

SCL INTERVIEWS: MALCOLM ROSS

With this interview of Professor Malcolm Ross, Studies in Canadian Literature begins a series on contemporary cultural history. It will be concerned particularly with the careers of those people who have helped to shape Canadian literary and intellectual life since the second world war. At this time of cultural reassessment, it is of interest to look again at the state of Canadian arts and letters before and after the war, and to reflect on the central part played by the Massey Commission and the Canada Council. SCL will talk to some of the individuals who brought about major changes during that critical period.

We begin the series with Malcolm Ross, whose distinguished academic career spans the past half century. In the fifties he played many parts in our cultural and intellectual life, as editor of Queen's Quarterly (1953-1956), as head of the Department of English at Queen's University (1957-1960), and as president of the Humanities Association of Canada (1956-1958). Professor Ross was also a founding member of the Association of Canadian University Teachers of English, and the founding general editor of the New Canadian Library. His books include Milton's Royalism (1943), Poetry and Dogma (1954), Our Sense of Identity (1954), and Arts in Canada (1958). He was made an Officer of the Order of Canada in 1976, and Professor Emeritus at Dalhousie University in 1982.

INTERVIEW WITH MALCOLM ROSS Kathryn Chittick, Queen's University

KC You have written on the aesthetic ferment that Fredericton witnessed in the early days of Canadian poetry and on the importance of Christ Church Cathedral as a focus for the city's cultural life. Can you talk about what it was like to grow up in Fredericton about that time of the first world war?

MR I have only a few dim memories of the first world war. I was born in 1911. My memories of the cathedral go back to a New Year's Eve when I was three or four years old. We had gone down to a New Year's Eve gathering at my uncle's who lived not far from the cathedral. I had never been out at night before, and, as we started for home very late, I saw a cluster of stars hanging in the sky between

the cathedral and the legislative buildings. The cathedral was laced with snow and seemed to shine in the starlight. I have never forgotten this sight. A few years ago I happened to be in Fredericton on New Year's Eve and I walked down to the spot where my uncle's house had been. There were the stars and there was the cathedral, shining still. Time had turned backward for me!

The city has changed but somehow has kept much of its character. Some of the elms along Brunswick and Church Streets have gone. But the lovely frame houses are still there. Of course the place has grown. The hills above the city are crowded with houses and schools, where we used to go on hikes and take our sleds and toboggans. But the core of the city is still pretty much intact and as I remember it.

I lived uptown on George Street just above Northumberland. I went to the Smythe Street School which is having a reunion this year. I think it opened about 1915, and I began there in 1917.

Queen Street has changed a great deal. There are too many overhanging signs and Americanized store-fronts. The addition to the city hall is dreadful. So is the new police station. And yet Fredericton has much to offer now that I would have loved when I was growing up. The Playhouse, for instance. And the Beaverbrook Gallery. It wasn't until my last year at UNB when I visited relatives in Boston and Philadelphia that I heard a symphony orchestra and saw great paintings "in the flesh." There was no art gallery in Fredericton then, very little chance to hear music of professional quality. There wasn't even a public library; the legislative library was accessible but very limited. There were only odds and ends of books, uncatalogued, lying about. There was, however, Hall's Bookstore, which had a lending library. It is still there — on Queen Street, across from the old Normal School (now the Law Courts). And it was a fine bookstore. Margaret Hall put very good titles into the lending library. I haunted the place. Got a new book every week at two cents a day. That was when I was in Smythe Street School and high school. The university didn't really have a library either. When I entered, there was a scattering of books on the top floor of what is now the Administration Building (the Old Arts Building). There was no recognizable cataloguing system and not much of a budget for purchasing books. They had a lot of very old journals and some things that had come as gifts.

Just before I graduated they opened a new library in the building now occupied by the Provincial Archives. Purchasing improved and so did cataloguing. When Alf Bailey arrived things began to happen. He was made honorary librarian and he soon laid

the foundation of a respectable university library and did much to create the library which the university now has.

But there were many excellent private libraries — and this I think is different from many houses now of people who are better able to afford them than we were. In my own home there were well-stocked bookcases. We had many of the major British and American classics. I remember when I was still in Smythe Street School selling lettuce from our garden to buy new books — Carman, Roberts (both Charles and Theodore). We had in the house Scott, Dickens, Stevenson, Tennyson and Longfellow — and I devoured them — whereas I never studied much of anything in school. I learned to read at home and I was reading before I went to school; actually I had a grandmother who taught me to read when I was crawling on the floor and I was reading novels in grade one, not Dostoevsky but stories — Zane Grey, for instance, things like that — I read everything. So I think I probably read more in a town that had no public library than a lot of people do now who have excellent public libraries. But there wasn't anything else to do. We didn't have radio then, certainly no television.

I remember when we got the telephone in. I think I was in grade one. I do remember what a thrill it was — like going to the moon! I used to call all sorts of numbers as they came into my head. It was a game and I kept score of the “Hellos!” — one hit and four misses was a pretty fair batting average. What a pest I was . . . *

KC What other entertainment was there in the town?

MR There were “sacred concerts,” as they called them, on Sundays in the Opera House (an auditorium in City Hall). And when I was ten or thereabouts I saw a performance there of *Il Traviatore* by the Boston Opera Company. That was a great event! Then, too, Chautauqua came every summer. I remember them doing Balfe's operetta *The Bohemian Girl*. They stayed in town at least a week. There were concerts of light music, lectures and so on. We went every night. At first the Chautauqua tent was pitched in the old military compound on Carleton Street near the bridge. Later the tent was moved to Queen's Square. But Chautauqua was gone by the late twenties.

I studied piano with William Smith, F.R.C.O., who was organist at the cathedral and a fine musician. His organ recitals at the cathedral were marvellous. When I went to high school I played viola in the school orchestra. A man named James Coy, who played cello, organized a string quartet from members of the school orchestra. We worked on some of the simpler Haydn quartets. Mind you, we were *not* very good. I certainly wasn't. But I got the “feel” of chamber music, which I have loved ever since. and I often bless the memory of James Coy!

* Some questions here and throughout the interview have been eliminated and the responses have been run together for the sake of continuity.

