

photos by harry kitz



Robin Mathews

**J**ack McClelland, president of the McClelland and Stewart publishing house, launched an outline of the "platform" of the Committee for an Independent Canada for which he is a major spokesman. In the main he said, The CIC's aim is to be practical in the present context.

They are trying to appeal to as many interest groups and individuals as possible in order to bring Canadians together on this issue. McClelland believes the CIC's long range goals are the same as the NDP Waffle group's. But if we have to wait until the socialization that the Waffle advocates comes, Canada may be lost. So the CIC's feeling is that it must be a non-partisan group and it must be practical enough to interest business.

"We put Canada before the political issue," McClelland said that like many countries, Canada is going in the direction of greater socialization, a process he seems to regard with equanimity.

McClelland seemed ambivalent about the Committee's chances to reverse the Liberal Party's traditional drift towards Americanization. But he said that Trudeau being as unpredictable as he is, and as shrewd a politician as he is, he could conceivably begin to push the issue. Already Trudeau has hinted that some sort of policy will be formulated to deal with foreign control where presently there is none.

As McClelland sees it the primary justifications for building an independent Canada are these: we are not irretrievably committed to the materialistic ethic; we are not committed to the inevitability of east-west cold war conflict; our dual society makes us unique and gives us certain opportunities; we can learn from the mistakes of British and American society, instead of copying them.

**F**arley Mowat, the writer better known for his public antics, declared that "paranoia is the only thing that will save us." Promising to speak as long as his glass of rum lasted, he got into a lively exchange with the audience and other speakers. He and Robin Mathews were called "irresponsible" by a student who took issue with their advocacy of some form of violence like "blowing up Gulf stations" to forestall an American takeover. The audience was delighted, if confused, when they both agreed vehemently that this was indeed irresponsible. After all, Mowat declared, he was safe, being nearly 50 and secure, he wouldn't be anywhere near any violent action that might take place.

This exchange was certainly the most entertaining of the afternoon. Although few wish to seriously consider actual violent confrontations in preserving Canada, as this is not the way Canadians think they traditionally act, it was refreshing to see Canadians who were a long way from the lackadaisical, stick in the mud Canadian stereotype.

Carleton University English professor Robin Mathews sparked heated debate when he said Canada has entered a political era and that "politics is the poetry of the soul." His political poetry and that of others he read "comes to grips with a real and present power," he said.

He depicted Manpower and Immigration minister Otto Lang as a "Trudeau Terrorist". Mathews said the minister desired to provoke a



Pie-eating contest.

confrontation between members of a sit-in Mathews took part in and Toronto police. The sit-in took place at the downtown Manpower offices in protest against the government's allowing large numbers of foreign professors into Canadian universities.

**T**here were other individuals at Encounter Canada who added the cultural dimension of Canada's existence as a nation. Artist Ron Bloore said that politicians too rarely pay attention to the cultural domination from abroad that Canada lives under. He also spoke of the need of those in the visual arts field to catch up to the political concern of writer.

Bloore dealt a blow to those who point to the Group of Seven as the most powerful expression of indigenous, Canadian art. Bloore pointed out in his attempt to "de-mythologize" the Group that they were in fact heavily dependent on North European and Scandinavian forms, they were by no means "a starving group of artists" having as they did, perhaps the best studio in the world.

The Toronto-based, Group's representativeness of the rest of the country was exaggerated. By the time the modern tradition came to Ontario in the mid 1950's they had become a reactionary, academic force representing WASP Toronto only, he said.

Also, because of our traditional ignorance of Quebec, Canadians have neglected significant work by French-Canadian artists who have reached beyond the stereotyped landscape image, Bloore added.

**D**ave Godfrey, the author of the New Ancestors which Eli Mandel described as one of the most important yet least read books of recent years, and a founder of New Press described Robin Mathews as an extension of the Canada First movement of the 1870's. He described New Press as "counter propaganda" against the real propaganda in Canada which is American. Although neither propaganda nor counter propaganda are art, they "clear the way for art" and so are necessary in our situation.

Generally Encounter Canada came off quite well. It deserved to because it was obvious that a great deal of hard work had gone into producing the environments around the themes of our history and culture. Those who wandered through the rooms were rewarded with a view of Canada as seen through historical newspapers, photographs, documents and art.

**O**ne of the more effective displays was the noose hanging over a picture of Louise Riel with the legend "Rebel or Victim." This display, which took one from the discovery of Canada to the present, brought home the dominant role religious and racial bigotry and hatred have played in our history. Outside this display the walls were plastered with "Vive le Quebec Libre", "Canada: The 51st State", "Ready, aye ready" and "The Big Ale in the Big Land".

Perhaps our search for identity, because it so often is expressed in terms of our relationships with the United States demonstrates one of Canada's main reasons for existence. Canadians may have difficulty in defining what they are and the ways of establishing a viable national life and culture. This is only because we are still a society not set into a definite mold, so we have the challenge and the opportunity to make our society according to principles that have been lost in older and more powerful nations.

**O**ur challenge is to build a North American nation according to our own designs, not those imported from the neighbouring nation which has foregone its opportunities. In essence, this is what all our "new nationalists" from Jack McClelland through Robin Mathews to Mel Watkins are talking about.

Canada, at long last, in asserting economic and cultural independence through her nationalistic expressions is encouraging. However, with history still afresh, the idea of the American melting pot of the late 19th century and the "nativism" movement in America of the twenties are something we Canadians should bear in mind in carrying out our own nationalism. Where do we go from here?