

## *Notes and Communications*

### **The Commission on Canadian Studies**

After more than three and a half years of research, the Commission on Canadian Studies released the first portion of its report<sup>1</sup> in March, 1976. Sponsored by the Association of Universities and Colleges in Canada and headed by Professor T.H.B. Symons, the former president of Trent University in Peterborough, the task of the Commission was to “Study and report upon the state of teaching and research in studies relating to Canada” and more specifically to assess curricula, special programmes, library resources, financial support, the state of research, and the requirements and needs of Canadian studies. The title of the report, *To Know Ourselves*, is in many ways a true reflection of its content.

Early in the course of the inquiry, it became evident to Commission members that an investigation into Canadian studies should not be simply a flagwaving exercise responding to an emotional challenge, or be yet another examination of society for a final definition of the Canadian identity; rather, the first and only justification for Canadian studies should be the need for self-knowledge leading to a better perception of problems and especially for more effective and sound decision-making from social leaders. A particularly important aspect of the report, then, is contained in the second chapter which outlines the rationale for Canadian studies not only for the university environment but also for the general public: the report insists that it is, after all, a matter of looking after one’s new house. From this perspective the report examines the achievements of universities in serving the needs of the wider Canadian community and finds that, despite generally increasing student demand, a less than adequate portion of the curricula relates to this country, that the academic-scientific community has not paid sufficient attention in teaching and research orientations to the problems of society and that professional education does not incorporate enough exposure to the composition, the problems and the needs of the wider

<sup>1</sup> T.H.B. Symons, *To Know Ourselves*. The Report of the Commission on Canadian Studies. Vols. I and II. Ottawa: Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 1975. Pp. 228 and pp. 115.

community. Although the second volume is shorter than the first, it constitutes the most surprising part by injecting new elements into the general discussion. This section concentrates on factors such as Canadian studies abroad and at Community Colleges, on audio-visual resources, and upon the roles of foundations and archives. In each case, the Commission makes appropriate recommendations likely to provide support to the entire concept of Canadian studies.

In this context, the chapter on archives is of great interest to archivists in Canada. Pointing to the immense role played by archives across the whole country in supporting and promoting Canadian studies, the report challenges archives to unite even more strongly in coordinating their efforts to serve the public and to prevent unnecessary duplication and wasteful rivalry. Sensitive to regional needs and potential for acquisition, the report calls for the creation of a national network of regional archives "well equipped and properly staffed, which would work in close liaison with provincial and federal archives and in collaboration with universities, historical societies, school boards and other appropriate institutions and authorities" (p. 72). Suspecting that the solution is not necessarily an expansion of the present archival centres, but rather decentralization, the report emphasizes the role of the archives as resource centres essential to the Canadian public and academic community. In the context of the recommendations that universities increase involvement with their regional communities, the Commission recommends that these academic institutions seriously consider playing a role in a network of regional archives. The report also draws the attention of university administrators to the value of their own records. Finally, emphasizing the requirement for more formal training for archivists and conservators, the report recommends that "the university system, in cooperation and consultation with leading Canadian archivists and archival institutions, take immediate steps to ensure the rapid establishment of graduate programmes to train professional archivists in both our official languages" (p. 75). Other recommendations deal specifically with the Public Archives of Canada by supporting the Association of Canadian Archivists' resolution last year at the Edmonton conference for a new building, by urging an expansion of the diffusion programme, and by stressing the importance for Canadian studies of the new National Film Archives. Among other subjects, the Commission also pointed to the necessity for the preservation of business records and sources for native studies, for the preparation of appropriate finding aids to newspapers, and for the long-overdue modifications to the present copyright law.

The report of the Commission on Canadian Studies will certainly interest the archival community and should encourage an awareness of the potential and the importance of archives to universities and the Canadian public. As suggested by the Commissioner, it might be useful to archivists if the Association of Canadian Archivists were to establish a committee to review

the report and to suggest means of implementing relevant recommendations. It would be shameful to let such an opportunity pass.

The recommendations contained in the chapter on archives follow:

1. The Commission recommends that the archives and archivists of Canada undertake a programme to promote public awareness of the potential value of private papers and other archival material, and that the universities of Canada co-operate in this programme in various appropriate ways.
2. The Commission recommends that the preparation of a national guide to all known archival resources in Canada be immediately undertaken under the leadership of the Public Archives of Canada in co-operation with other federal, provincial and private archives. The Commission recommends that adequate funds to support this important project be made available by Federal and Provincial Governments.
3. The Commission recommends that all Canadian universities participate, in ways appropriate to their character and region, in the preparation of a comprehensive national guide to archival resources.
4. The Commission recommends the creation of a national network of regional archives.
5. The Commission recommends: that, in many cases, the regional archive be located within the local university and be administered by it; that every university give consideration to the possibility of undertaking such a role in the proposed national network of regional archives; and that, in all cases, close ties be established between the university and the regional archive.
6. The Commission recommends that every university assume certain minimal archive services relating to the records of the university itself and to those of the members of its staff, including basic data and research findings that might be of considerable value to future students and researchers.
7. The Commission recommends that the universities acquire archival material in microform from the major national and provincial archives, which will enable them to support a markedly wider variety of teaching and research and, at the same time, will assist in the process of archival diffusion within their particular regions.
8. The Commission recommends that the universities provide leadership toward the development of the archival resources of their regions and that they collect, process and maintain original archival material that is of local or regional significance or associated with fields of special interest to the university or to certain of its faculty.
9. The Commission strongly recommends to Federal and Provincial Governments that archives be considered an essential element of a university's academic development and of its role as a public institution, and that adequate funding be provided specifically for this important facet of the university's work.
10. The Commission recommends that the university system, in co-operation and in consultation with leading Canadian archivists and archival institutions, take immediate steps to ensure the rapid establishment of graduate programmes to train professional archivists in both of our official languages. The minimum requirement is for two separate programmes, one at a major university of each language, or for one programme at a major bilingual university.
11. The Commission recommends that the university system explore the needs of Canadian archives and other institutions for trained professional conservators and take steps to meet the needs that exist for teaching and training in this field.
12. The Commission recommends that Canadian universities offer graduate students and senior undergraduates in any discipline a credit or non-credit course in archival procedures and methods.