- KC When you graduated from high school, what were the choices before you at that time?
- MR Well, the only thing I had in mind was to go to university and I couldn't afford to go outside the city. I lived at home and I worked in the summers. I got a job as a reporter on *the Daily Mail*, which no longer exists. It was away up on Queen Street and I started out at eight dollars a week, which was pretty good money in those days, and I saved most of it. I was about seventeen — just out of high school. When I went up to UNB I became the campus correspondent for the *Saint John Telegraph-Journal* and earned enough for movies, dances and so on. My family was not very well off at this time. My father had been manager of the men's clothing department in Edgcombe's store. There is another large store there now [Creaghan's] — just below York Street on Queen. That is where Edgcombe's was. It burned down when I was in my last year in high school. My father began to sell insurance, but it was tough going for some years. The summer job and the stint for the *Telegraph-Journal* certainly helped. In my last year at UNB I got free tuition for tutoring in the English department. And that was a help.
- KC Did you ever think of becoming a journalist?
- MR Yes, the idea was at the back of my mind and it was tempting. But I went up to UNB to specialize in history — perhaps because the great teacher at Fredericton High School was Carl Bishop, and he taught history.
- KC You planned to specialize, even though there was no History department as such at UNB?
- MR Malcolm MacPherson, from Edinburgh, was the combined departments of English and History at UNB. He based a course on Green's *History of the English People* and kept very close to the text. He did not pretend to be an historian. I think most students in honours English and philosophy took the history course. But history as a subject for serious study soon faded. Malcolm MacPherson did the history course as a chore. But his literature classes opened my eyes. High school English had bored me — my reading then was quite outside the school curriculum. But after a few months in MacPherson's classes, I decided that I would seek a university career in English literature. I went on to Toronto for my M.A.
- KC Well, I had wondered about this because I have read Alfie Bailey's comment that you were a brilliant English student at UNB; but it had seemed to me that there must have been some sort of debate going on in your mind between history and English.
- MR The debate was over in about three months. I took a double honours degree in English and philosophy; and later when I went to Cornell

for my doctorate I kept up that interest by doing a minor in philosophy. In any case, there would have been no chance of doing serious work in history at UNB when I was there — it didn't exist.

KC Did most of the people you were in high school with go on to UNB? I mean, was that a usual choice?

MR UNB had then a total enrollment of about 300. I would guess that fewer than twenty of my high school classmates entered college with me. I never thought of anything else. For some reason or other, I decided that what I wanted to do was to go to university, and my family was very strongly in support of it. There was no question about it, or any argument. And, so I did.

KC Yes, that is interesting. I am sure that a lot of students these days go to university as part of an inevitable process, but it strikes me that it would have been fairly unusual then.

MR Given the kind of early interests I had, I don't think it was. I was a reader! In high school, beyond the standard literary classics, I was reading Freud, Bertrand Russell, John B. Watson's *Behaviorism*, snatches of Santayana and so on.

KC How did you hear of these books?

MR In various ways. A friend of mine, Ronnie Guthrie, who read even more than I did, moved to Boston and regularly sent me literary journals, reviews of new books in the humanities, newspaper clippings.

KC They would be American journals?

MR Yes — from Boston and New York. I saved up from my newspaper earnings and bought what I could. The more I bought and read, the less tempted I was to become a newspaper man. With the *Daily Mail* I covered two murder trials, and both a federal and a provincial election. It was exciting. But my reading was taking me in a different direction.

KC So when you went to UNB, what courses did you register in, or did you have any choice?

MR There were some compulsory courses — English, mathematics, Latin, a science subject — all in the first two years. There were choices, too. With my double honours I added courses in political science, Greek and biology — and there was an introductory course in psychology. In looking back I am grateful for the breadth of my undergraduate studies.

KC Yes. What do you think was the model for the university in those days? Was it a Scottish university? English? American?

MR In my case, it was more Scottish than English because of Malcolm MacPherson. He had recently come from Edinburgh where he had been a student of the great Sir Herbert Grierson. MacPherson lent

KC me a copy of Grierson's *Cross-Currents in English Literature of the Seventeenth Century*. It was a revelation to me and, as much as anything, confirmed me in my decision to make a career in English studies. When I went up to Toronto in 1933, it was with the intention to study Milton and his great century. This led me to A.S.P. Woodhouse, and eventually to the writing of a doctoral dissertation on Milton.

KC So, do you think UNB, as a whole, was Scottish?

MR No — but it was British. The professor of classics was from Cambridge, the professor of physics and chemistry were both English, the dean of engineering was Irish. I should mention him — Blinky Stevens. He was most unacademic in manner and in attire — at least for those days. Never wore a coat or a tie, slumped about in overalls with a cigarette dangling from his lips. One day some American tourists stopped at the old Engineering Building. "Blinky" was standing on the steps having a puff, and he offered to show the visitors through the building. When they came out they thanked him kindly and gave him fifty cents. "Blinky" pocketed the coin. (He used to tell this story himself.) Those were the days!

But all the professors were not "Old Country." W. S. Keirstead and his son Burton were Canadian; Bill Argue, the biologist, was Canadian; and there were others. But the British presence was strong. The faculty was quite tiny. You got to know most of them, and I saw them after lectures quite often. I got to know MacPherson well. I used to go to his house a lot, and he would have people in. I knew Bryan Priestman very well and Toole, who was a remarkable man. He became dean of the graduate school and vice president later on. Alfie Bailey hadn't come back to UNB by the time I left. I got to know Alfie in Toronto when I was a graduate student. I don't know of anyone before me who had gone to Toronto for graduate study in English. Alf Bailey, of course, had gone there for history. Shall I tell you how I happened to go to Toronto?

KC Yes. When did you decide that you would go to graduate school?

MR Because of MacPherson and certainly after reading Grierson, I wanted to go to Edinburgh. So I tried both for a Rhodes and an IODE Overseas Scholarship. The latter would have allowed me to go to Edinburgh but, of course, the Rhodes would have meant Oxford. I had no chance for the Rhodes. In those days some proficiency in college sports was imperative. As for the IODE, I suspect that my refusal to take compulsory military training (COTC) knocked out whatever chance I might have had. I was a bad boy! I had been reading H. G. Wells and Bertrand Russell and accounts of the debates in the Oxford Union and believed that I had to take a stand against the principle that soldiering was a necessary part of an Arts

curriculum. The story did get about. For awhile there was some question as to whether I should be granted a degree. I was told by Malcolm MacPherson that the faculty debated this issue well into the night before recommending that I be graduated with first class honours. And it was a close vote. There was no IODE scholarship and no Edinburgh. I am now glad that I did not go overseas for further study at that time. I needed the kind of graduate training provided in North America. While I had a sound and broad undergraduate education I knew nothing of research methods — not even the use of a library. But my family could not afford to send me away to a graduate school. Fortunately I had an uncle, relatively well off, who had taken an interest in me and offered to stake my first year of graduate studies. Malcolm MacPherson advised me to apply to Toronto. I was admitted, went and found an inexpensive boarding house on St. George Street where that large, ugly social sciences building [Sidney Smith] now stands.

