Joseph Griffin

James T. Farrell vs. The Dominion of Canada: a Case of Censorship*

In a brief 1965 article entitled "A Postscript on Bernard Clare," James T. Farrell, reminiscing about his 1946 novel, revealed something of the attitude of the relieved parent, who distraught about the growing pains of a favorite child, finds vindicated in later years his early hopes for the child's success. Noting that the novel had by the mid-1960s outsold the *Studs Lonigan* trilogy in France and *Studs* in hardcover in the United States, he wrote: "*Bernard Clare* is coming into its own at a time when it is out of print and not too easily procured.... At the time that I was writing [it] ... I stated that this was a novel that would not come into its own until the 1960's.... My prediction is slowly coming true. There is a slowly gathering interest in *Bernard Clare* and a realization that the writing is different stylistically from much [of] my early work."[1]

Besides expressing Farrell's optimism about the novel's future, the article referred to one of the problems *Bernard Clare* experienced in its early days. As Farrell succinctly put it, "a real character of the same name turned up,"[2] with the result that the author and the publisher, Vanguard Press, found themselves the object of a lawsuit over a coincidence of names. The case was eventually dismissed, but not before it had caused Farrell considerable trouble. In the first place, the book came out under the threat of the suit, bearing on its title page a "Note to the Public" by Farrell and Vanguard stating the plaintiff's assertion "that he has been libelled and has been caused great humiliation by the publication of the book," and their own disclaimer that "Neither 'Bernard Clare' nor any other character portrayed in it refers to or represents any person, living or dead." Then Farrell had to go to considerable time and expense to mount a defence, drawing on evidence from his files and sharing costs of over $1,000 with Vanguard Press. Finally, after the satisfactory conclusion of the case, Farrell felt compelled to change the name of the hero to Carr in the subsequent

books of the trilogy, *The Road Between* and *Yet Other Waters,* and in the title of the trilogy itself, because "the real character did not like his name used."[3] (It is a sign of Farrell's particular attachment to his book and hero that he retained the Bernard Clare title and name in the first instalment of the trilogy.)

Farrell might also have alluded to other hard times *Bernard Clare* had caused him. Its very conception seems to have been an especially difficult one. On June 6, 1944 he wrote Jim Henle, his editor at Vanguard, "I am planning this morning to start, the sixth time, on volume one of Bernard Clair."[4] But undoubtedly the most distressing experience he had with the novel derived neither from the bothersome business of countering a lawsuit nor from the normal pangs suffered in engendering a new work of art. In mid-June, 1946, Farrell learned that the Government of Canada had placed a ban on the importation of *Bernard Clare.*

The banning of his newest novel roused up Farrell's finest fighting spirit and launched him on counter-action of considerable effort and duration. At the same time, the action of the Government was met with widespread indifference in Canada. The story of the banning itself, and of Farrell's attempts to address the injustice directed at him, and in a broader context at the freedom of artistic expression, is well worth telling. It makes a contribution to the biography of an important figure in American letters. As well, it has much to say about the weakness of the system within which the ban was enacted and of the liabilities of decisions made therein. Indeed, a considerable measure of Farrell's objection, and of the objection of the few other dissenting voices, was reserved for the way in which the decision to ban *Bernard Clare* had been arrived at.

* * * * * * * * *

Bernard Clare was not the first Farrell book to attract the ire of Canadian officials. Some time in May, 1944 Farrell was informed by William Targ, an editor at the World Publishing Company, of a ban on the importation of its 49 cent edition of the first volume of the *Studs Lonigan* trilogy. World had been notified by the Department of National Revenue of Canada (Customs and Excise Division) on April 13 that "the book entitled YOUNG LONIGAN is prohibited entry into Canada as being of an indecent or an immoral character."[5] Although he feared that making a public furore "might force them to ban entry to STUDS into Canada in all prices," Farrell decided to take a stand. "I

think I ought to yell as loudly and as long as I can...and to see if this can get anyone else to [do] some yelling," he wrote to a friend. Farrell's "yelling" took the form of an open letter to the Prime Minister, Mackenzie King, with copies to "papers, intellectuals, professors, college English and sociology departments and so on."[6]

The open letter was dated May 29 and was to be released to the press on May 31. It called for an immediate removal of the ban. Besides raising conventional arguments against literary censorship — the legitimacy of realism in fiction, the differences between a responsible portrayal of life and one that "pander[s] to lascivious tastes," — it exploited certain contemporary circumstances that were seen to render the banning untenable. The letter's opening sentences advanced an analogy calculated to embarrass Canada: "The authorities of the Third Reich have banned the sending of copies of my trilogy, STUDS LONIGAN, to American prisoners of war. I have just learned that the authorities of the Dominion of Canada have taken a parallel action." The letter pointed up the inconsistency of refusing entry, twelve years after publication, to a book that "neither in single volume form nor as part of the trilogy had been disallowed previously." It seized upon the fact that the ban was directed exclusively at an inexpensive edition, and emphasized that this could only suggest "that at least some Canadian authorities are of the view that the masses of the Canadian people, who can afford only the more popular-priced edition of a book, are more susceptible to corruption, so-called, than are those who can buy the same work at the regular trade price."[7]

Farrell's initiative received an immediate reaction. On May 31, the *New York Times* carried, along with its news story about Farrell's announcement of the ban and his open letter, the following "Special" dispatch, datelined Ottawa, Ont., May 30:

> The Canadian authorities have put no ban on James T. Farrell's book "Studs Lonigan." David Sim, Commissioner of Customs and Excise, said that the last time "Young Lonigan" was examined by the censor's branch of his department was in 1936 and the book was allowed. In 1935 and 1936 "The Young Manhood of Studs Lonigan," another of Mr. Farrell's books, was examined and allowed.
>
> It is possible that a customs collector at a Canadian port may have held up a shipment of "Young Lonigan" as being immoral, but there has been no report to Ottawa of any such incident.[8]

