

LUNN, Janet

By Sue Dickens
Gazette staff

Well known children's writer, Janet Lunn of Hillier, has taken on a new role as chairman of the Writer's Union of Canada.

It will be the first time that a children's writer is chairman, and will mean Mrs. Lunn's current book and another she has already started (in her mind at least), will be on the back burner for the next year.

Her accomplishments with the written word have already been many. She was recently included on the honor list by the Canadian section of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY). The organization awards the Hans Christian Anderson Medal.

She was awarded the 1979 IODE Book Award for her story entitled *The Twelve Dancing Princesses*.

It's a classic European fairy tale about 12 princesses and their mysterious disappearances each night.

Her book *The Root Cellar*, which is very well known, was published in 1981 and is going to be produced as a play in 1985 by Erewhon Theatre in Toronto.

It's a time travel story involving an orphan girl from New York who comes to live in Mrs. Lunn's own house and who meets the ever-present Lunn ghost, an important character in the author's writing.

Dividing her time between her 130-year-old farmhouse at Hillier and an apartment in Toronto where she works, keeps the world of writing at her fingertips.

Battle

First and foremost on Mrs. Lunn's list of priorities with the writer's union is her driving ambition to make the public aware of the fact that writers are important for what she calls "our sense of ourselves as Canadians."

The campaign to help writers financially is being called the battle for payment for public use. Writers subsidize places like libraries, the government doesn't, she explained.

Once a book is sold to a library, the

writer receives no more compensation. It can be read and reread by anyone making use of the facility.

The average salary of a writer in Canada is \$5,000 annually, she points out. "We get 10 cents on every \$10 when we sell a book," she explained.

Writers today can't live on what they earn, she said. Their alternatives are to either work at two jobs, one with a guaranteed regular income, or to gain support from a spouse who is earning a salary.

"People seem to think writers are glamorous and rich," said Mrs. Lunn with a smile.

She hopes her work as chairman of the writer's union will prove to be an effective way of lobbying for Canadian writers.

"People say books are too expensive, but beer isn't, cigarettes aren't and toys aren't," she added. "Writers are subsidizing people who want to read."

It is her feeling that writers are doing a job for the community, "the same as road builders or anyone else."

"But writers don't represent any large constituency," said Mrs. Lunn sardonically.

In the short term the people who are revered are the rich, but in the long term "the people we remember are the great artists," said Mrs. Lunn.

For Mrs. Lunn, writing is work, not a hobby. She has written four books. In addition to *The Twelve Dancing Princesses* and *The Root Cellar*, she has written *Double Spell* (a mystery) and *Larger Than Life* (a history).

Her enthusiasm and imagination continue as she works on her next book, which is at the first draft stage. It is set in the county and is a story about the grandmother of a character in her book *The Root Cellar*.

It's an historical novel based on weeks of research in northern Scotland. In the back of her mind is yet another story, this one is to be about the United Empire Loyalists.

Having raised five children, Mrs. Lunn finds it quite natural to write stories for youngsters.

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