

Canada/Belgium literary prize

The Department of External Affairs announced recently that the Canada/Belgium Literary Prize had been awarded to the Belgian writer Pierre Mertens. Presentation of the \$2,000-award was made on May 18 during the Montreal International Book Fair by Assistant Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs D'Iberville Fortier, in the presence of Ambassador Marcel Rymenans of Belgium and officials of the Canada Council.

Co-sponsored by the Canadian and Belgian Governments, the Canada/Belgium Literary Prize is awarded in alternate years to French-language Belgian and Canadian authors on the basis of a writer's total literary work. Canadian participation is financed by the Cultural Affairs Division of the Department of External Affairs and the prize is administered on its behalf by the Canada Council. Previous prizes were awarded to the Belgian poet Géo Norge (1971), the Canadian poet Gaston Miron (1972), the Belgian author Suzanne Lilar (1973) and to the Canadian novelist Réjean Ducharme (1974).

Pierre Mertens, who is 34, is regarded among French-speaking writers as one of the most representative of the contemporary novel. In addition to being a specialist in international law and a wide traveller, he visited the Middle East, Greece and various other countries between 1967 and 1974. He is the literary columnist for the newspaper *Le Soir* of Brussels. He has published *L'Inde et l'Amérique* (novel, Prix Rossel, 1970), *Le niveau de la mer* (short stories, 1970), *La fête des anciens* (novel, Prix Del Duca, 1972) and *Les bons offices* (novel, 1974).

Winners of the Canada/Belgium Literary Prize are chosen by a jury composed of Belgian members ap-

pointed by the Belgian Ministry of French Culture, and Canadian members appointed by the Canada Council. Canadians on this year's jury were Mrs. Louise Maheu-Forcier, Jacques Godbout, Gilles Marcotte, Jean-Guy Pilon and Naim Kattan. The Belgian jurists were Jean Remiche, Roger Brucher, Jacques-Gérard Linze, Mrs. Jeanine Moulin and Paul Willems.

Protection of Canadian culture

In a speech to the annual meeting of the Association of American Publishers in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia on April 29, Secretary of State J. Hugh Faulkner said that the Canadian Government was prepared to intervene to safeguard Canada's cultural industries and that foreign-owned cultural enterprises in Canada would have to improve their performance in this country if they wished to avoid Government action.

Stressing the necessity for a sovereign country to have its own "healthy, critical, searching and enlightening network of communications", Mr. Faulkner outlined the initiatives taken by the Government in the field of culture: "In television and radio, the Government has regulated access for Canadian programs, in the knowledge that Canadian material existed, or could quickly be created, to fill it." This action, he said, had provided Canadians with an opportunity to compete.

Feature films

In the film industry, Mr. Faulkner continued, the Government had assisted in the production of feature films; the difficulty now was the insufficient exhibition of Canadian films owing to traditional commitments to the foreign product by distributors.

"I will be asking the distributors and theatre-owners to improve their performance, both in exhibiting Canadian feature films and in developing them." If this did not happen, he added, governments in Canada may have to turn to regulation and legislation.

While emphasizing the Government's responsibilities to its citizens in encouraging their cultural activities, Mr. Faulkner assured his audience that this action did not signify "a rejection" of the foreign product or a threat "to any-

one's freedom to publish or anyone's intellectual freedom." Nor, he said, was it the Government's intention to erect a barrier against the entry into Canada of any cultural commodity.

"Any Government intervention...will be to ensure that commercial interests do not compromise the possibility of the less powerful voices being heard."

Plea to publishers

Regarding the publishing industry, Mr. Faulkner stated that the Canadian subsidiaries of American publishers, while they have been active in publishing some works in this country, were not doing enough to encourage Canadian books. They were neglectful of the "difficult realms of fiction, poetry, criticism and letters", he said.

He told the publishers that their subsidiaries' performances had not been what Canadians had a right to expect in consideration of the profitable business transacted in Canada by the subsidiaries.

"If you want to go on doing business in Canada in this sensitive area, you will have to change your perception of us. If you continue dealing with us as a simple extension of your domestic market, then we are bound to disagree. I am calling upon you to recognize that you are operating in a sovereign country which has cultural needs going far beyond its consumer needs, and your subsidiaries are expected to make their serious contribution."

We must, he added, ensure that the Canadian-owned book publishing industry does not fail and has room to grow. "You will therefore see us in Canada taking measures to ensure the health of our indigenous publishing industry. Those measures, I tell you frankly, will include the careful scrutiny of any impending new foreign presence in Canadian book publishing."

Philadelphia Stanley Cup winners

The Philadelphia Flyers won the Stanley Cup on May 27, beating the Buffalo Sabres 2-0 in the deciding game of the best-of-seven final of the National Hockey League championship.

Out of six games played, the Flyers won four, Sabres two.

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