

Irving Layton

versus

Dave Fairbairn



Controversial Poet
IRVING LAYTON
interviewed
by Brunswick's
Controversial
Columnist
Dave Fairbairn



I lit his cigarette. He looked at the flame. "I still have scars right here," he said pointing to his chest. "When I was four, I wondered at the miracle of flame. So I set my night-gown on fire. I was badly burned. I still have the scars—right here", he said, pointing to his chest again.

These are the physical scars, a result of the Layton curiosity, the Layton daring, the Layton wonderment. What about the other scars—the ones inside—that are not really scars at all, but wounds, open and bleeding and festering? "The biggest one is the wasting of man's potentialities—the fact that man is higher than the animal but does not think above the animal. Man is not free. Man is a conformist. Man scorns individuality. All the potential creativeness of man is wasted because he does not adopt ideas based on experience."

"Surely", I questioned, "people who have been broadened by a college education think for themselves." The amused, almost sad expression on his face, spoke volumes and was the only indication of the raucous laughter that I knew was inside him. "Our beautiful, pathetic, university system. Professors from another country, England for instance, come over and cram the snobbish ideas of their old culture into young, growing minds. This is the injection of inertia into the veins of the young. Real professors should make students leave the class in a fury—angry young people—they will want to do something—anything—dig a ditch—make violent love—think—experience—create. This is not so in Canada. Professors pass on standard, conforming, lifeless ideas. They are germ carriers in the midst of a new generation—a healthy growing generation".

"Many of your poems deal with sex . . .", I began, and before I could finish . . . "Sex is the most intimate dialogue between two people. With it there is emotion. Our society regards it as carnal. And by this attitude our society turns out nothing but bores and whores. Why hide sex in a dirty closet? Bring sex out in the open as a beautiful wonderful experience—a creative experience. In our stupid, stinking moralistic society here in Canada it is considered dirty. Sex is our only real answer to death. Sex is a symbol of life, of the living, of creation. And of the erection is the most potent symbol of life. People are afraid—confused—and can't distinguish between the sex of a brothel and the idea of something wonderful between two people. Sex is the most intimate dialogue between two people", he repeated. "This is creation—this is lasting. Before man dies, if he has created, it makes even death seem beautiful. Sex is our only answer to death."

"But", I asked, "Doesn't our religion have certain rules to guide sexual behavior?" "If you can call religion a belief in a church that crams its ideas down the throats of the public, perhaps there are rules. Religion is an attitude—not a belief—it is an active verb, not a dead substance. True religion is personal and adventurous. It is an attitude of wonderment, of amazement, at the miracles of life—the falling of a snowflake, the growing of a tree. And man should be amazed. The awareness of these miracles is a religion. The awareness of sex and love is a miracle—religion. Man in our society is afraid to wonder at these miracles. He has no curiosity—just accepts the doctrines of the church. He lives for security—he lives by clearly defined rules. He doesn't think. His own awareness of the miracle is gone. There is no amazement left. Organized religion stifles curiosity, gives answers and explanations—this is its real error, its blasphemy. This is obscene. It is unhealthy. It stifles man. It prohibits creativity. It robs man of the fulfillment of his potentialities".

And what do I think of this fellow Layton? Is he the bawdy balladier? Is he the pornographer? Is he belligerent? Is he an isolate of our society?

This fellow Layton. He doesn't believe in pornography. "It exists only in the mind of the reader", he says. So that is up to the reader to decide. He is belligerent because he is frustrated with the incapability of man to rise above the level of animal—belligerent towards the mass conformity of society—belligerent, yes, and he writes with a chip on his shoulder because the thoughts, the ideas, and the action of man is hidden behind the veneer of the social face. To him, this is disgusting and revolting. An isolate?—he is living in a society, he adds to it, rejuvenates tired minds. Possibly he is helping to revamp a worthless society.

The most striking impression that one gets of this man is an awareness of his extreme sensitivity. He is sensitive to nature, to beauty, to his fellows. Not the "bawdy balladier" at all—the balladier of beauty. We feel a bit sorry because we can see what he is trying to do—in a single-handed fight against a cold society that won't give his ideas a chance—because it is afraid to think. He hasn't become discouraged, he hasn't quit. This, is itself, a testimony to an iron will, a resolute character, and a stout heart.

As he hunched his shoulders and walked into the swirling New Brunswick snow, I watched. I thought of the scars that he has carried since the age of four—scars perhaps signifying the struggle, the fight, the battle against conformity, against fear of man, against society. I thought about what he had had to say about people, about society, about waste and confusion.

I think I know what he was thinking. I joined him and said aloud . . . Good luck my angry friend . . . and as an afterthought . . . to hell with the world.

BOO!

. CLUE: unscramble following into two words—selyeeub: Girl #4.



by KEN PLOURDE and GERARD COURTIN

Are there too many people around you? Are you standing in too many queues and being jostled around too often on crowded sidewalks? Do you find it difficult to find a boarding house or a seat in a doctor's office which is crowded with beaming mothers-to-be? If these things frustrate you, then you are liable to be caught up in the wave of excitement which is currently flooding the press concerning the overpopulation of our world.

To many people, such as the manufacturers of maternity clothes and baby necessities, the population boom is a hayday, while to others, such as hospital and school officials, it is a real problem. To most Canadians, however, overpopulation is the least of their worries. The lighthouse keeper on Sable Island or the fire tower man on some remote Rocky Mountain summit probably never gave it a thought. Mariners are even elated at the idea of the proximity of other humans when they see some dingy tramp steamer on the horizon. Any timber cruiser will certainly agree that certain parts of Canada have a decided shortage of people—especially women!

When a fire tower man in Newfoundland met a party bringing supplies, his dog fled across the bog. The dog, upon seeing his first humans besides his master, whom he probably thought was a dog too, was indeed alarmed about the population increase.

There are many others in North America besides this dog who are alarmed at the increase in the world's population. Perhaps it isn't the total population that bothers them so much as the fact that other races are increasing at a greater rate than theirs!

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