Farrell was pleased with the news, but not convinced of the truth of the disclaimer by David Sim. He took the statement to mean that a ban had been lifted and made sure shipments of the book were being

resumed. Though tempted to make an issue of the apparent duplicity of the Customs and Excise Division, he preferred to use it to his advantage, writing Targ that "the denial of the head of the Canadian customs division is valuable, for it helps to be a kind of answer to complaints about the books."[9]

Whether the World edition of *Young Lonigan* was under official censure by the Canadian Government or merely the victim of bureaucratic bungling, Farrell considered that he had brought off a coup with his aggressive counter-action and he referred more than once in later years to his success in having a ban removed from one of his novels. Also, his handling of the *Young Lonigan* problem provided him with a method of procedure when he found out that *Bernard Clare* was refused entry into Canada. However, Farrell's efforts on behalf of *Bernard Clare* did not have the immediately successful outcome he had seen two years earlier. After writing another open letter to Mackenzie King, organizing a letter blitz of the Canadian Government by friends and supporters, producing a major article for the *Canadian Forum* and preparing a protest publication which he called his "Canadian pamphlet," he was forced to capitulate, admitting to a friend a year and a half after the affair began, "No the Canadian ban hasn't been lifted! I made all the noise I could concerning it, and I hope the effort I made will help other writers and will possibly prevent banning further books of mine."[10]

* * * * * * * * *

News of the prohibition on the importation of *Bernard Clare* into Canada reached the Vanguard Press early in June, 1946: the memorandum, dated May 31, 1946 and signed by D. Sim, Deputy Minister of National Revenue, stated that the book contravened "Section 13 and Item 1201, Schedule 'C' of the Customs Tariff,"[11] without citing the regulation. Item 1201 defined "Prohibited Goods" as "Books, printed paper, drawings, paintings, prints, photographs or representations of any kind of a treasonable or seditious, or of an immoral or indecent character;" copies of *Bernard Clare* had been judged to fall into this category. It did not take Farrell long to react. "BERNARD CLARE has been banned in Canada," he informed a publisher friend, "and I wrote an open letter to the Prime Minister which is in the mail. I will take the liberty of sending you some copies of it, and if you would send these to some friends in Canada, Australia, and England, I'd be most grateful. I got a STUDS book off such a ban in Canada by an

open letter, and wrote this new one, and am sending it out — my publisher is, rather extensively."[12]

Farrell's open letter to Mackenzie King was, like the one written two years before, a temperate statement of protest over an injustice done. Not only did Farrell ask that "this unjustified and unexplained act of censorship be rescinded," but also that "this unfair action against my novel be publicly investigated so that responsibility for it may be fixed and explained to the public of both the United States and the Dominion of Canada." Countering the specific charge against his book, he stated, "If some official has decided that my novel be banned on the allegation that it is pornographic, I would instantly answer that neither in this work, or in any work of fiction that I have published have I ever written one line which a fair-minded human being can, by any stretch of the imagination, term 'pornographic.' " But the sense that Farrell and his novel have been misunderstood and wronged is not the overriding impact the letter produces, and the bulk of its two pages was a well argued assertion of his position about the dangers of censorship, particularly at that time.

While never straying very far from his immediate concerns about *Bernard Clare*, Farrell raised an issue that went beyond the mere banning of one of his own books. Drawing freely from his 1944 open letter to Mackenzie King, he described censorship as more appropriate to Nazi Germany that to a nation subscribing to the principle of "Freedom of speech...one of the Four Freedoms guaranteed by the Atlantic Charter." The arguments used two years before — that "Literature is not national, it is international. The people of the world should have the right to read serious works of literature in all countries" — were more relevant now, "When there are still iron curtains in Europe, and all over the world." At a time when "a world-wide cultural organization, UNESCO, dedicated to freedom of cultural exchanges of all kinds, is being formed," the Canadian ban was a regressive step. What held for "my other books including the *Studs Lonigan* trilogy," held for *Bernard Clare*: "It is only by describing conditions as they are that the road can be found to better conditions; it is only by describing human beings as they are, describing their needs, their feelings, their problems, their actions, that they can be made better...if this be indecency, then life is going to be increasingly indecent despite all the efforts of all the censors, official or otherwise."

Farrell made one major new point in his open letter; it concerned Canada's duty to foster a climate of openness to "serious and honest writing" in the broader North American community. "The prejudiced

forces of censorship that have been straining at the leash in the United States in order to begin a new witch hunt...need only government precedents to come out into the open and to begin a reactionary campaign of legal book lynching." Hence, Canada must not set the wrong precedent, and writers and readers in both countries must know about the ban and lend their support to its rescission.

Despite wide dissemination by Farrell and Vanguard Press, the open letter received little coverage in either the American or Canadian press, and when it was used, only brief excerpts were printed: one is hard pressed to find the letter reproduced in anywhere near its 1,000-word entirety. The *New York Times* buried its "Farrell Protests Canadian Book Ban" story on page 25, citing merely a few lines from the open letter and appending a special dispatch datelined Ottawa, June 12, that stated cryptically, "The banning of James Farrell's book 'Bernard Clare' in Canada was a routine procedure, it was said here to-day."[13] The biggest splash the *Bernard Clare* story made in the popular press was in the Canadian edition of *Time*, which cited short parts of the open letter and commented on the ban in a news item headed "Farrell v. Sim." The *Time* story was an interesting if uninspired piece. In branding Farrell's letter "liverish" it demonstrated a most notable flair for the evident. In calling Farrell "one of the most earnest authors and worst writers in the U.S....whose new novel *Bernard Clare* is a lacklustre portrait of the artist as a young man" it illustrated that magazine's not uncharacteristic penchant for sacrificing reasoned judgment for the catchy turn of phrase. It did, however, provide David Sim's rationale for his action. "I discovered at least two chapters which I considered indecent," *Time* quoted Sim as saying. "There was nothing else I could do about it but slap on the ban.... We're not on a witch hunt. The fewer such decisions we have to make the better we like it."[14]