That's where my place was. I roomed with a student at the Ontario College of Art — Bruce Stapleton who became a fine portrait painter as well as first-rate commercial artist. We used to get dinner over at Hart House for 38 cents, and on Saturdays we splurged and got a full-course dinner for 50 cents in the Stoodleigh Restaurant in the old *Toronto Star* building. That was an expensive meal in those days!

Through Bruce Stapleton I came to know something of what was going on in the art world of Toronto. And I revelled in the concerts at Massey Hall and the Eaton Auditorium. At home in Fredericton I had quite a collection of old Red Seal records — many of them pre-electronic 78's. One in particular — Fritz Kreisler playing his own "Rondino on a theme of Beethoven's" — captivated me — completely changed my musical taste (this was before high school). I wore that record out. Then, in my first week or so in Toronto — who was to give a recital but the great Kreisler himself. What an evening! He played Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Schubert. And then, for encores, a dozen or so of his own lyrical Viennese pieces. I have never before or since seen an audience enjoying itself so much. People were hugging themselves with delight .

KC And they used to say Toronto audiences are cold.

MR Nonsense! I heard Rachmaninoff then and Tibbett. The Royal Alexandra had George M. Cohan in O'Neill's *Ah! Wilderness*. Walter Houston in *Dodsworth*, the Lunts in *The Taming of the Shrew*. I had a season ticket for the symphony (the student rate was \$5.00 for some eight concerts). I got to the dress rehearsals of the Hart House String Quartet for 50 cents a concert. And I never thought the audiences cool or unresponsive in those days. Never! I

remember one evening when the audience was almost dancing in the aisles. It was an evening with George Gershwin and Leo Reisman's orchestra. Gershwin played the *Rhapsody in Blue* and the *Concerto in F* with the orchestra and, in solo, most of his best show tunes. It was marvellous!

KC Were most of your friends artistic or musical?

MR Norrie Frye was an accomplished pianist and a great concert-goer. But in my first year I usually went to concerts alone. In my second, post-M.A. year I often went with an old UNB friend, Herb Smith, who had come to Toronto to work for Canadian General Electric. (Herb was eventually to become president of the company!) There were some great people in my year at Toronto. Norrie Frye, Arthur Barker and Donald Creighton's brother John. The graduate school was very small. Gradually I got to know most of the professors, and even some outside the department, like Donald Creighton and Barker Fairley.

His first Goethe book was out by then, I think. The German department had offices in the University College cloister next to the English department and we saw a good deal of each other. Although I was timid and rather isolated at first, I soon found the professors — Woodhouse, Macgillivray, Endicott — friendly and very helpful.

KC Who do you think influenced you the most in the English department?

MR Woodhouse. The man had a first-rate mind. His lectures on Milton were the most exciting and stimulating academic lectures I have ever heard, and his seminar on the origins of Romanticism opened up whole new worlds of meaning for me. He had been trained at Toronto and Harvard. Woodhouse was a great man and a great scholar. He was also a generous man who went far out of his way to find places in the profession for his students. He died just after he gave up the headship of the department but he was still teaching. It was when I had been back in Toronto for a few years as a professor at Trinity, around 1964-65. I remember attending a Milton Ph.D. oral with Woodhouse then. He had a chest cold but was in top form at the exam. He died that night in his sleep. I shall never forget my sense of shock and sorrow when I was told the news.

Woodhouse was the real creator of ACUTE and of the Humanities Research Council (now part of SSHRC). He brought studies in English in this country into the twentieth century. Before then, it had been a sort of amateurish thing with people coming out from Oxford with a B.A. and giving lectures, then going home again as soon as the ice broke in the St. Lawrence. And he was the force behind the development of advanced graduate studies in English at the University of Toronto.

KC Did you think of doing your Ph.D. at Toronto?

MR Toronto didn't go beyond the M.A. in English when I was there. The Ph.D. programme really didn't take off until after World War II. After a year's teaching at Alberta, I went to Cornell for the doctorate. Woodhouse arranged this for me with Herbert Davis, a Swift and a Blake scholar, who had gone from Toronto to Cornell as head of the department. I went as part-time instructor and took my Ph.D. there.

KC Just to backtrack a bit. What was Alberta like after Toronto?

MR The university was still quite small — with fewer than 1,000 students. It's up to something like 25,000 now! The campus then had a few handsome brick Palladian buildings — now lost in a clutter of high-rise structures. In my day there were great open spaces and walks along the river. The city, then, was about 80,000, and now it is over 600,000. But the contours of the place have survived, and Edmonton, keeping to an original city plan, is much more shapely than Calgary, I should think.

KC Of course, at that time, you could have just got your M.A. and then gone on teaching, and that would have been enough. Why did you return to graduate studies?

MR It turned out to be a one-year appointment although I didn't know this until late in the fall. Apparently they had been angling for a senior man and when he became available, I was dropped. Very disturbing at the time. Now, like my failure to win an overseas scholarship, it seems providential. Woodhouse came to the rescue, and, through Herbert Davis, secured me a part-time instructorship at Cornell.

KC Why do you think Woodhouse directed you particularly to Cornell? Why not, say, Harvard where he had gone?

MR I don't know. I think Davis had been in touch with him about the possibility of getting some graduate students.

KC What was it like living in a small town, after Toronto?

MR Ithaca — oh! It was a lovely place. A lovely campus with waterfalls running down though the middle of it and a beautiful lake and lovely villages around it. I liked it very much.

KC I have been reading E.K. Brown's letters to Duncan Campbell Scott from when he was there.

MR Brown didn't like it at all.

KC No. He found it very small, but the thing that struck me about his letters from Cornell was that he really didn't seem to find any differences between the States and Canada. There is no mention whatsoever of the fact that he had gone to another country; and I have

read other memoirs of the same period — J.K. Galbraith's, for instance — neither he nor Brown seem to make much, culturally speaking, of having to cross the border.

MR I had no sense then of leaping from one planet to another. Davis, from Toronto, was my supervisor in the first year and, when he left to become president of Smith College, I was taken over by R.C. Bald, an Australian and a graduate of Cambridge. Actually, Cornell had had a long association with Toronto from the days of Goldwin Smith, who was professor of history there before coming to Toronto. During an election campaign I was often asked how I would vote. There are so many accents in the U.S. that mine could have been any one of them, I suppose.

KC Of course, it wouldn't have been any where nearly as difficult as it is now to get into the States.

MR No. I applied for a permanent visa to teach at Cornell, and it was granted speedily. I used to come back every six months or so to get it renewed. I kept the visa alive into the late forties on the off chance that I might take a position in the U.S. After a year at Indiana University — the war was on — I came to Ottawa to enlist. I was turned down on medical grounds by each of the three services. A senior colleague of mine at Alberta had asked me to look up his old classmate from Glasgow — John Grierson of the National Film Board. I did.

