

MONTREAL POETS OF THE FORTIES

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DURING THE WAR YEARS Stanley Street was the centre of Montreal's "little bohemia". In the section of Stanley between Sherbrooke and St. Catherine Streets stood a row of disreputable old tenements. Cheap rooms, blind pigs, private gambling clubs, bookies and numerous other nefarious enterprises thrived here. It used to be said that if you pushed the right buzzer and knew the password you could get anything illegal that you wanted at any time of day or night in that block. Shuttered and draped, the upper windows gave away no secrets. At street level shoe shine parlours, cheap restaurants, Jewish tailors and Chinese laundries crowded together, each blistering with bilingual signs. And up and down the sidewalk, catching soldiers and tourists like flies, strolled the girls, ignoring the complaints of the Y.M.C.A. authorities across the street. Painters and writers were to be found spotted through the tenements, in attics, in basements and in the back rooms of shops. The rent was cheap, the location central, the bookstores, art galleries and universities within walking distance.

This setting provided the backdrop for the activities of the young writers and artists later called the "First Statement Group". The notorious location lent atmosphere to the public image of these writers as "Montreal's Bohemians"; and talent and poverty, brash youthfulness, vociferous belligerence, their dishevelled personal appearance and irregular living habits gave the description further credibility.

The central figure, if not the leader, of the "First Statement Group" was John Sutherland. John came to Montreal from Saint John, New Brunswick, in 1941

to attend McGill University after a three year bout with tuberculosis. During his illness he had spent much time reading, writing poems, and corresponding with writers and editors of literary magazines both in Canada and abroad. By the time he arrived in Montreal, he was well acquainted with the Canadian literary scene and with modern American and British poetry. Shortly after arriving, he determined to launch a little magazine of his own and to this end he engaged the help of several undergraduates including R. G. Simpson and Mary Margaret Miller, and Audrey Aikman who later became his wife. Together, in 1942, these few friends turned out the first six or seven issues of an eight-paged mimeographed sheet which they named *First Statement*.

Sutherland's own talent lay not in creative writing (though he wrote poems and sketches) but rather in editorializing and criticism. He had a mission — to set Canadian writing on the right track — to provide an outlet for young talent whose work was fresh, close to experience and above all free from any kind of colonialism. He inspired in his colleagues a firm belief that no other magazine in Canada was thus oriented and their missionary zeal supported them throughout the first arduous year. But John soon found that he had no time left for classes at McGill; and unlike most "little mag" editors, he put the "little mag" first. He abandoned his formal studies within the year and concentrated his whole effort on the magazine. He was to spend the remainder of his life — a short fifteen years — at this chosen task and related publishing ventures.

It is doubtful, however, despite such zeal and dedication, that he and his original editorial board could have sustained their intentions for longer than the usual brief lifetime of a "little mag" had not a hat-check girl told a friend about her brother's venture into publishing. The hat-check girl was John's sister, Betty; the friend was the sister-in-law of Irving Layton.

Layton and his friend Louis Dudek had been writing and swapping ideas about poetry for a year or two. They had each had poems published in the *McGill Daily* and were seeking broader outlets. On a night that must be memorable for both, they walked together through the darkness over the long and beautiful Jacques Cartier bridge which stretches from east end Montreal across the St. Lawrence to the South Shore. The two young men talked poetry all the way, excited and tense, as if there might not be a next time soon enough. Irving was in uniform, billeted, for the time being, on the South Shore at Longueuil. Shortly after this, he was sent to Brockville and while there, heard from his sister-in-law about the new magazine in Montreal. The first poems of Layton's appearing in *First Statement* were sent from Brockville and appear in the 9th issue. Soon

after, on a trip to Montreal, Irving met Betty Sutherland whom he later married. And, upon Layton's discharge from the army, he and Louis Dudek joined forces with John Sutherland in the editing of *First Statement* magazine.

These three, Sutherland, Layton and Dudek, different as they were in many ways, formed the hard core of the "First Statement Group". They held some ideas in common about poetry in Canada and they dedicated themselves to promoting these views and their own talents in the pages of their magazine. They soon were publishing contributions from such important newcomers as Miriam Waddington and Raymond Souster. By 1943, the end of their first year of publication, *First Statement* had attracted writers from coast to coast and was making a distinctive contribution to modern poetry in Canada. By that time also, it had been threatened with a libel suit, attacked for its extreme views and violent verse, and become inextricably entangled with a rival Montreal magazine.

