

A TIME OF PROJECTS

A FAVOURITE WORD among Mexicans is *proyectismo*; it means the rage for making plans without considering the probability of achievement. To the outside observer in recent years the Canadian literary world might at times have seemed to be suffering from *proyectismo*, so many plans for magazines and other publications have been in the air. In fact, a surprising number of these plans have taken concrete form. *Canadian Literature*, here publishing its third number, can regard itself as well out of the project stage, and it is only one of a considerable group of literary magazines which have started in Canada during a comparatively short period and which still flourish. *Fiddlehead* in the Maritimes, *Delta* and *Liberté* in Montreal, *Tamarack* in Toronto, *Prism* in Vancouver — even such an incomplete list shows that the literary magazines are not merely becoming numerous, but also that they healthily represent every region of the country.

Perhaps the most encouraging fact about these new magazines is that they do not seem to be achieving mutual strangulation; on the contrary, those whose circumstances we know appear to be receiving more support than the pioneer Canadian little magazines of the 1940's. Whether the people who support the magazines of today are getting more for their devotion in terms of good writing than the people who supported the early issues of *Northern Review* and *Contemporary Verse* is another matter, and perhaps not yet to be judged; the important fact at present is that those who do write well in Canada can be more sure than in the past of having places to publish, people to read them, and even a payment which at least makes token recognition that writers should receive material as well as moral encouragement.

OUTSIDE THE FIELD of periodicals other projects suggest a liveliness in the general air of Canadian literature and literary scholarship. One of them is the new Readers Club of Canada which started operations towards the end of last year. This is the first book club devoted to the dissemination of work by Canadian writers, and its early selections range interestingly from relatively light biography to works like E. J. Pratt's *Collected Poems* and W. T. Eccles' *Frontenac*.

A SECOND PROJECT of rather different literary interest is under way at the University of Toronto, where preparations are well-advanced for the Dictionary of Canadian Biography, which will differ from its predecessors, the *Dictionary of National Biography* in Britain and the *Dictionary of American Biography*, in adopting the much more practical method of considering its subjects by periods instead of alphabetically. As a result of a continuing endowment, it will become possible to found a permanent centre of biographical information, where the editors of the Dictionary intend that the material gathered in the enquiries they direct may be filed for the use of individual scholars. In other words, we shall have not merely a biographical dictionary which will doubtless increase our knowledge of Canadian literary figures and stimulate the art of biography, but also a new Canadian research institution of great value to writers of all kinds.

FINALLY, as a project of particular interest to readers of *Canadian Literature* we would like to draw attention to the Literary History of Canada which is being prepared under the general editorship of Carl F. Klinck, with an editorial committee that includes Northrop Frye, Roy Daniells and Desmond Pacey. The combined efforts of the editors and twenty other writers will produce, we are told, "a comprehensive reference book (about 600 pages in length) on our literary history, which is due to appear in 1961 or 1962". The collection of essays by many hands has rarely been completely successful in presenting either literary or general history; there is the temptation to produce an anthology rather than a cohesive narrative. Yet variety of viewpoint has its merits, and we can certainly expect that the Literary History will produce new facts and fresh interpretations which will stimulate interest in this field of scholarship.