We began talking. I had just finished a book on Milton, and he was interested in that and the seventeenth century. We began talking about the Leveller movement and everything else. He was a learned fellow. Then he said, "When can you start work?" and I said, "What do you mean?" "Well," he said, "come up to my office tomorrow — be there at ten, I never get there before ten — and we will see what we can do." So I went up and he said, "What's your salary?" I told him and he said "I'll double it." It wasn't very much, but it was a lot in those days. So I started working at the Film Board and the first thing he said to me — I was just sort of hanging around to see what was going on for a while and I was in the office — was "Get me Walt Disney on the phone!" So I went out and I saw one of the secretaries and said, "he wants to get Walt Disney," so she got him on the phone and I walked in and I said "I've got you Walt Disney." "Oh! Good for you," he said. I guess he figured then I was a genius!

KC What were you supposed to be doing?

MR He put me into distribution and by the end of the war I was head of non-theatrical distribution. We organized circuits of volunteer film projectionists all over Canada in cities and factories as well as in

rural areas, and I travelled over most of Canada setting up volunteer groups. We also had offices in New York, Washington and Chicago — which I visited from time to time. It was a tremendous experience for me!

KC Yes, I am sure it was. Did you think your academic career was at an end then?

MR I must admit I was tempted. I liked the people I worked with and I liked everything about the job. But I wasn't really a film man. As the war ended, I had offers both from Cornell and Manitoba — and "feelers" from UBC. I soon knew what to do.

KC What had your experience in Indiana been like?

MR My feelings were mixed. The department was very good indeed, and we found the people hospitable. But my first-year classes were far below the level I was used to in Canada and at Cornell. There were no state entrance exams, and I had students who were downright illiterate. I remember one strapping fellow from East Chicago. He was a football player of great promise and would be eligible for the university team in his second year. It was scarcely an exaggeration to say that he could neither read nor write. I spent a great deal of time with him going over his essays and exercises, but he failed the course miserably. The football coach came to see me in some anguish. I could not raise the mark. It was impossibly low.

I taught the same course in summer school. And there, on the first class day, sat my football player. When I entered the room he blinked, looked at his enrollment card (which had my name on it), looked up at me, then at his card — and rose hastily from his seat and rushed out into the hall. Apparently, I served as a visual aid to his reading skills! I never saw him again. But he passed his summer course with a good second-class mark and went on to become an All-American and later a well-paid professional in the NFL. I must suppose that he had the guidance that summer of a teacher more proficient than I was or ever was to be! I had never thought that UNB was the leading university in North America; but the standards at UNB were so much higher. We had no illiterates at UNB.

KC Was there someone at Cornell who got you the job in Indiana?

MR Well, I had a number of offers. When I finished my degree, you know, I wrote all over the damn place. I had an offer which looked fairly attractive in terms of salary from a State Teachers' College in Texas, in Houston, and I went into the chairman of the department and he said, "For God's sake, don't go there. I'll tell you what you do. There's an opening coming up in Indiana. Why don't you get that? Do you want that?" and I said, "Well, I guess so." so that's the way it happened.

KC Were there many jobs around?

MR Not many. But there were fewer Ph.D.'s coming out, and I think most of us got places. I had two or three approaches when I was at Indiana. I was not sure I wanted to stay there. I was unhappy with the standards at the freshman level — and I only did freshman teaching. The event which helped me decide was this: I went into the library and by chance came upon Donald Creighton's *Commercial Empire of the St. Lawrence*. I read it with real excitement and said to my wife, "We're going back to Canada." A few weeks later I was in Ottawa and had joined the NFB.

KC So then you never felt the difference when you were at Cornell?

MR Well, I felt some difference, but I didn't feel any startling difference, no. I felt very much at home there and I made a lot of friends. I didn't feel a foreigner at all. I felt much more of a foreigner in Toronto, when I first went up, coming from Fredericton. I felt really like a fish out of water up there at first. I was scared to death — homesick until about Christmas. Concerts kept me going — and plays at the Royal Alex. But it did take me some time to feel that I "belonged" at the University of Toronto. My student colleagues — people like Norrie Frye and Arthur Barker — had the intensive Toronto honours degree behind them and, while I had a broader undergraduate training than the Toronto students, I was far behind in knowledge of the main periods of English literature. But I worked — often until 3 a.m. And I managed to complete my M.A. in one year. I collapsed at the end of it and spent ten days in bed.

KC Did you write a thesis?

MR Yes, I did. It had something to do with Shakespeare and the Romantics — a study of Shakespeare criticism in the early nineteenth century. I did it with R. S. Knox and Woodhouse. I owe much, also, to Norman Endicott, who took a day off to teach me the rudiments of bibliography and the use of the Toronto library. He saved my life! There was no formal course in bibliography.

KC Did you see many of the professors after lectures?

MR Herbert Davis used to have a Sunday afternoon "open house" for graduate students. I often had dinner with Woodhouse and his mother, too. This helped a great deal, and I gradually overcame my terror of the place.

KC Yes, I remember Alfred Bailey talking about how he felt when he went up to Toronto and found that he knew nothing about the important modern books that were coming out at the time.

MR That's right. Nobody did, coming out of this place. We didn't have the library to begin with. We didn't have a periodical index.

- KC Did you have any sense, specifically, of being a Maritimer going up to Ontario? Was that emphasized much?
- MR Well, I felt it. I felt, as I said, like an alien, in a way that I didn't when I went to Cornell. By that time, though, I suppose if I had gone to Africa I would have been all right. It wouldn't have made any difference.
- KC That was the great watershed, maybe,
- MR I think so. If I hadn't "made" that I don't know what would have happened.
- KC How old were you at the time?
- MR Twenty-two. I had never been away before — except for a summer's visit to relatives in the States. I suppose my settling in owes much to Alfie Bailey whom I met in Toronto late in that first term there.
- KC You hadn't known him in Fredericton?
- MR No — but I knew of him. I used to read his poems in *The Brunswickan* when I was still a high school kid. I thought they were great. People pointed him out on the street in Fredericton and said "There's the poet, Alf Bailey." So I knew him when I met him on St. George Street in Toronto and introduced myself as a Frederictonian. He at once took me under his wing, introduced me to all sorts of people and taught me how to read — and enjoy — T.S. Eliot and the modernists.
- KC Did you write any poetry yourself?
- MR I tried to. I published some poems in *Canadian Forum*, *Saturday Night* and *Here and Now*. Alfie encouraged me in this, but I am sure I was not intended to be a poet! But I must tell you of the trick I played on Alfie — I think early in 1934. I used to try to get Alfie to come to concerts with me — without much success. I saw a poster advertising the George Gershwin concert. Gershwin in profile looked exactly like an Indian chief. I pointed this out to Alfie. "Look, Alfie," I said, "you are interested in North American Indian culture. You simply cannot afford to miss this!" So Alfie came along with me to Massey Hall. And he loved it! I wonder if he remembers? Anyhow, he came with me a bit later to hear Lawrence Tibbett — I was forgiven.
- KC When did you give up writing poetry?
- MR I don't think I wrote anything after I left Toronto. Well, then, I got digging into bibliographies. I didn't think, quite frankly, that the stuff was good enough.
- KC Of course, by that time you would have been thoroughly involved in your graduate work.