This rivalry was important. The tension set up between the two magazines generated much of the poetic activity that went on in Montreal and made the 'Forties Canada's most exciting literary decade.

THE RIVAL MAGAZINE, of course, was *Preview*. And if I were a scene-shifter now, I would replace the Stanley Street backdrop with a view of the McGill gates, the campus and stately buildings, with a shot of swank Sherbrooke Street, perhaps, and then one of the spacious lawns and lovely homes of Westmount. This would suggest the contrast in the backgrounds of the two magazines, but it wouldn't be exactly right. To get closer to the truth, there should be a shot, also, of rooms over a garage on a squalid side street below St. Catherine where *Preview* was conceived. Here, shedding their academic gowns along with many of their middle class conventions, the *Preview* editors gathered around Patrick Anderson, proletarian by choice, Canadian by desire, and poet aflame with purpose.

Out of this unlikely pastiche of settings, the polished, avant-garde *Preview* emerged, intermittently, over a period of five years, offering Canadian readers a sophisticated combination of modern poetry, party politics and editorial advice as to how we might shake off our colonial impotence and lethargy and claim our place in the cosmopolitan sun.

Preview was a year older than *First Statement*. From its beginning it had had

a confident, competent air about it, lacking the rawness and naïveté of the typical “little mag”. It shared with *Contemporary Verse*, its Western counterpart, a conscious commitment to modern poetry but it had a distinguished, sophisticated tone of its own. It cultivated what A. J. M. Smith was to call (and what John Sutherland was to denounce) the Cosmopolitan Tradition. It had, too, an impressive roster of contributors. Names like Frank Scott, Neufville Shaw, Bruce Riddick, P. K. Page, and later, A. J. M. Smith and A. M. Klein give some notion of the power and prestige that *Preview* commanded. These writers together with Anderson and some few others became known as the “Preview Group”.

Despite the name, most of the “Preview Group” were not newcomers to the Canadian literary scene. Many of them had already, by 1941, gained considerable recognition. As far back as 1925, A. J. M. Smith and Frank Scott had founded the *McGill Fortnightly Review* which, though it lasted a bare two years, had devoted itself to introducing Canadian readers to the “new poetry”. In 1936, the work of the “Montreal Poets” (Scott, Smith, Kennedy and Klein) was published together with poems by E. J. Pratt, L. A. Mackay and Robert Finch in the refreshing anthology *New Provinces*. Smith was well known, also, by the Forties, as a critic who had been calling for maturity and modernism in Canadian poetry for over a decade. And most of the other poets on the *Preview* roster had published frequently in such magazines as *Poetry Chicago*, *Canadian Forum* and *Queen’s Quarterly*.

Apart from their achievements in poetry, the *Preview* poets were older, some by half a generation, than most of the *First Statement* writers. Most of them were well-educated, widely read, well-travelled; and by the early Forties, several of them were comfortably established professionally in the fields of teaching, law and medicine. They had status in the community, even dignity as public figures. Their accomplishments, age, prestige, sophistication and talent all combined to present an irresistible target for the raw, impecunious parvenus of Stanley Street.

It was the clear intention of the “First Statement Group”, from the beginning, to challenge *Preview* and all it stood for. Indeed, it is claimed by some that *First Statement* magazine was conceived on the day that *Preview* rejected a poem submitted by John Sutherland. Be that as it may, the compulsion to challenge *Preview* had deeper causes and was much more complex than it first appeared.

The *Preview* elders in many cases represented father images. Several of them were McGill professors. Some members of the “First Statement Group” had literally gone to school to them. Irving Layton regarded A. M. Klein as a beloved mentor — and Dudek’s respect for Scott was deep and lasting. Individually, like

indulgent fathers, members of the "Preview Group" showed a kindly interest in *First Statement* and gave encouragement, advice and support on many occasions.

Yet these overtures of friendship had an air of condescension. *First Statement* writers could not rid themselves of the belief that they were being patronized, that their *Preview* elders did not really take them seriously. Furthermore, while awed by *Preview*'s sophistication, *First Statement* people were suspicious of it. They detected an artificiality, an effete quality, in *Preview* verse which struck them as precious, like an exotic forced growth, lacking indigenous roots. With such convictions, they became acutely conscious of their own lack of polish; but such awareness only strengthened their compulsion to challenge. They set out to sharpen the distinctions between themselves and *Preview* wherever possible. Perhaps they even exaggerated their gaucheries both personal and literary by way of contrast, turning their lack of sophistication into virtues of simplicity and directness. Certainly they were driven to clarify and justify their own critical views and poetic practice to a degree which they might not have attempted, had *Preview* not existed.

