions began when Mr. Needham attempted to explain why he considered travel to be the best form of education. Travel anywhere you like, he said, but you have to see all of Canada and when that has been done, see the rest of the world. The experiences of life and the people you meet will remain with a person much longer than a few lousy facts about the sex life of Mother Goose.

In effect, Mr. Needham was telling university students that they were wasting their time cooped up behind dirty windows and walls and listening to the dull mournings of half-dead professors.

### HIS FRIENDS

As if to support his philosophy, Mr. Needham continued the offense with statements condemning the materialism of Canadians and humans in general. He talked of his shady room in a cheap Toronto rooming house in which the most important piece in the room was a half-empty bottle of scotch. And it was there for the taking if one was so inclined, he said. His other most important possession was a discolored, torn raincoat which "no one would bother stealing" and his entire wardrobe consisted of the clothes on his back.

To come out and rip the hell out of a system is one thing, but Mr. Needham brought along his personal cheering section. The group of three supported the old man for all they were worth but the most impressive one was a young lady of 20 named Anita Hymers. This companion, clad in a deep purple sackdress, green ear-rings and a purple tam has been to Europe

where she stayed for 18 months. Her figure could be described as anti-Twiggy.

She is Mr. Needham's idea of what a young person should be and what every one should attempt. She spoke with great sincerity and warmth and listeners could not help but be smitten. As Mr. Needham advocates, Anita says we, as young people should live only for today and let tomorrow bring what it will.

"Who can tell what we will be doing and what we will be in ten years," she said. "If we knew, life wouldn't be much fun."

Statements as these and blasphemous lines such as uttered by a sort of fool who was along for the ride riled the audiences which were consistently large. The fool, a long-haired type with little to say and defend, made the stunning generality that "all you people want from university is to get a degree".

With lines like that, one had better learn logic to stay sane and healthy. It might help if the speaker knew what and whom he was talking about. Mr. Needham was silent as his companions tried to expound and explain his philosophy.

That's basically the way it was in the Day of Richard J. and those who heard him speak will not forget his words.

Even if they do not agree with his text, they are aware that university is not the only way in the world. People have been known to get along well without school learning. But those poor uneducated souls would have been a success at anything they tried.

Mr. Needham earns somewhere between \$15,000 and \$20,000 annually. If money is your guiding measure, Mr. Needham is a success.

If travelling mileage is your guideline, Mr. Needham is a success.

If you base life on public recognition, Mr. Needham is a success.

Maybe that's why so many were hostile towards him.

## casserole

a supplement section  
of the gateway

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This is the final paper of the year, and hence the spot for the editor to get all mushy with farewells. Not wanting to break tradition, I too get all broken up—Boo, hoo, and thanks to all you great guys who made this wonderful rag possible.

As for this week's Casserole, we start out with a look at Richard J. Needham. The noted columnist came up to the office a couple of weeks ago, and spoke to the staff. He came across as part philosopher, part con-man, but still worthy of a cover, and page C-2. The rose on the cover is his gift to Staffer Lorna Cheriton.

Religion is one of those "untouchable" subjects it seems, but Marjorie Bell did a comprehensive review of it for C-4 and C-5. Believe it or not, religion does have a place in university life.

The arts staff has a cultural round-up on C-6. Books, theatre and what-not are all there.

And on C-3 is the Casserole awards for 1967-68. No doubt some people will be unhappy with them, but that's how it goes. You just can't please everybody. We are not perfect (another image shattered) and neither is anybody else. So a few barbs liberally spread around this campus probably won't do any harm.



—Lyll photo

**HIS COMPANIONS WERE ULTRA-LOYAL**  
... especially Anita Hymers (background)