- MR That's right, I was, and I didn't do anything else at all; except I read everything I could lay my hands on. But I got more interested in going to concerts than in writing poetry. That was my main relaxation and still is. I like music. And when I got to Ithaca there were marvellous things, and in Indiana, too. Ithaca's Bailey Hall is one of the great concert halls in the country, I think. All the major American orchestras came there. I heard Heifetz there — who else did I hear? Martha Graham Dancers came when I was there. Marion Anderson gave a marvellous recital. She was great in those days. In Indiana they had the Metropolitan Opera when I was there. Edward Johnson, a Canadian, was then head of the Metropolitan. They had a marvellous concert hall in Indiana, with great murals in the foyer by Thomas Benton, the American painter. It was a lovely place. The place was simply bursting with music.
- KC Did you notice much difference — that is, you went from Toronto to Cornell and then to Indiana, and then, of course, out to Alberta — did you notice much difference, if not between the States and Canada, then between East and West?
- MR Yes — there was a difference in the West. I taught at the University of Manitoba for five years. I loved the sense of space — the wide Winnipeg streets. And Winnipeg, far from other centres, created its own cultural life. The symphony was just beginning when I was there, but the ballet was already well established and very exciting.
- KC So after you were at the Film Board, then how did you get back into academic life?
- MR That's when I went to Manitoba. I had had an offer to return to Cornell but by now I was determined to stay in Canada. My Film Board travels had given me a sense of the country I had never had before and I wasn't going to leave.
- KC What about the Guggenheim?
- MR I got that while I was at Manitoba. A.J.M. Smith put me up for it. I spent the first half of the Guggenheim year at Harvard and the last half at the Huntington Library in California. I was working on a book called *Poetry and Dogma*.
- KC Had you already started to write it before you got the fellowship?
- MR I had some notions — but had done little research and no writing. The notions came from a course I had been teaching at Manitoba. It was a course in seventeenth-century poetry, and I became interested in religious symbolism.
- KC When one reads your book *Milton's Royalism*
- MR That was the early thesis. It was a reduced version of the Ph.D. thesis.

KC When one reads that and when one reads *Poetry and Dogma* — there is roughly ten years between those two books — I think one senses more of an intellectual sturdiness with the second book. One would expect that to be so, but I wondered, what changes do you think you experienced, roughly speaking, as an intellectual during that period?

MR I suppose the change was really a deepening of my religious sense and the beginning of a serious concern with theology — as a result of teaching poets like Herbert, Donne and Crashaw, and the need to explore the religious dimensions of their work. But I suppose that most of the things I have written began with problems that arose in teaching. My writing has grown out of my teaching. Certainly *Poetry and Dogma* came out of my seventeenth-century course at Manitoba.

I don't think I have ever had such an exciting run of students as I had in those years. Among them were Margaret Laurence, Adele Wiseman, Jack Ludwig, Patricia Blondal, the actor Douglas Rain, the painter William Kurelek, Roland Penner (now Attorney-General of Manitoba). Sidney Warhaft was to become head of the English department at Manitoba. Allan Bevan was to become head of the English department at Dalhousie. Ross Woodman is a professor at Western Ontario, Hugo McPherson at McGill. There are others. Others have flourished in government and in business. An amazing company of talents. Many of them had just come back from the war. They were mature, but maturity is not the whole story. There was a strain of brilliance in the blood, I feel sure. And peace had broken out with the promise of a new world. They were all excited about their studies — they were thirsty for ideas. We would meet after class and talk and argue into the night. I have never known anything like it — before or since.

KC Was it a more optimistic time?

MR I think it was. I think everything was opening up, and the future looked pretty good. The economy was beginning to pick up. There were lots of jobs. Hitler had been defeated. Things looked better.

KC Why did you leave Manitoba?

MR I had an attractive offer from Queen's, and my wife and I both had aging parents back East — indeed my father died just before I left Manitoba.

KC What was the average academic salary then?

MR I became a full professor at Manitoba at \$4,900 after having come there as an assistant professor at \$3,000. When someone told me Woodhouse at Toronto was getting \$10,000 a year, I couldn't believe it. It seemed astronomical! After I got to Queen's, salaries

began to go up. The universities were in danger of losing their top scientists and engineers to private industry in the post-war boom, and so even teachers of English literature had their share of the sudden new largesse. One year my salary was actually doubled! And there was a steady increase from the mid-fifties on.

KC How old were you when you became a full professor?

MR I was thirty-eight. Rapid promotion was easier to come by in those days. The universities were expanding and were all under-staffed. There weren't enough qualified Canadians to go around, and a great influx of American academics was underway.

KC Do you think many people were going into university teaching at that time?

MR Canadian Ph.D. programmes in English studies were just getting off the ground, but some brilliant people were enrolling at the University of Toronto with an academic career as their goal. Soon doctoral programmes were established in other major Canadian universities. But until after World War II Canadians like myself had to leave Canada to complete their studies.

KC Did they go mostly to Britain or did they go mostly to the States?

MR In my day most of us went to American universities. The British placed very little emphasis on the doctorate. This is no longer the case.

KC Of course, at that time the British would not have been putting out that many Ph.D.'s.

MR No, they were not, and Canadian universities were on the hunt for Ph.D.'s. The influx of American faculty was, therefore, I suppose, inevitable. In some institutions a kind of civil war broke out between the American "Army of Occupation" and the native Canadian guerrillas. "Yankee Go Home" was scrawled on many a blackboard, I am told.

But it worked the other way, too. Canadian academics were still taking up posts in the United States. I had several American offers myself but did not seriously consider leaving Canada again. So I went from Manitoba to Queen's. After I had been there for a few years the Principal, William Mackintosh, invited me to take on the editorship of the *Queen's Quarterly*. Subscriptions had dwindled and the principal wondered if the university should continue to publish the *QQ*. "Would you," he asked, "be willing to take on the *Quarterly* for one year to see if it can be rejuvenated?"