As for the Canadian daily press, it gave the whole episode short shrift. If the *New York Times* relegated the *Bernard Clare* news to its inside pages, the Toronto *Globe and Mail* did not treat the event as a news story at all. First mention of it was on the Saturday, June 29 book page in an unsigned article, probably written by the newspaper's literary editor, William Arthur Deacon. Here, four paragraphs of Farrell's open letter were reproduced, "the essence of his argument." The writer condemned the ban, recalling the recent history of Canadian book bans "that had to be withdrawn." "Thus in the post-war period of the Second Great War, as in the 1930s after the First Great War, the battle has begun between creative writers and those who

would restrict them. On the former occasion the writer has won a long series of court decisions. James Joyce and James Branch Cabell were notable cases.... In the long run anti-censorship forces must win for reasons Mr. Farrell has given."[15]

Although it drew some sympathetic coverage, as in the aforementioned *Globe and Mail* article, and a smattering of attention in a few other North American newspapers and magazines, the banning of *Bernard Clare* did not become the important public issue Farrell hoped it would. The sporadic interest soon fell off and Farrell eventually had to re-kindle the fire himself in his *Canadian Forum* article in the late fall. Not only was the issue virtually ignored by the popular press, the public support Farrell hoped to enlist from fellow writers was not forthcoming either. It is of some interest to note that during the weekend on which the *Globe and Mail* ran its coverage of the ban, the Canadian Authors Association, winding up its annual meeting in Toronto, does not appear to have even raised the issue. There is a certain irony in words addressed to the delegates by Thomas Raddall concerning the recent improvement of standards in Canadian literature. Raddall's caricature, "Canada used to be known to American publishers as a land of Royal Canadian Mounted Police, trappers and a comic character named Jean Baptiste,"[16] would have no doubt elicited a wry comment from Farrell.

Farrell did receive support from one segment of the book community in a one-page comment called "Witch-Hunting" in the summer issue of *Quill and Quire,* the Canadian book dealers' and stationers' trade magazine. Like most of the rest of the coverage, *Quill and Quire's* critique was a direct response to Farrell's open letter. Though brief, and composed of large portions of the letter, it served the important function of placing the *Bernard Clare* ban in the larger context of the current state of book censorship in Canada — and in even more pointed fashion than had the *Globe and Mail* commentary. It noted that "while the majority of books banned in Canada have singularly suggestive titles, such as: *Fast and Loose, On Going Naked, No Bed of Her Own, Here Is My Body, Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk*...occasionally we come across the names of authors who already are, or whom we have every reason to expect, will be renowned in world literature." Listing the names of such authors who were currently on the list of banned books —de Maupassant, Trotsky, Balzac, Maxwell Bodenheim, Erskine Caldwell, D. H. Lawrence, Joyce, Edmund Wilson — *Quill and Quire* commented: "it seems to us that if the Canadian Customs officials are not able to distinguish between pornographic

and serious literature, some better qualified board should consistently have the final decision on cases which the intelligent reading-public are moved to protest."[17]

Farrell himself seems for the most part to have maintained public silence during the summer of 1946, letting his open letter do its own work. There was one interesting exception: he was interviewed about the ban, apparently in Washington, D.C., by a reporter named Peter Inglis. Inglis's story, carried in the Ottawa *Citizen* of July 9, is worth reproducing for an additional dimension Farrell gave to the repercussions of the ban on his novel, as well as for his comments about pornography and obscenity.

> ...says Mr. Farrell, he is not mad at Canada, not even at Mr. David Sim....
>
> Rather Mr. Farrell is worried about the cultural future of the Dominion.
>
> He is afraid Canada will become infected with what he believes is a phony export-brand American culture which presents life in juvenile terms and which he says is typified by Hollywood outpourings.
>
> He also says that he is sad that Canada has not produced a literary culture of is own.
>
> Mr. Farrell believes books of the sort he writes will help counteract the phony, export U.S. culture, and also perhaps fill some of the gaps in Canada's domestic literary supply.
>
> As for grounds for banning his book: "It isn't a pornographic book. Whether it's obscene I couldn't say — I don't know what obscene means."
>
> "I've always understood pornography to mean the description of sexual acts without any thought of their emotional side."
>
> Bernard Clare does not, he says, describe a sexual act — but it does describe what a man is thinking during one.
>
> This, says Mr. Farrell, comes under the heading of literature, not pornography.[18]

It is difficult to say, of course, how accurately news stories of the kind Inglis wrote reflect what was said. On the face of it, Farrell emerges as patronizing towards Canada's "literary culture," and somewhat superficial and frivolous, Farrell may have given way to disappointment and impatience since his open letter to Mackenzie King had not immediately succeeded, as had its predecessor, and his attempts to rouse public interest were not drawing much response. However, Farrell's attitudes, as reflected here, were not at all characteristic of the way he conducted himself throughout the affair: public statements and private ones (as in his letters, for example) do not generally show a condescending attitude towards Canadian culture, or Canadian affairs generally.

While his attempts to make the banning of *Bernard Clare* a public issue petered out, Farrell persisted in a more private way to exert pressure on the Canadian Government to force a reversal of its decision. His letters during the summer and fall of 1946 were often injected with requests to his friends to write letters of protest to the Government and to encourage others to do likewise. George Gloss, editor of the *Western Socialist,* was singled out to promote this project: Farrell reported the progress of the mail campaign or encouraged Gloss to multiply his efforts in practically every letter he wrote to him. And Gloss in turn showed continuing interest and enthusiasm. That the letter blitz reached its target was attested to by the *New York Times Book Review* report in mid-August that Farrell's "dogged campaign ... has progressed to the point of receiving a letter from Prime Minister Mackenzie King" and that "Mr. Farrell's representations are being brought to the attention of the Honourable J. J. McCann, Minister of National Revenue."[19] And a few days later a Canadian Press dispatch, reporting the same news, indicated, according to "officials of the Revenue Department," that the "publicity campaign for the novel has brought letters from all over the United States to the prime minister asking if Canada is going back on the principle of freedom of speech."[20]