The pages of *First Statement* reverberate for four years with attacks on and denouncements of *Preview*'s position. But, reading the pages of *Preview*, one could not have guessed it. For *Preview* was otherwise preoccupied. Editor Anderson, writing in the February, 1943, issue, declared "Two events of great importance to the writer have occurred in recent weeks. One is the Russian offensive, the other the conference at Casablanca . . ." and, he claimed, "Our task is clear: not only to help in the winning of the war by our literary work . . . but also to supply something of the personal, the graceful and the heroic to the atmosphere of this half-empty Dominion." The rude snorts from Stanley Street could not have reached his ears or if they did he would have shrugged them off as further evidence to support his point.

They did not, of course, meet each other with daggers in the street. On the contrary, more than cordial relations were maintained, on the surface at least; and in several instances lasting friendships cut across these lines of contention. The two groups occasionally joined forces to entertain a literary figure from out of town or from abroad. They sometimes held readings in each other's homes — sometimes in the large private houses of *Preview* supporters, sometimes in the humbler rented rooms and small apartments of *First Statement* people.

But in the pages of *First Statement* magazine, the attack went on. Looking back almost twenty years, it is difficult to sort out the real issues from the imagined ones. They were confused even then perhaps and certainly they were a mixture

of personal, literary, social and political.

Both groups, for instance, were politically conscious. The *Preview* poets were more doctrinaire, and more markedly committed to the Left in varying degrees. Many of them displayed strong sympathies with a continental communism of the Auden-Spender-MacNeice variety. Anderson's orientation was for a time thoroughly Marxist; and Scott was committed to the less revolutionary socialist ideals of the C.C.F. Much of the poetry that appeared in *Preview* had a clear political intention and a strong Leftist flavour.

First Statement writers objected not so much to the political ideas as to the subservience of poetry to politics. Yet their confusion on this point is illustrated by the following buck-shot blast from Dudek—

First Statement does not deny that poetry may express matters which are not in themselves essentially poetry: matters geographical, sociological, etc. It even encourages literature which will reflect the atmosphere and currents of Canadian life. . . . But it underlines the "reacting honestly . . . first hand", as the chief concern of the poet.

and, he claims that much modern poetry (i.e., especially the *Preview* brand) is suffering from the following corruptions—

(1) a clever aptitude for exploiting the unreal universe of language; (2) a pedantic absorption in the second-hand universe of books, literature and erudition; and (3) a falsified devotion to a special universe of ideas, chiefly sociological and political ones . . .

By way of correctives, *First Statement* can suggest three slogans for the poet's masthead. No polyglot displays. No poetry about poets and poetry. No high party politics.

Dudek was speaking for the editorial board but it should be noted that in these days Sutherland showed little interest in politics, and Dudek's own political views were mild. It was Layton who held the most doctrinaire socialist views among *First Statement* writers.

"No polyglot displays. No poetry about poets." These grim injunctions are directed against two interrelated characteristics of *Preview* poets— their technical virtuosity and their devotion to the British moderns. Much of their poetry was in the tradition of Eliot, or after the manner of Sitwell, of Auden, and of Dylan Thomas. *Preview* poets excelled in tightly-structured metaphysical exercises, in sophisticated, witty satiric pieces of social comment, in highly metaphoric poems rich in Marxist and Freudian allusions. The cold, intricate brilliance of their

us than a transplanted Englishman of considerable poetic talent and sophisticated eccentricity.

But the fact is, that Anderson fell in love with Canada, and the heat of his passion glowed in his poetry. Not before, and not since, has he written as brilliantly as he did during his sojourn here. "Fell in love" is not quite the term. Canada fascinated him and if he loved it, he also feared it. He described it as "a great, white, empty prison" and saw it as a beautiful monstrous challenge which he must somehow meet. He felt towards the end that he had failed, that Canada had somehow won. His leave-taking was more like a baffled retreat and he retained the hope that he would return some day to the land that he wanted to call his own.

But while he was here the physical aspects of this country appealed to his imagination. Native-born readers of his poems are delighted and amazed in turn as they encounter in Anderson's imagery his vivid treatment of aspects of Canada's physical environment which we take for granted. Snow and ice, Mount Royal, skiers, skating and hockey, our great empty spaces, our lakes, have never been so brilliantly — exploited.

Exploited is the word. Anderson was not a nature poet. His Montreal mountain is a political symbol; snow is our chloroform and ice our state of social anæsthesia; skiers are capitalist entrepreneurs, or sometimes Leftist propagandists.