KC Why do you think you were asked?

MR I am not sure. But I think he knew from his friends in the social sciences that I had a rather wide range of interests and would not be

tempted to make a narrowly literary magazine out of the *QQ*. So I went to work with a will! It seemed to me that our magazine should depend very little on the chance of volunteer submissions. I decided that, if at all possible, from one-half to two-thirds of each issue should be solicited with some design in mind. Accordingly I attended meetings, national and local, of economists, political scientists, historians and so on, and at the same time went after poets, fiction writers and literary critics. We ran articles on foreign policy, labour relations, the political parties; writers like Margaret Laurence, Alice Munro, Sheila Watson, and Alden Nowlan published their first work with me then. It was an exciting time. And circulation went up. I pestered the alumni, went after news-stands and bookstores and, by some miracle, got a subscription for 1,000 copies of the *Quarterly* — a yearly subscription — from the Education Office of the Royal Canadian Airforce. I think our subscription in two and a half years rose from less than 300 to something more than 2,500.

KC Of course, you had your experience in distribution.

MR With the Film Board, I suppose. I learned something about marketing there all right! Anyhow after almost three years as editor, I was made head of the English department and had to give up the *Quarterly*. I really didn't want to but I couldn't do *both* jobs.

KC Nineteen fifty-four was the year that *Poetry and Dogma* came out, and it was also the year when your book of Canadian essays appeared. This seems to announce a change in some of your preoccupations or directions. Your previous publications were very strictly seventeenth-century academic books, and all of a sudden you were doing something much more broadly based in Canadian culture. Did a change like that come about, and was it sudden or gradual?

MR I suppose my Canadian interests deepened with my editorial work for the *Queen's Quarterly*. And I had been for several years reviewing Canadian books for the CBC. Anyhow Lorne Pierce asked me if I would put together a volume of essays by Canadians. I accepted, and the volume was called *Our Sense of Identity*. I wasn't teaching Canadian literature at the time but was reading widely in Canadian history, social studies and so on.

KC Well, of course, much more than Canadian literature is in that piece. It's the same with *Arts in Canada*. How did your editing of that book come about?

MR I was invited by Macmillan and by a committee of an organization now called the Canadian Conference of the Arts. It had a rather different name then. Anyhow, Frank Upjohn of Macmillan, John Parkin the architect and Arthur Gelber (one of our great patrons of the arts) came down to Kingston and with me developed a working

plan for the book that was to be called *The Arts in Canada*. Things were beginning to move in all the arts, and government was taking note. The fifties was an intensely creative period in Canadian life.

KC Why do you think that happened precisely then?

MR In the fifties? The country began to have a new sense of itself — partly, I think, because of the war. Prairie boys trained in Nova Scotia for the navy; Maritimers trained for the air force in Manitoba. We were all shaken out of our nests. I know I got the feel of the country with my travels back and forth for the Film Board. And Ottawa was full of people from every part of Canada. Then, too, in the years after the war the economy boomed. Canada began to think of herself as chief of the middle powers. With Mike Pearson and others, we began to play a significant part at the UN. Then, too, people like myself were getting to know French Canada — the people and the arts of Quebec. For a while there was a lively interplay between the two Canadian cultures. I hope and pray that this creative relationship will be restored. In those days, French Canadian painters were well represented in the Toronto art galleries — and painters from English Canada were certainly visible in Montreal. This was well before the promising developments in all the arts in the West and in the Maritimes. But in the fifties these developments, however regional in origin, were coming together in a Canadian pattern. We were at last sharing with each other!

It's hard to know how to write a cultural history, but it would be interesting just to try to work out the strange network of relationships that developed after a period of intense national effort and then the sudden upsurge of something like prosperity and the sense of national importance which we didn't have before: how this was reflected in the arts as well as in everything else.

KC Of course, it was a tremendously busy time for you as an individual. You became a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, president of the Humanities Association of Canada, and you were head of the Queen's Department of English after having been editor of the *Queen's Quarterly*; you were also a founding member of ACUTE.

MR Yes. I had a part in founding ACUTE. I was president of the Humanities Association at the time, and the major segment of the association was English literary studies. Indeed the English segment was so large and so varied in its concerns that it could no longer be contained in the old Humanities Association. A.S.P. Woodhouse, who had founded the Association, felt that a separate professional association for English studies was needed. I agreed and had the task of convincing my colleagues in humanities — some of whom feared that the withdrawal of English studies would shatter the Humanities Association.

KC When was the Humanities Association set up?

MR I'm not sure of the date — late forties or early fifties, I would guess. Woodhouse was the architect — with help from Watson Kirkconnell and others in the Royal Society (the senior Learned Society in Canada). The Royal Society has a limited elected membership and could not contain the new army of gifted scholars entering the profession as the universities expanded after the war. History already had its own professional association but took some part in the Humanities Association. But English was much larger than history and soon had to find its own separate voice and purpose. When the separation took place, it was not a divorce. At each annual session of the Learned Societies at least one plenary session was arranged in which English and the other humanities participated. The Humanities Association thus became an interdisciplinary agent and has served the academic community well in this role. ACUTE has developed in a way that it could not have under the old dispensation but is still able to play its part in the broader humanities grouping.

KC Has ACUTE developed the way you thought it would or the way you wanted it to? It sounds all tremendously exciting and optimistic; a lot of the excitement has died down since then.

MR Things are probably more exciting at the beginning. But excitement isn't everything!

KC Well, it strikes me that humanists now, in Canada, are much more apologetic for themselves than they might have been in the fifties. Do you think that the development of all these professional organizations in the humanities that sprang up during the fifties have really changed Canadian intellectual life for the better, or do you think they have just given us more bureaucracy and more mediocrity?

MR I wouldn't attempt a snap judgement on that. I think we have made great advances. For instance, the Canada Council has opened up unheard of opportunities for writers and artists in this country. There has been an enormous creative explosion in all the arts in Canada in the last twenty-five years, thanks in large part to the work of the Council. But of course what artists do and what scholars do is bound to be affected by changes in the economy, in technology, in the whole world environment. Our cultural life is not lived out in a cocoon. Or within a nation. We have our corner in the global village and we cannot ignore what happens around the corner on the next street. Humanist and social scientists must start thinking seriously about the global context within which they try to function. They must think about the pollution of the planet, the nuclear arms race, the awful plight of the Third World, the impending revolution in the means of production and the means of communication. We must get out of our comfortable cubby-holes!