Farrell soon realized, however, there was little reason to feel buoyed by Prime Minister King's answer: he quickly discovered that there was no hope for an early rescission of the ban. The same Canadian Press story that reported the success of the letter blitz quoted unnamed Canadian officials as saying that bringing the matter to the attention of Revenue Minister McCann "didn't mean much," and Deputy Minister David Sim as declaring that "the ruling still stands and further than that I don't care to comment on the affair."[21] It was probably the Canadian Press story, which Farrell saw in the Montreal *Gazette,* that triggered his realization that another and stronger initiative should be undertaken and that launched the preparation of the protest article that appeared in the November issue of the well-known liberal monthly, the *Canadian Forum.*

The sympathetic ear and voice Farrell sought he found in the *Canadian Forum,* whose left-wing stance on political, social and cultural issues generally reflected his own. Always particularly committed to human rights and liberal causes, it ran a feature called "Civil Liberties" in all numbers from December 1939 until December 1949, listing cases of civil rights violations across Canada. Its stand on censorship in Canada was expressed in a June 1939 editorial which

drew attention to the questionable procedures by which substantial numbers of publications were banned: "According to a recent question asked by Mr. Isley in the House, the Department of National Revenue seized in 1938 no less than 3,917 publications of a 'subversive' nature, while the 'obscene' literature confiscated amounted to the immense total of 26,639 magazines, 3,897 newspapers, 16,040 pamphlets and 581 books. All this material, of course, is inspected and blacklisted by a few lesser civil servants, whose qualifications for this priestly task are unknown, and who never on any occasion have to disclose the standards used in sorting the nice from the nasty."[22]

As both subject and contributor, the Farrell name had become a familiar one to *Canadian Forum* readers by 1946: two articles[23] favorable to his work were published there and his own byline appeared over one piece of short fiction[24] and one essay.[25] An April 1938 article by Earle Birney, at the time a member of the magazine's editorial board and an important poet, has particular relevance in the context of the present discussion for it emphasized the problems Farrell had with censorship in his own country. Birney's words, "Farrell's present fame is not the result of any ... compromise with prudery, but is rather an illustration of the difficulties which Puritanism faces when it tries to emasculate a really fertile and hard-working genius,"[26] made a pointed comment on Farrell's stubborn refusal to succumb to the *Bernard Clare* censure. Farrell's own essay, "The Realist Approach," billed by *Canadian Forum* as a condensed version of his introduction to a Penguin collection of his short stories, made its appearance in the midst of the *Bernard Clare* affair but did not refer to it — it had surely been written and accepted before the ban. But Farrell's words, unwittingly of course, aptly summarized his current predicament: "During the war it was sufficient to say that a writer was a realist or a naturalist if one wanted to convince people of certain types that he was a literary snake, a Mussolini of the typewriter, an immoral creature, and one of the little band of writers who had allegedly demoralized the entire American nation."[27] Alas, if one were to believe people of certain types in Ottawa, the literary snake was loose and about to demoralize the Canadian nation.

Farrell's protest article, "Canada Bans Another Book," made its appearance in the November 1946 issue of *Canadian Forum.* He received no stipend for it — it was the magazine's policy to pay its contributors with a year's subscription. He was influenced in his choice of *Canadian Forum* for his protest by his previous favourable reception there and no doubt by the contention of Alan Creighton, the Assis-

tant Editor, that the magazine had "a fairly wide circulation among intelligent and often influential readers."[28] Among the few points the article added to Farrell's previous comments on the ban was the one emphasizing the sources of support he had already been given: "I have received an encouraging public support from representative figures in the United States," he wrote. "In addition, students, private citizens, ex-soldiers and others from the United States and other countries have sent protests to Mr. King."[29] The inference was that Canadians had not done their duty to oppose this affront to civil liberties within their own borders.

What originality "Canada Bans Another Book" had came mainly from the fact that it was directed to Canadians. But for that, and a few additional elements that expanded upon Farrell's earlier comments on the implications of book censoring, the article was essentially a review of the literature on the banning of *Bernard Clare.* Farrell repeated arguments advanced in his open letter and in the statements he allegedly made in the Inglis interview; he also quoted from the *Time, Quill and Quire* and Montreal *Gazette* stories. But at the heart of the *Canadian Forum* article was Farrell's insistence on the particular dangers the ban, and the circumstances surrounding its initiation and continuation, held for Canadians. Wrote Farrell in conclusion:

> If we wish to apply realistic tests to men and to governments, we must judge them by what they do, not solely by what they avow. And what men and governments do in small things is a forecast as to what they are likely to do in larger matters. The silence of Canadian officials, their refusal to answer questions, to meet arguments and protests, their refusal even to specify precisely what chapters Mr. Sim considers "indecent" — all this constitutes a forecast. It reveals the attitude of Canadian officials on books and on the question of the artist's right to freedom of expression. If they will ban my book without a hearing, if they will uphold officials who ban Balzac, Trotsky, Joyce, Lawrence and others, they will be likely to ban still further books. If they do not trust Canadian readers to judge these books themselves, they will not trust them in other cases. Mr. King and Mr. Sim have, in this way, revealed what they can be expected to do in the future on important questions of free speech, on questions of the right of the artist to free expression as this is interpreted by the civilized reading public of civilized countries. An American such as the author of this article can well know how to interpret such action from his own standpoint. It is, however, less menacing to him than it is to Canadians. In this sense, the banning of *Bernard Clare* is a Canadian problem, and possibly, a warning to Canadian citizens, especially to those who are concerned with the new cultural ferment in Canada, and with the hope of once and for all ending the parochialism in Canadian culture. And regardless of who was originally responsible for this banning, the officials now responsible are

> Mr. Sim and Mr. King. It is they who refuse to heed the protests of many representative citizens of the United States. It is they who now are enforcing this ban. [30]

Two other aspects of "Canada Bans Another Book" are worthy of comment. There was a far more literate presentation here of the ideas Farrell discussed when he was interviewed by Peter Inglis for the Ottawa *Citizen* story. It is as if Farrell, having read the *Citizen* report and found it wanting, was now stating first hand his view about the "vast...grandiose...and worthy counterfeit popular [American] culture"[31] that was given easy access to Canada, while works such as *Bernard Clare* and modern classics were denied entry. Interestingly also, Farrell's comments here were without the patronizing tone given to them in the Inglis story.