Anderson's influence on the *Preview* poets is clear. He acted, as is well known, like a catalyst among them. Under his influence, both personal and literary, they were stirred to experiment. Their poetry takes on a new depth of insight, new breadth of subject, a new intricacy of construction and new verbal textures.

Though Anderson himself and P. K. Page supplied the bulk of the poetry appearing in *Preview*, the remainder of the "Preview Group" contributed a creditable number of very good poems, indeed. To *First Statement* eyes, *Preview* presented a veritable galaxy of accomplished writers. They were more than impressed; they were also influenced more than they would admit at the time. Irving Layton had confided recently—

Not that we wanted to be like them but we wanted to be as good as they were in our own way. It made us tougher than we would have been and provoked us into working harder than ever. I secretly read and studied Anderson's style and went back beyond it to his sources and models and I gained a great deal for myself in the process.

But at the time, frustration and envy too often reduced *First Statement* attacks

to the personal level. In Vol. 1, No. 19, Sutherland independently goes straight for the bull's-eye. In a lengthy criticism of Anderson's poems, he ignores the political dimension and concentrates on an analysis of Anderson's images of Freudian terms which make libellous suggestions about Anderson's private life. It was an illuminating study at many points, but intemperate and callous. If Anderson had been dead, Sutherland might have got away with it. But Anderson was far from dead. *First Statement* found itself threatened with a libel suit; and the very next issue — a delayed publication — carries a front page retraction, made, no doubt, grudgingly. John Sutherland was stubborn enough, but *First Statement* was not rich enough, to risk going to court.

By this time, as might be expected, the paternal interest shown by *Preview* members in the *First Statement* venture had cooled considerably, had turned indeed into a wary watchfulness. These snapping puppies had sharp teeth as well as loud barks. Furthermore, they now had something that *Preview* did not have.

In the very same issue that bore the retraction, Sutherland announced exultantly: "We Go To Press." — "The first printed issues of *First Statement* will appear within a few weeks . . . the new magazine will be issued as a monthly . . . new features will be added, including a review of Canadian books and literary magazines."

THE ACQUISITION OF THE PRESS had important consequences. The magazine took on some dignity, attracted new subscribers, and new contributions, some even from *Preview* poets. Its policy, however, remained the same and it kept its favourite set of opponents clearly in view. But apart from the magazine itself the press was used to begin an important publishing venture. Early in 1945 announcement was made of the first chapbook in a *New Writers Series* to be published by First Statement Press. The book was Irving Layton's first published volume *Here and Now*, redolent even in its title of his *First Statement* alliance.

But the choice of the second title for the series is a tribute to John Sutherland's devotion to literature. Patrick Anderson's *A Tent For April* was published by First Statement Press in 1946. It was followed, over the next few years, with Miriam Waddington's *Green World*, Raymond Souster's *When We are Young*, Anne Wilkinson's *Counterpoint to Sleep*, Kay Smith's *Footnote to the Lord's*

Prayer and a second volume by Layton, *Now is the Place*. Only now, looking back, can we appreciate the perspicacity and courage it took to claim for these writers a public hearing at a time when no commercial publisher would take the risk.

One other book published by First Statement Press has a significance of its own. *Other Canadians*, subtitled "An Anthology of the New Poetry in Canada 1940-46", is edited, with polemical introduction, by John Sutherland.

The book is puzzling to students of the period who are not familiar with its background. The title, of course, is a defiant reaction to another recently published anthology, A. J. M. Smith's *The Book of Canadian Poetry*. The poets that Sutherland chose to represent are the younger poets whom Smith overlooked or gave scant notice. Apart from a few new names, the seventeen poets in *Other Canadians* fall quite readily into two groups — *Preview* and *First Statement*. To this degree at least, Sutherland's acumen as an editor and publisher overrode his partisan interests. But he is quite clear, in Part II of his Introduction, about where his sympathies and hopes for the future of Canadian poetry lie. With poets like Layton, Dudek and Souster active, "The future in this country is already beginning to move."

What is different about the Introduction is Sutherland's championing of the cause of socialism — a socialism which will be truly national as opposed to colonial and which will be furthered most effectively by the "social realism" of the poetry of "proletarian" poets like Dudek, Layton and Souster.