- KC When did you do most of your radio and television work?
- MR When I was at the University of Manitoba I began doing book reviews for CBC and at Queen's appeared regularly on the CBC program "Critically Speaking." Bob Weaver invited me.
- KC Do you think there was a more receptive audience for academics in the media at that time?
- MR No. Think of "Stereo Morning" and "Arts National" and Weaver's program "Anthology" now.
- KC You were also on *Fighting Words*?
- MR I was on that several times, yes. It was rather nerve-racking. Nathan Cohen chaired it, and he loved to put people on the spot. We were on pins and needles most of the time. A radio talk — written in advance — was much less terrifying. With Cohen you had no idea what was to happen. More like a hockey game! But it was fun — even if frightening. I was only on the program half a dozen times, I suppose.
- KC Were you ever tempted to do more of that kind of work?
- MR Well, if I had been tempted, I probably would have, but I don't think I was. I did it when I was asked to, and I had no desire to become a professional CBC man.
- KC Could you tell me a bit about how the New Canadian Library came about?
- MR It came about when I was head of the department at Queen's. We had a North American literature course — which allowed about two weeks for Canadian literature, taught from one of the anthologies. I thought there should be a full course on Canadian literature. There had been such a course at Queen's in the twenties, given by James Cappon, but it disappeared after his retirement in the early thirties. The problem now was texts. You can't teach novels from an anthology. Old novels were out of print, new novels too expensive for class use. It seemed the only solution was a paperback series of novels at a reasonable price. One day I had lunch with John Gray of Macmillan, and proposed a Canadian paperback series. He liked the idea but said there was no market for it. "We'd lose our shirt!"

I pondered this and a few weeks later, on a trip to Toronto, looked up Jack McClelland, who had been a student of mine in summer school at the University of Toronto in 1946. Jack used to come up and chat with me after class. He was about to enter his father's firm, and we talked about the need of putting more emphasis on Canadian books. When I went to see him in Toronto, I made a case for a paperback series. Like John Gray he said "There's no market." I seemed to convince him that such a series would *create* a market in

the universities and schools of the country, and he agreed to take a gamble on the idea. "Let's put out two books, announce the series and see what happens." The first two were Callaghan's *Such Is My Beloved* and Grove's *Over Prairie Trails*.

KC What made you choose those?

MR A rather haphazard choice, I suppose. I *did* want to begin with a Callaghan. So a series called New Canadian Library was announced and, after some delay, the first two books appeared. The idea of the series was applauded in newspaper reviews. But the sale at first was light. We had agreed that it would take several years and many more books before the idea caught on in the universities, and Jack was prepared to take an initial loss. The next two were Ross's *As For Me and My House* and Leacock's *Literary Lapses*. The Leacock sold like hotcakes, and Jack decided to put a Leacock in each new batch of books to help carry the cost of the others. Leacock carried us over the first four or five years until the university sales began. Courses in Canadian literature opened up in one university after another. We were away! To further our hopes of getting books adopted for Canadian courses, I got introductions written by people in universities from Newfoundland to British Columbia. Soon we were putting out a minimum of ten titles a year. At first other Canadian publishers sold rights to then out-of-print books without a murmur. But as NCL began to show a substantial profit, Macmillan and the others began to put out their own paperbacks and our selection, except for very old titles, was narrowed to M & S books; then Jack began putting his best new titles and some of the best NCL titles in Seal Books, and for nearly three years no new titles were added to NCL. I gave up the General Editorship in 1982 before going to Edinburgh as a visiting professor.

KC It's interesting that the NCL started out of a need in Canadian graduate studies and moved down into the undergraduate, and now again it has come back to scholarly interest in the older works. But thinking about that time, the fifties, when you were at Queen's and all this was going on and opening up and the Canada Council starting in 1957 and all of that, it must have been a tremendous time.

MR It was very exciting. It was exciting in all the arts, too.

KC Why did you leave Queen's in the early sixties?

MR I have never regretted the moves I have made — although my pension has suffered. But I was attracted to the graduate programme at Toronto. And there were personal reasons, too, for leaving when I did. It was not an easy decision, as I had and still have a great affection for Queen's and Kingston. In any event, I went, and greatly enjoyed my teaching at Trinity College and in the Graduate School. I

became a dean and then acting provost and was spending less and less time in the classroom and in research and writing. I used to go out to meetings every night of the week.

KC Did you know you were going to get into all that administrative work?

MR Well, I knew it might happen — and if I stayed just as dean, it wouldn't have been too bad. I became involved in committees when they were discussing the whole honours question and what was going to happen to the colleges. They lost their autonomy. I battled all of that. After my stint as acting provost, I was granted a year's leave of absence without pay to go as visiting professor to Dalhousie. The fun of the classroom — and no administrative duties — was too much, and I easily yielded to a tempting offer to stay on at Dalhousie.

KC What has it been like going back to Toronto, say, twenty years after you had been there? Did you notice many changes between the fifties and the thirties?

MR I enjoyed it. My wife and I still had many friends there. We were quite at home. Toronto had become a big city in every way with a rich and diverse cultural life. But I still have happy memories of the old Toronto of the thirties. It was for me then a great city (once I had overcome my homesickness) and the sophistication of the big new Toronto never gave me the thrill of that Kreisler concert or the Gershwin or the old art gallery in the Grange. Or the university as it was then with its marvellous honours programme, which, alas, was dismantled by the sophisticated professionals of the late sixties.

KC But then, you decided that you wanted to go back to the Maritimes. Was it really as specific as that — a hankering to go back?

MR Yes, well I had a year off coming and I thought — well, for one reason or other, that year we didn't think we could go abroad. We considered this, but for various reasons it was the wrong moment. I have always come back to the Maritimes whenever I could. While a devout Frederictonian, I have always liked Halifax, and I have strong family connections in Nova Scotia.

KC I have heard that it's only New Brunswickers that speak of this area as the Maritimes.

MR Once upon a time — but not now. And the sense of being a Maritimer is evident here in many ways. They had the Canada Games here a few years ago, and I went to all the baseball games. When Nova Scotia played New Brunswick, the crowd, of course, rooted for Nova Scotia. But when New Brunswick or P.E.I. played Ontario or Manitoba the crowd rooted vociferously for the Maritime team. A loyalty to the region is always there — just under the skin.

KC Do you think you would have participated in this Canadian cultural identity if you had, say, never gone up to Ontario, had stayed in the Maritimes? Would there have been any possibility perhaps of your staying in the Maritimes?

MR I suppose if I hadn't gone to Toronto when I did and if I hadn't travelled the country for the Film Board, I would have had a less vivid sense of Canada. I don't think I could have got this sense from books and films. Over the years I have had a chance to know at first-hand the different Canadian regions. They all seem Canadian to me despite their differences. In my day people didn't move around as much. A lot of this happened since the second world war. A sense of belonging to something larger than the particular region you were in developed in the fifties in a way that it never had before.