However, another aspect of "Canada Bans Another Book" showed that Farrell was not above slinging the sarcastic barb. David Sim had contended, in *Time*, "We are not on a witch hunt. The fewer such decisions we have to make the better we like it." Farrell responded in a footnote: "If Mr. Sim does not like these cases the remedy is simple. All that he needs to do is to stop censoring books this way, and to instruct his subordinates to do likewise."[32] And his comments in another footnote about the Montreal *Gazette* story, were considerably more biting:

> In this report, [it] mistakenly printed my name as John Farrel, and also declared: "Ever since the book *Bernard Clare* which uses many four-letter words no longer considered polite in English...." If this newspaper means the four-letter words usually referred to in this context, it is factually wrong. *Bernard Clare* does not contain many four-letter words of this kind. Either this esteemed Canadian newspaper was ignorant and careless, or else the conception of polite four-letter words is different in Canada than it is in other countries. While I am not familiar with local usage of four-letter words in Montreal, I can hardly believe that words such as "many," "moon," "they," "them" and the like are impolite in this city. However, it is four-letter words of this type which are used in many instances in my novel.[33]

"Canada Bans Another Book" prompted very few responses in Canada. The major one was by the *Globe and Mail*'s copyrighted editorial-page columnist, J. V. McAree, whose November 19 piece, "An American Author Appeals to Mr. King," strongly supported Farrell. McAree's avowed purpose was "to make sure [his letter, i.e., the *Canadian Forum* article] comes to the Prime Minister's attention," for "it is possible that Mr. King does not read the Canadian Forum with the diligence its merits warrant."[34] The column paraphrased

Farrell's article, with some passages verbatim, and concluded that "neither Mr. Sim nor any other individual ought to be a judge of such matters. The best suggestion we can make is that if we are to have censorship it ought to be exerted by literary men, a committee of them, who would in turn argue with the recalcitrant, free-speaking author on the one hand and the police authorities on the other."[35] But McAree's was a lonely voice. "Canada Bans Another Book" did not even draw any letters in the *Canadian Forum*. Nor did it elicit any editorial comment in the city in which it was published or in the national capital, where the ban had been promulgated. The *Canadian Forum* in its "Marginalia" feature in the January, 1947 issue, acknowledged McAree's support, thanking him for giving "additional publicity" to the article and "in general for his good-humored and sensible attitude to the subject of book censorship."[36]

By the time "Canada Bans Another Book" appeared, Farrell was beginning to see some dwindling of interest in his search for support in the United States. Although he had still been optimistic in October when he wrote George Gloss that "the campaign against Canada is really heating up,"[37] by December he admitted to Gloss that although "we are getting publicity ... we need to build up a much more impressive showing in letters of protest."[38] Perhaps the nature and extent of the coverage the *New York Times* gave the *Bernard Clare* ban can serve as a good indicator of the falling off in what scant interest the American press showed. In the first place, the *Times* did not stay with the story, relegating it, after its initial burst of interest, to its book pages and then to the Sunday *Book Review*. After the mid-August coverage, the topic did not appear again until December, when it was featured in the *Book Review* column, People Who Read and Write. The piece was a brief recapitulation of "Canada Bans Another Book" and lauded Farrell's latest attempt at redress in the *Canadian Forum*. It also commented with relish on an interesting effect of the ban, one that Farrell had himself alluded to in his article: "But there is a certain left-handed justice in these things, as previous bans have attested. Thus residents of Buffalo have lately observed more than the usual number of Canadian visitors browsing around Buffalo bookshops. They are shopping for 'Bernard Clare,' whether D. Sim, Deputy Minister of National Revenues, Customs and Excise, likes it or not."[39] For all its sense of umbrage, though, this was the *New York Times*'s swan song on the banning of *Bernard Clare*.

Early in 1947, Farrell decided on yet another attempt to rouse public interest in the ban, an attempt that turned out to be his own swan song

on the matter. He and Vanguard Press had evidently determined that an international initiative was needed to exert effective pressure on the Government of Canada, and a document Farrell usually referred to as the "Canadian pamphlet" was prepared for that purpose. "The question of this banning is an international one," he wrote to a friend in March 1947. "The question of the freedom of the artist is now an international question.... I would like to have my pamphlet read not only by people in the United States but by people in Europe and elsewhere."[40] He took specific steps to implement his international plan: letters on March 12 and April 14 requested Jim Henle, his editor at Vanguard, to send the pamphlet to the *Manchester Guardian* and to E. B. Chisholm at the Ministry of Health in Ottawa.[41]

But the Canadian pamphlet was a long time coming out and Farrell's correspondence during the first five months of 1947 talked more of the anticipation than the reality. By the time it did appear, the ban was a year old: if Farrell had difficulty maintaining the momentum of his campaign in the early months of the ban, the task was greatest now. The Canadian pamphlet might have been an effective instrument at another time and in different circumstances, for it was a professionally turned out document. Its seven 9 by 6-inch pages had an attractive pale blue cover bearing a table of contents and the Vanguard address and dominated by the bold-face title:

THE DOMINION OF CANADA

VS.