13. The Commission recommends that Canadian universities take fuller advantage of opportunities to have archivists on campus as visiting lecturers or advisors in Canadian studies.
14. The Commission recommends to the Federal Government that it immediately undertake, in close co-operation with the Dominion Archivist, to draft a new and expanded legislative mandate for the Public Archives of Canada, to replace the act of 1912, and that such legislation be presented to Parliament at the earliest opportunity.
15. The Commission recommends to the Federal Government that planning now go forward for the expanded physical capacity that will be required to house the Public Archives of Canada.
16. The Commission recommends that responsible officials of the Public Archives and the National Library, and of the Department of the Secretary of State, seriously explore the possibility that the new space to be provided might house storage and administrative space for one or both of these institutions, making it then possible for some of the public rooms and research facilities of both to be retained under one roof.
17. The Commission recommends that the new building be located immediately adjacent to the present National Library building.
18. The Commission recommends that the diffusion programme of the Public Archives be continued and expanded.
19. The Commission recommends to the Federal Government that adequate funds be made available to the Public Archives to permit the appointment of liaison officers, whose duties would include assistance in the organization and description of holdings of small institutions and contact with universities and research centres.
20. The Commission commends the Public Archives for the preparation of the *Union List of Manuscripts in Canadian Repositories* and the *National Union Catalogue of Maps* and recommends to the Federal Government that adequate funds be made available to complete the latter project as soon as possible and to prepare revised editions of both works at regular intervals, perhaps every four years.
21. The Commission recommends that appropriate federal and provincial parliamentary committees study the question of the ownership, disposition and preservation of records, documents and papers related to the public service of men and women prominent in Governmental affairs, and recommend procedures and guidelines that might apply in such matters.
22. The Commission recommends to the Federal Government that the National Film Archives now be established on a permanent basis, as a division of the Public Archives of Canada, and that it be formally granted exclusive authority under the Dominion Archivist for the selection, acquisition and conservation of film and television resources of enduring historical, cultural or social value to Canada, with authority to document and diffuse these resources for scholarly and cultural purposes.
23. The Commission recommends to the Federal Government that either the Public Archives Act or the Copyright Act be amended to require the deposit with the National Film Archives of at least one copy of every Canadian film, either produced or distributed in Canada.
24. The Commission recommends to the Federal Government that sufficient funds be made immediately available to the National Film Archives for the acquisition and preservation of those film documents in the greatest danger of being destroyed or damaged, in particular the 35 mm film existing only on cellulose nitrate base.
25. The Commission recommends that business corporations and organizations develop sound records management and archival programmes to be administered either internally or through the facilities of an established archival institution.

26. The Commission recommends that Canadian businesses avail themselves of the archival advisory services offered by the Business Records Committee of the Public Archives of Canada.
27. The Commission recommends to the Federal Government that a parliamentary committee or other appropriate committee of inquiry be asked to study problems relating to the disposition of the business records and papers of international corporations operating in Canada, and to propose appropriate legislative controls upon the export of such documents. The committee might also wish to consider the application of such controls to other international organizations operating in Canada, including labour unions, charitable and cultural associations, and the like.
28. The Commission recommends the formation of a Committee on the Development of Native Archival Resources with representatives from the archival, academic and native communities, as well as from appropriate Government agencies and private bodies. The task of the committee should be to survey the present state of Canadian archival resources for native studies, to assess future needs, and to develop proposals and procedures for the future development of native archives. Such a committee could perhaps be formed under the aegis of the new Society of Canadian Archivists, in full co-operation with the groups named above.
29. The Commission recommends to the Federal Government, to the Canada Council, and to the Social Science Research Council that they explore the possibility of providing adequate funds to support the preparation of a comprehensive index for at least one leading English-language daily newspaper in each region of Canada, and that similar funds should be made available to support the existing French-language index.
30. The Commission recommends to the Federal Government, and to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs in particular, that in the current revision of copyright legislation special consideration be given to the status of archival material and that the new act permit the most liberal use of unpublished documents, for non-commercial purposes.
31. As noted in its chapter on Canadian studies abroad, the Commission strongly supports the microfilm and retrieval programmes now being conducted abroad by the Public Archives of Canada of documentary and other archival materials that bear upon the history and affairs of this country. It recommends that substantially increased financial resources be made available to the Public Archives to enable it to broaden and accelerate its excellent work in this field.

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### **Three Centuries of Documents**

In September 1974 historical resources in Canada were enriched by more than 5,000 linear feet of Hudson's Bay Company Archives. In an agreement signed 31 July 1973, between the Company and the Manitoba Government, the records were deposited in the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Winnipeg.

With mixed feelings about the daunting assignment, the Hudson's Bay Company Archivist arrived at Beaver House, the Company's London headquarters, in the Fall of 1973 to oversee the transfer of the records to