KC Yes, I agree; although it strikes me that in the sixties and seventies — particularly in the mid sixties when there really was that great expansion with even a lot of Americans coming up to Canadian universities — it strikes me that regions such as New Brunswick at that time not only felt themselves part of Canada, but felt for once that their regionalism was something significant.

MR Well, I think that is true. I think both regionalism and a sense of nation developed together in this country.

KC And they seem to have disappeared at the same time as well.

MR I don't think they have disappeared. There are moments of self-awareness that do not remain at high temperature. But in cooling down, we don't lose what we have gained. We are going through a difficult period now. But this does not put us all the way back — at least, I don't think so.

KC Well, I wasn't around, except peripherally, when everything was *hot*, as you say; but certainly when I read about the fifties and sixties, I am overcome by a sense of envy for what must have been the excitement of that time. And what I find interesting, although I don't suppose I should be surprised, is that it seems to go with prosperity. And one doesn't like to think, necessarily, that there would be such a dependence of cultural climate upon the economic one. Do you think there has been a demoralization of Canadian intellectual life since the money left?

MR Every culture has its rhythm — and we are on the down-side, perhaps, at the moment. But this is not a specifically Canadian phenomenon — it is part of that larger global crisis of which I spoke a moment ago. It has something to do with fear of the future, and of our position in relation to powers and super powers beyond our borders and seemingly beyond our reach. The time has come when we have to think not just as regionalists or nationalists (although we hold to our love of region and nation) but as civilized human beings

entering a time of crisis which embraces the whole planet. We have to be more than Canadians now. I think we have tended to fall back with some nostalgia on a moment which we felt good about ourselves, and I don't think we can continue to do that.

- KC Of course, the danger is with the money drying up, say for instance with travel grants being less and less accessible, that the chances are that everyone is going to stay within their own borders. Far fewer students now are going to study abroad because they simply cannot afford to go.
- MR The other thing is, of course, that even if they don't travel abroad now as much as they did, and a lot of them still do — I am amazed at the number of people who travel abroad from here. In my day, to go to Europe, you would have to be a sort of — almost from another planet. The people of my generation who went to Europe when I was growing up — there weren't any in Fredericton. I remember there was a famous character around town then named Frank Cooper who had a beautiful baritone voice. He was a fine singer. He sold insurance, but he was a cultivated musician and he went over to Europe a couple of times, I remember his talking one day. He said "I'm not going to go back there again. I've been to Europe. I've seen all of Beethoven's paintings!" He had a good sense of humour, but he was one of the few people I knew who had been to Europe when I was a boy. And even now, with all the talk of recession, most of my students have been to Europe and are still going. So it's not as bad as all that; if you wanted, in my day, to look at something in a rare book, you would have to go to a British library or out to California. Now you can get a microfilm. There are all sorts of ways of doing things. The whole communications network is so different than it was that you are not really isolated any more. You see, you can watch what is going on in Saudi Arabia at dinner time on your television set. People's minds have been expanded by this sort of thing. They see everything in the world. It isn't the way it was. I didn't know what anything looked like except from little picture books. No sense of immediacy at all as far as other countries were concerned. We can't lose any of that; but what I am worried about is not whether or not a few scholars get over to the British Library, but whether the world is going to blow up — much more serious!
- KC Do you think that universities are going to retreat back to being institutions for the elite few?
- MR This seems to be happening to a degree. If there is going to be an elite few, it is in the high tech field. The universities may be forced into "practical" work at the expense of the humane disciplines. There is much worry about this now in Britain. People in the humanities can't just take a negative position on this and simply

fight the drift to high tech. I think we have to discover how the central humane values and arts can be brought to bear on what is happening in the world. We must learn the new language of the electronic order. We must speak out loudly if we are to be heard and if we are to be heeded — before it is too late.

KC It seems to me there are two different philosophies of education involved here — one is the cultivation of the individual for no particular use.

MR And of a class.

KC Yes, it has political overtones, whereas this emphasis on technological training ignores the production of a fine human being.

MR Of course it does. That is the awful danger. The humanist has to learn how to affect this process, and he is not going to deal with it simply by asking for more grants from the Canada Council. How are we to humanize the computer and all its brood? How many humanists have dared to address this issue?

KC I suppose they worry about it to the extent that they find themselves teaching reading and writing courses to engineers.

MR Well, I suppose that's something. Not much, alas!

KC But there is still a great element of mistrust.

MR I think we have to start thinking very hard and very imaginatively about the kind of world that is developing around us and see what values we are meant to project. How in the name of heaven are we going to do it — and we are not going to do it just by going along the same road we always have and by teaching composition to engineers — although I don't say we shouldn't.

KC What would you feel about a core curriculum — going back to that?

MR Well, I have always been in favour of that anyway. I think even an electronic scientist ought to learn to enjoy reading Dickens or Milton or somebody, and he ought to know another language, and he ought to make some basic attempt to understand something of political science and economics, as a groundwork. I think that our education, even in the humanities, has become too specialized anyway, and I am glad that when I went to UNB that they gave us a fairly broad basic undergraduate education. I had that.

KC One last question. What have you been doing since your “retirement?”

MR What have I been doing? Well, I still am supervising theses. I have four doctoral theses that I am finishing off and a couple of M.A.'s. I am on several other Ph.D. committees in which I am involved as second reader. Here, I keep fairly busy. I see students regularly. But I am doing a bit of writing. I have a few things underway, which I

KC won't talk about. I am on a committee known as the Institute for Advanced Research which meets about four times a year. I am active in that. I have been a member of the Advisory Panel of the Canada Council and have been regularly involved in that all year.

KC What does the Institute for Advanced Research do?

MR The institute develops inter-disciplinary research projects not otherwise funded by the conventional granting agencies or by individual universities. One of these has to do with robotics and is concerned with the impact of the new electronic technology on society and culture. Another is concerned with population and health. To me it is gratifying that an active institute now is attempting to bring together in a common attack on crucial problems people from the sciences, the social sciences and the humanities. I think this is a direction now absolutely necessary and one which the universities must try to follow. With that in mind, some of the problems that worry the humanists as they go to meetings of ACUTE seem to be rather insignificant.

KC Do you think it will ever go on the agenda of ACUTE to be discussed?

MR Well, I hope so. I hope that what develops now in this institute will gradually catch the imagination of people in the humanities and social sciences so that they will start thinking about it, and the sooner the better.

KC Are you being asked to write on these questions?

MR No, nobody so far has asked me to write on them. But I might!

Dalhousie University
April 1984