

Section, Canadian Historical Association, was held in Ottawa from September 2nd to October 3rd. Seventeen students attended: two from abroad, seven from the Public Archives of Canada and eight from other institutions in Canada.

Once again the course attempted to cover many topics and media through a variety of formats: seminars, lectures, tours and workshops. While more than half of the sessions were conducted by Public Archives of Canada personnel, the contributions by guest speakers from other archives and institutions were stimulating as well as helpful.

The evaluations by the students were marked by a dual attitude: pleasure from having their appetites whetted, but frustration at finding the meal too skimpy at times. In view of this fact and of the possibility of the creation of graduate level training, the future of this course will be considered carefully in the coming months. Clearly the course has reached a plateau, perhaps even a crossroad. A major modification in purpose and structure would seem to be necessary.

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Course Coordinator

Business Archives Notes

In October, 1974 a conference was held in London, England to consider the desirability of setting up a Business Archives Committee under the auspices of the International Council on Archives.¹ An invitation was extended to the Dominion Archivist to attend, but, unable to be present, he nominated as a substitute the co-ordinator of the business programme at the Public Archives of Canada. The meeting opened with a round-robin review of the state of business archives in the various countries represented. One feature of the Canadian situation that impressed the Europeans was the active part played by governmental institutions, especially the P.A.C., in the preservation of business records. They concluded that this positive role guaranteed the existence of a rich reserve of data on Canadian enterprise. In this they were wrong. Canadians are in danger of losing large portions of their historical heritage through the indifference and omissions of their business leaders. No programme operating within the limited bounds imposed by a state archives can be expected to compensate fully for such widespread neglect.

Denmark seems to be the best equipped to preserve business records. There, some years ago, a consortium of firms established an archives especially dedicated to the preservation of business material. While public funds are now assisting their work, the Danish *Erhvervsarkivet* represents a

1 A decision was made to establish the Committee but no practical steps have yet been taken to do so.

uniquely successful approach to the independent storage of corporate records. In most other western European countries, individual companies or their designated university repositories undertake archival work on their own, although associations exist to service their needs. The British Business Archives Council and the *Vereinigung Deutscher Werks — und Wirtschaftarchivare* are two such organizations.

Canadian business archivists are, for the most part, left to toil in solitary splendour. A group of Montreal archivists and corporate secretaries attempted to create a Business Archives Council in 1968. An ambitious programme was begun, but, failing to expand its membership or to attract significant corporate sponsorship, the Council terminated its activities in 1973. A subsequent attempt by an academic to launch a similar organization, backed by university historians and business executives, quickly failed because of apathy on all sides.

Some encouraging developments, however, have taken place here. Active archival programmes exist in a number of our largest private businesses, including Distillers Corporation-Seagrams Limited, Bell Canada, Alcan, the Bank of Montreal, and the Bank of Nova Scotia. But advances have been counterbalanced by disappointments and failures. Even the admirable Alcan project may be shelved upon the retirement of the present Secretary unless the company is fortunate enough to find an equally devoted replacement.

The state of business archives in Canada is not overly encouraging. To meet this situation, more is needed than the standard archival prescription of an ounce of education and two ounces of conversion. It might be advisable to urge state institutions to direct their efforts and limited resources toward the provision of advice and practical assistance to firms considering the establishment of an archives. Perhaps tax concessions would act as an incentive for companies to store historical data. This, of course, would require a conclusion by government that such storage was a service benefiting all Canadians. Finally corporate archivists should abandon their low profiles, emerge from their regional enclaves of fellow tradesmen and make themselves known one to another. Communication is a necessary precondition for the effective protection of our business archival heritage.

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A record number of more than 800 persons attended the annual conference of the Society of American Archivists at Philadelphia, nearly 200 above the