"BERNARD CLARE"

a novel by James T. Farrell

The pamphlet contained the open letter to Mackenzie King protesting the *Bernard Clare* ban and a revised version of his November 1946 *Canadian Forum* article. The revisions to "Canada Bans Another Book" were mainly for the purpose of updating it and there were two substantial addenda, both footnotes, that bear mentioning. The first of these, almost a column in length, referred to a *New York Times* dispatch covering a visit to the United States by the Governor General of Canada, Field Marshall Alexander, in February. Citing Alexander's reference to the Canadian Government's "publishing the full facts

of its investigation of organized espionage" as "brave," and his declaration that "it would take equal courage and honesty ... and bluntness of speech and action to preserve our freedom and build for a peaceful world," Farrell suggested that Mackenzie King and David Sim might "apply the principles of Viscount Alexander when they consider the serious question of artistic freedom."[42] The other lengthy footnote deserves quoting in its entirety, for it betrayed Farrell's frustration as his long and arduous effort seemed to be issuing to naught:

> The U.N.O. is currently attempting to draft a world bill of rights. The commission working on this laudable effort is, however, meeting with difficulties. From the press, we learn that the ladies and gentlemen engaged in completing this task cannot always agree on definitions of freedom and rights. Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt is one of those engaged in this work. On February 6, 1947, she contributed a column to *The New York World Telegram* titled "Individual Rights." Mentioning the meetings, the speeches, and the disagreements of the U.N.O. representatives, she said that one of the members "brought out the fact that the one thing which nobody objects to is freedom." She did not mention the name of this delegate, but I have speculated as to what nation he might represent. I can hardly believe that he comes from Canada. To continue, however, Mrs. Roosevelt also stated that: "The representative from the United Kingdom is troubled by the fact that, while you can write a bill of human rights, it will mean nothing to various parts of the world where people are still in a state which will not allow them to enjoy many of these rights. It is quite obvious that the people of Borneo do not have exactly the same conception of rights and freedom as do the people of New York City or London." The relativity of conceptions of freedom, of which Mrs. Roosevelt spoke, applies, of course as much to the government officials of Canada as to the people of New York City, London, and Borneo. Mr. Sim, obviously, believes in giving unlimited freedom to himself and his officials when it comes to dealing with books. But this conception of the freedom of the customs department demands a different and more limited conception of freedom on the part of the readers and the writers of Canada. I regret that I am unable to compare this conception of the freedom of the customs officials with conceptions of freedom held by the people of Borneo. I do not believe that they would be as likely to censor serious novels as the officials are, but, then, it may well be that there is a higher level of civilization prevalent in the various government buildings of Ottawa, Canada. Mrs. Roosevelt's remarks about the representative of the United Kingdom won my sympathy. It is a hopeful sign to read of this unnamed man troubling himself about the conceptions of freedom of the backward people of Borneo. I have the same troubled feelings when I think of Mr. Sim and his subordinates.[43]

One senses here that Farrell had lost his composure, was no longer in control. The lack of clarity and focus, the grasping at straws, the

over-stated irony were not characteristic of Farrell; for the first time, perhaps, he was showing the signs of the worn-out crusader.

* * * * * * * * *

One can venture a safe guess at the identity of the "at least two chapters of *Bernard Clare* David Sim [considered] indecent," for the novel contained passages that were not the usual stock in trade of realistic fiction during the 1940s. Chapter IV describes a Saturday night of loneliness and sexual frustration and Clare's subsequent visit to a New York brothel: here the disarray of the prostitute's room is described and her nakedness alluded to, but the depiction of the scene ends with a reference to Clare's unclasping his belt. Chapter XI carries passages about Clare's love-making with Eva Stone: never is the sexual act itself described; we are always either left behind as the two begin their sex or brought back as they lie together afterwards. The most "lurid" allusions are those to Eva's "sagging breasts" and "broad hips" as Clare watches her dress. Clare attempts, also, to engage his lover in open conversation about the extent of her carnal satisfaction; and he reflects, in the aftermath of their relations, on the power and mystery of sex. Aside from these references in Chapters IV and XI, there is a passing reference in Chapter II to a homosexual "grabbing awkwardly at Bernard's genitals"[44] as the latter turns away from a urinal, and in the same chapter an extended description of a morning scene in the common washroom of a cheap men's hotel, replete with the sights and sounds of body evacuation and toilet and spiced with the indelicate commentary characteristic of males thus engaged. There are no "four-letter words" anywhere in the novel: the Montreal *Gazette's* allegation was erroneous and Farrell's sarcastic retort, in the *Canadian Forum* article, was understandable. David Sim had evidently taken a very narrow view of what could be called indecent and had almost certainly not considered whether or not Farrell's treatment, of sexuality especially, was justified in the context of the story of a young man alone in New York City in June, 1927. The chapters are restrained and demonstrate an evident attempt not to exploit potentially offensive situations.

In the various statements in which he addressed the censure of *Bernard Clare*, Farrell was as much concerned with the official procedures whereby the Government of Canada arrived at its decision as with the ban itself. And other commentators as well — McAree in the *Globe and Mail*, for example — seized upon the deficiencies in the system. Indeed, the absurdity of that system and of some if its by-

products was the subject of at least two treatments in the Canadian popular press during the 1940s.

The first of these came in the immediate wake of the *Bernard Clare* ban: a news story headed "Books Banned from Canadian Public Are to Be Found in 'Hill' Library" appeared in the Ottawa *Citizen* on June 19, 1946. Although the piece made no mention of Farrell's novel, it is difficult to believe that it was not prompted by the ban. It drew attention to facts relevant to the practice of censorship in Canada and, hence, to the *Bernard Clare* situation. In the first place, it pointed to two anomalies: banned books were available in the Parliamentary Library — hence the new story's caption — by virtue of the fact that imported books addressed to that Library were not, as a matter of course, examined at Customs; and books banned "under tariff regulations" could, "if [they] did not contravene those sections of the criminal code dealing with obscenity, etc., be lawfully printed and distributed in Canada." It then described the procedure whereby books were banned from Canada: "Deciding what books and publications should be refused entry under the Dominion's tariff laws is primarily the very onerous job of Arthur J. Merriam, Examiner of Publications. When Customs officers open a book or other publication and feel that there may be some question as to its propriety, they send it along to Mr. Merriam's office. A decision is made. Should it be decided to ban the book, action is taken. If it is a borderline case, then it may be discussed with the Deputy Minister, David Sim, or finally, with the Minister himself." The story concluded with the comment that little furore resulted when books were banned. On the contrary, "Most complaints come from critics who desire to see books and publications kept out of the country."[45]