This is a new note in Sutherland's criticism and if it does not ring true it is because Sutherland was not a socialist. He was at this period very closely associated with Irving Layton who was at the height of his Marxist phase; and it seems likely that Sutherland simply assumed the guise of a socialist as he understood it, the better to badger Bishop Smith. Having laid aside the disguise very soon after this, Sutherland was to look back on his Introduction with increasing embarrassment. It is probably the one critical article which he sincerely regretted having written and by 1950 he would have recalled all copies from circulation if he could have had his way.

John Sutherland, in private life, as a man, as a brother, husband, friend, was a kind, warm-hearted, rather shy, soft-spoken person. In appearance he might have been taken for a timid accountant. As a member of the literary world he made quite a different impression. Not an accountant in any sense, his book-keeping was hopeless, he never made any money, his accounts were never in order and his files were in a perpetual state of confusion. His soft-spoken mild

manner was disarming and left one unprepared for the frequently caustic import of his remarks. When you had blinked and taken a second look you discovered that the set of his jaw was stubborn and his eyes mocking. What could be taken for a blush of shyness was more often the flush of anger. He was hot-headed and quick-tempered. He lived to argue and he gave no quarter. He had an astonishing range of profanity; he loved beer and cigars and could be quite a wild man at a party.

As an editor and publisher, he was courageous and dedicated but also ruthless, opinionated and high-handed. As a critic he was perceptive and analytical but too often brutally frank and intemperate. These very qualities, which fitted him well as the aggressive leader of the "First Statement Group", incurred the animosity of many others, and, combined with certain changes that took place in his thinking, eventually alienated even his closest confreres.

It is well to keep John Sutherland's personality in mind when trying to understand the next significant development in Montreal's literary world of the Forties. *First Statement* magazine, in its printed form, had appeared for two years, from 1943 to 1945. *Preview*, meanwhile, was issued sporadically in mimeograph, but its impetus had flagged noticeably. The war being over, political issues which had absorbed *Preview* editors were fading. Patrick Anderson's influence was dwindling, the initial shock of his techniques having been absorbed. But most important, *Preview* poets were increasingly preoccupied with their professions, and with publishing projects of their own, which left them little time for the magazine. Smith had published *News of the Phoenix* and *The Book of Canadian Poetry* in 1943; A. M. Klein, *Poems* and *The Hitleriad* in 1944; F. R. Scott, *Overture* in 1945; and P. K. Page, *As Ten as Twenty* in 1946.

In view of all this, a merger of the two little magazines seemed most practical. As the *Preview* people were likely to state it "We had the talent, and they had the press!" But it was a while before negotiations were concluded. Neither little magazine wishing to give up its identity, a new title had to be chosen. *Northern Review* was a neutral enough name and it presented to the public a deceptive impression of unity. One would not have guessed how carefully the editorial board was chosen to give equal representation to the same old constituencies of *First Statement* and *Preview*.

This equality, however, was rendered unreal from the outset by two significant facts — the new magazine was published by First Statement Press (operating now as an independent organization) and its managing editor was John Sutherland.

Northern Review was an ambitious project. It ran an average of forty pages, had a handsome format and carried poems, stories, articles, reviews and reproductions, accompanied by criticism of works by contemporary painters. Its list of contributors was a catalogue of Canada's best talents and during the ten years of its existence it won a reading audience that no literary magazine in Canada had so far been able to command.

The first issue appeared in January, 1946, and for four issues, thereafter, despite stormy editorial sessions, the uneasy alliance of *Preview* and *First Statement* factions was maintained. But in the sixth issue, managing editor Sutherland shattered it. In defiance of his editorial board, and without his regional editors' knowledge, John Sutherland printed his own review of Robert Finch's *Poems*, winner of the Governor-General's Award for 1946. The review was at once a withering and bitter denunciation of the judges who gave the award and a harsh criticism of Finch's work. It should be remembered that Robert Finch was an early colleague of members of the "Preview Group" and still commanded their respect and loyalty. Thus the attack on Finch, combined with the caustic, intemperate tone of the whole review, aroused the ire of the entire *Preview* bloc of *Northern Review's* editorial board.

The very next issue of *Northern Review* carries a drastically reduced editorial roster and, on the last page, this notice:

Certain changes have taken place in the editorial board of *Northern Review*, effective from the last issue. The following editors have resigned: Neufville Shaw, Patrick Anderson, A. M. Klein, F. R. Scott and A. J. M. Smith. Two regional editors, P. K. Page and Ralph Gustafson, have also resigned . . .

The present editors are John Sutherland, R. G. Simpson, Mary Margaret Miller, John Harrison, Irving Layton and Audrey Aikman . . . We intend to carry on *Northern Review* in its present form.