A similar but far more comprehensive discussion of book-banning in Canada appeared in the national magazine, *Maclean's*, but long after the *Bernard Clare* affair had ceased to be an explicit concern of Farrell. Written by the magazine's Ottawa editor, Blair Fraser, the article appeared in the issue of December 5, 1949. Its title "Our Hush-Hush Censorship: How Books Are Banned," is reminiscent of the aforementioned Ottawa *Citizen* story's caption in its seizing upon one negative element of a general undesirable institution. Fraser's article alluded only briefly to *Bernard Clare*, an example, along with such other works as Faulkner's *Sanctuary,* Caldwell's *Tobacco Road,* Balzac's *Droll Stories*, Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead*, of the stature of the books that had come under Canadian censure. Fraser, more explicitly than the anonymous

Citizen reporter, pointed up the absurdity of the system. Of Sim and the other public servants given the responsibility of passing judgment on the acceptability of books for Canadian readers, he wrote: "None of these men pretends to be an authority — their qualifications are those of customs administrators, not critics — but it would be unfair to blame them as individuals for the faults of Canadian censorship. Nobody is qualified to be a censor. These officials, by and large, do as liberal a job as they can."[46]

Blair Fraser's contention as to the essential sincerity of the censors may have been correct. But the particular circumstances of Farrell's experience — the *Bernard Clare* ban and his inability to have it rescinded following hard upon his successful plea *vis-à-vis* the ban on *Young Lonigan* —lead to some intriguing considerations and serve to highlight the potential for abuse inherent in the Canadian censorship procedures. This, after all, is what appears to have happened. Sim issued an order to prevent an inexpensive edition of *Young Lonigan* entering Canada. Farrell wrote an open letter to Mackenzie King protesting the ban. A red-faced Sim was forced to rescind the ban. Two years later, another Farrell novel was brought to Sim's attention. Sim refused *Bernard Clare* entry to Canada. Farrell wrote an open letter to Mackenzie King. Given the "indecent" nature of certain chapters, Sim this time insisted that the ban must stay. (Sim was determined not to be embarrassed again.) Farrell protested and protested. Sim had last word. Of course, there is no conclusive evidence that Sim was retaliating. Nevertheless, the fact that the banning decision rested effectively on one man, and that the procedure was cloaked in secrecy (that it was "hush-hush," to use the *Maclean's* term), make just such a scenario plausible.

Farrell fell prey not only to a questionable policy and procedure. As has been suggested earlier, he was a victim of the general indifference in Canada to the problem of book-banning at its borders. It is striking, for example, that Blair Fraser's public airing of the situation drew no letters to the editors — none, at any rate, that the editors found publishable. But, at least *Maclean's* can be praised for trying to alert the public. An earlier attempt, this one on the part of the well-known Canadian literary figure Robert Weaver, was stalled at the discussion stage. "I'm sorry that nothing has come of the censorship article," Weaver wrote Farrell in September, 1947. "The Montreal Standard decided they wanted one on censorship generally, not just on the *Bernard Clare* case. Then they thought my article was too heavy for

their readers, we have been writing back and forth and I haven't decided what to do."[47]

Both Fraser's and Weaver's fears about infringements of basic freedoms in Canada, of course, reflected Farrell's own concerns as expressed in his two open letters and *Canadian Forum* article. And the vehemence and persistence of the expression of these concerns must be seen in the context of the support he did receive when his writings were threatened with censure in the United States, as they frequently were. An example of such support was cited by Earle Birney in his 1939 *Canadian Forum* assessment of Farrell: "The Society for the Suppression of Vice...had counted 75 indecent passages in 'A World I Never Made,' and used a warrant to have the remaining copies impounded at the publisher's and the latter sued. The magistrate threw the case contemptuously out of court, after a roster of outstanding writers had issued an indignant eulogy in Farrell's defense."[48] No such concerted and open expression of support was forthcoming from the Canadian artistic and intellectual community, and Farrell was surprised, puzzled and distressed that so few voices were heard not only in his own defence but on behalf of the principles he espoused.

Farrell's frustration with official Canadian censorship policy and procedure surfaced again in the spring of 1950, four years after the ban had been placed on *Bernard Clare* and three years after he had discontinued his public efforts to have his novel exonerated. His outburst this time took the form of a brief article in the Writers and Writing section of the *New Leader,* entitled "On Zola and Minister McCann." Here Farrell was responding to a Montreal *Gazette* piece that had been brought to his attention: "The Character of a Happy Censor," written by the Canadian journalist Arthur Blakely for his column, "Affairs of State." Blakely's ironic "Happy Censor" was the Honourable James J. McCann, Minister of National Revenue, under whom David Sim had served in his capacity as Deputy Minister. There was nothing particularly new in either Blakely's column or in Farrell's article. Blakely effectively underscored the dangers of vesting decisions about censorship in the persons of a few men; Farrell merely recapitulated what Blakely wrote, for an American audience, and reasserted his fears about dangers to the freedoms in Canada. Although Farrell must have been gratified to see Blakely's rare Canadian expression of dissatisfaction with the status quo, he was shocked at the adamant and righteous position McCann took in defence of censorship decisions. At one point in "On Zola and Minister McCann," Farrell cited McCann, as quoted by Blakely: "Would you suppose that a book banned 20 to 40

years ago as immoral would be declared moral today or tomorrow? ... Certainly not."[49]

* * * * * * * * *

Some time after the late 1940s, the Canadian ban on *Bernard Clare* was rescinded; it is difficult to say exactly when.[50] It was presumably still in place at the time Farrell wrote his *New Leader* article, for surely he would not have passed up the opportunity of offering an alternate answer to Minister McCann's rhetorical question. And, although nowhere in "Of Zola and Minister McCann" is there any mention of *Bernard Clare*, undoubtedly that novel and the unfortunate circumstances surrounding its attempted introduction to the Canadian audience were much in Farrell's memory. By expressing yet again his intense commitment to principles of artistic freedom, he was giving another sign of the difficulty he had in stomaching the *Bernard Clare* ban.