In other words, by January 1948, the original "Preview Group" had virtually withdrawn from the merger, leaving Sutherland and the "First Statement Group" in control of *Northern Review*.

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THIS WAS THE CLIMAX of the drama of poetry in Montreal in the Forties. The crisis over the Finch issue accelerated the decline of forces which

for seven or eight years had generated the most exciting and prolific poetic activity in Canada's history. Within two years, by 1950, the poets of both groups had dispersed, taking the divergent paths which private circumstance dictated. For some, like Patrick Anderson and P. K. Page, this meant leaving Canada; for others, poetic oblivion since they simply ceased to publish; others, continuing to write, were individually to achieve considerable recognition and success.

Meanwhile *Northern Review* continued to appear and for a year or two retained the interest of a growing list of subscribers and contributors. But it became increasingly the reflection of the tastes, opinions and radically changing ideas of one man.

About 1948, a certain souring had begun, in John Sutherland's views, which was to spread like a stain through all his thinking during the next few years, transforming his hopes for the future of Canadian letters into a complete and bitter disillusionment. The process was gradual, but as early as 1950 he had turned so far away from the beliefs with which he had begun his literary career that he had alienated even his *First Statement* friends. Irving Layton was among the last to go.

These changes in the editor's thinking are expressed, issue by issue, in *Northern Review*. In Vol. 4, No. 2, which appeared in January '51, Sutherland has an article entitled "The Past Decade in Canadian Poetry". It is perhaps the best of his critical essays; but the early Sutherland is barely recognizable in it. The tone is sombre, almost sad. He sums up the period to 1947 and then remarks "How suddenly it all changed! . . . What were the causes? Not *Other Canadians*, or my introduction to it: it went deeper than that." He explores some of the reasons for the decline in the late Forties, expresses his disappointment in what he considers the collapse of the movement, points to the new religious dimensions he senses in current poetry and says, with astonishing humility—

I criticized Mr. Smith . . . [in *Other Canadians*] . . . for his religious emphasis . . . Well, I take it back . . . the event has shown that he was substantially right.

Later in the same essay he says:

It is generally better for the poet to accept than oppose the values inherent in his society . . . and for the Canadian poet not to completely ignore his relation to the tradition of poetry in Canada . . . The question is whether the poet can find a new point of stability and re-discover the basic moral and religious values of our society.

This is a new Sutherland, one so changed as to baffle his closest friends. Relations with Irving Layton, strained for some years on several levels, were at this point broken off completely. It is significant that in this issue of *Northern Review*, Layton's name does not appear on the masthead. Nor, in his otherwise balanced, perceptive review of the Forties and predictions for the Fifties, does Sutherland so much as mention Layton's name — a lamentable omission, to say the least, in view of Layton's early connection and subsequent success.

The ensuing issues of *Northern Review* turned away from contemporary Canadian writing, from political radicalism, from experimental modernism. The magazine became increasingly international, conservative, traditional, as Sutherland the man moved steadily towards disillusionment, orthodoxy and death.

The mid-Fifties found John Sutherland a lonely, embittered man. He had long lost his belief in his own creative powers. His efforts to establish *Northern Review* on a sound economic basis had failed miserably. First Statement Press had had to be shut down for lack of funds. His old friends in Montreal had been driven away one by one. And when he left for Toronto in 1954, in a desperate effort to make a fresh start, he was already physically ill with the disease from which he was to suffer so much.

In the year of his death, he was sustained mainly by three things — his devotion to the poetry of E. J. Pratt, the love of Audrey Aikman, his wife, and his new-found peace in a very old religious faith. The magazine died with him in 1956. It was his own wish that *Northern Review* should not survive him.

The demise of John Sutherland and the extinction of *Northern Review* provide a tragic anti-climax to the story of poetry in Montreal in the Forties. One should, perhaps, backtrack, to 1945 to discover the true significance of the movement at its peak. The fact is that the interaction of the two magazines had created a milieu in which good writing was able to thrive. Close communication, diverse views, a variety of talents, sharp criticism, and publishing outlets combined to produce an unprecedented volume of good poetry and gave us, by the Fifties, at least one poet of considerable stature. The emergence of Irving Layton as Canada's most significant, and most controversial, poet, is best understood against this background. The Forties were Layton's formative years. "I was lucky", he says now, "to have known them all — so many exciting personalities, living poetry twenty-four hours a day, thinking, talking, analyzing, arguing, reading and above all writing. I learned something from every one of them."