The optimism Farrell expressed in his 1965 *Thought* piece about the eventual success of *Bernard Clare*, based on its increasing popularity, was likely a matter more of hope than of conviction. What he wrote in that "Postscript on Bernard Clare" as well as in an earlier *Chicago Sun* essay,[51] revealed the novel to contain essential and cherished elements of his total artistic vision. While *Bernard Clare* was not the artistic success that *Studs Lonigan* was, there is probably more of Farrell himself in its struggling and aspiring writer-protagonist than in his most famous street hero, Studs. Is it is any wonder that the repudiation of *Bernard Clare* affected him as deeply and persistently as it did?

NOTES

* I wish to express my gratitude to James T. Farrell's literary executors for allowing me to use the Farrell papers. I also wish to thank Dr. Daniel Traister and his staff at the Van Pelt Library for their kind assistance. The Farrell materials referred to herein are in the James T. Farrell collection, Special Collections, Van Pelt Library, University of Pennsylvania.

1. James T. Farrell, "A Postscript on Bernard Clare," *Thought*, 17 (30 October 1965), 22.
2. *Ibid.*.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Farrell to Jim Henle, 6 June 1944, Farrell Collection, University of Pennsylvania Library. Hereafter: FC.
5. *See* Farrell, Open letter to Mackenzie King, 29 May 1944, FC.
6. Farrell to unidentified correspondent, 27 May 1944, FC.
7. Farrell, Open letter to Mackenzie King, 29 May 1944.
8. *New York Times*, 31 May 1944, p. 17.

9. Farrell to William Targ, 31 May 1944, FC.
10. Farrell to Irving Halperin, 9 December 1944, FC.
11. *See* Farrell, Open letter to Mackenzie King, June 1946. In the ensuing discussion I am referring to Farrell's open letter as reproduced in the Vanguard Press pamphlet entitled *The Dominion of Canada vs. "Bernard Clare,"* published in the spring of summer of 1947. I have been unable to find a copy of the original letter itself, which Farrell wrote and sent in early June 1946.
12. Farrell to George Gloss, 12 June 1946, FC.
13. "Farrell Protests Canadian Book Ban," *New York Times,* 13 June 1946, 25.
14. "Farrell v. Sim," *Time* (Canadian edition), 24 June 1946, 13.
15. "Farrell Fights Ban in Canada," Toronto *Globe and Mail,* 29 June 1946, 9.
16. "'Result Tragic' Authors Favor Uniform Contract," Toronto *Globe and Mail,* 1 July 1946, 5.
17. "Witch-hunting," *Quill and Quire,* July-August 1946, 43.
18. Peter Inglis, "James T. Farrell, Author, Worries over Cultural Future of Canadians," Ottawa *Citizen,* 9 July 1946, 5.
19. "Aeropagitica," *New York Times Book Review,* 18 August 1946, 19.
20. "Bernard Clare Still Banned," Montreal *Gazette,* 23 August 1946, 6.
21. *Ibid.*
22. "Canadian Censorship," *Canadian Forum,* 19 (June 1939), 72.
23. Earle Birney, "The Fiction of James T. Farrell," *Canadian Forum* 19 (April 1939), 21-24; Samuel Levenson, "James Farrell's Crusade," *Canadian Forum* 22 (August 1942), 150-152. 150-152.
24. James T. Farrell, "The Fall of Machine Gun McGurk," *Canadian Forum,* 19 (July 1939), 116-121.
25. James T. Farrell, "The Realist Approach," *Canadian Forum,* 26 (September 1946), 138.
26. Birney, 21.
27. Farrell, "The Realist Approach," 138.
28. Alan Creighton to Farrell, 29 April 1946, FC.
29. Farrell, "Canada Bans Another Book," *Canadian Forum,* 26 (November 1946), 176.
30. *Ibid.* 178.
31. *Ibid.* 177.
32. *Ibid.* 176.
33. *Ibid.*
34. J. V. McAree, "An American Author Appeals to Mr. King," *Globe and Mail,* 19 November 1946, 6.
35. *Ibid.*
36. "Marginalia," *Canadian Forum,* 26 (January 1947), 221.
37. Farrell to George Gloss, 25 October 1946, FC.
38. Farrell to Gloss, 19 December 1946, FC.
39. "Mr. Farrell Throws a Punch," *New York Times Book Review,* 22 December 1946, 10.
40. Farrell to Ruth ____, 11 March 1947, FC.
41. Farrell to Jim Henle, 12 March 1947, 14 April 1947, FC.
42. Farrell, *The Dominion of Canada vs. "Bernard Clare,"* New York: Vanguard, 1947, 4.
43. *Ibid,* 5.
44. Farrell, *Bernard Clare,* New York: Vanguard, 1946, 41.
45. "Books Banned from Canadian Public Are to Be Found in 'Hill' Library," Ottawa, *Evening Citizen,* 19 June 1946, 15.
46. Blair Fraser, "Our Hush-Hush Censorship: How Books Are Banned," *Maclean's,* 62, 5 December 1949, 25.
47. Robert Weaver to Farrell, 22 September 1947, FC.
48. Birney, 23.
49. Farrell, "Of Zola and Minister McCann," *New Leader* 32, 13 May 1950, 22.
50. At the time, lists of banned books were published annually by the Customs and Excise Division and when the ban was removed from a book its title ceased to appear on subsequent lists. For the period in question, I have been unable to locate the lists, despite considerable effort of my own and of federal public servants, for whose patient assistance I am very grateful.
51. Farrell, "Farrell Analyzes Bernard Clare," *Chicago Sun Book Week,* 8 September 1946, 4.