

McMaster Labour Studies Programme

by HARRY J. WAISGLASS

The McMaster Labour Studies Programme is the result of two years of preparatory work by a joint committee representing the University, the Canadian Labour Congress and the Ontario Federation of Labour. The Programme was launched officially in July 1976, with the appointment of a Director and a reconstituted joint union-university committee. It has a three-year mandate to construct firm foundations for a university-based centre for labour education and labour research. The Programme will be evaluated in the third year, before long-term commitments are made.

The McMaster Labour Studies Programme is the first of its kind at a Canadian university. It has a unique service orientation toward labour and the community, and it is the first joint venture involving a Canadian university and the labour movement in the field of labour education and labour research that will serve the interests of both academics and practitioners. This university-based programme is also the first in Canada to offer specialized services to meet the continuing learning needs of the full-time staff of trade unions. It has already introduced certificate courses in labour studies. Further, it has started to develop a labour archives, with the ambition to establish a leading research centre for studies in Canadian trade union history.

The Programme's unique service orientation toward labour and the community is expressed by its objectives which include the fostering of the personal growth and self-development of workers as individuals, and as union and community leaders; the use of the University's research and education resources for the continuing development of the knowledge and skills of the executive, administrative, professional and technical personnel of labour organizations; and the encouragement of improvements in labour education and labour research, aimed at strengthening degree programmes in the labour field, as well as non-degree courses to serve the needs of the community.

To distinguish it from the industrial relations units which some Canadian universities have established, the McMaster Programme has a wide scope of interests in labour matters, promoting interactions between teaching and research and between scholars and practitioners. The Programme will include, but will not be restricted by, the concerns of industrial relations in the narrow sense of collective bargaining and related issues. Its range of teaching and learning interests extends broadly across "the world of work," and includes such important matters as occupational health and social services.

The McMaster Programme has already introduced some new approaches to labour education in the Hamilton-Wentworth region. The certificate courses, now in their second year, were developed jointly with a committee representing the Hamilton and District Labour Council. In collaboration with the labour councils in Brantford and Oakville, the courses are now being extended to serve those communities. The certificate courses are open not only to union members but to anyone seeking a deeper understanding and knowledge of the labour movement, and of the social, economic and political conditions affecting labour.

Specially-designed seminars have been presented for the full-time officers and staff of the United Steelworkers of America and the Canadian Union of Public Employees. Similar staff development seminars are being planned for other unions. Also, initiatives are under way to develop continuing educational programmes for union staff specialists in labour education, occupational health, and other fields.

The development of a labour archives, essential to such a programme, has made a good start with the involvement and support of unions and the community. The historical records of the United Steelworkers, Local 1005, Service Employees' Union Local 204, and the Hamilton and District Labour Council have already been acquired, and other collections are expected to be contributed soon. The archival collections of union records will provide a needed stimulus to research in Canadian labour history. McMaster's labour archives will be available not only to advanced scholars, but also to union members and others interested in the study of labour history.

Scottish Labour Records Project

by IAN MACDOUGALL

The pending publication of a catalogue of labour records in Scotland marks the culmination of a systematic attempt during the past few years to trace surviving material and to encourage its preservation by deposit in public or university libraries.

The project was begun more than a decade ago by the Scottish Labour History Society, a scholarly society which enjoys considerable moral and financial support from labour organizations. The Society endeavoured to establish as precisely as it could records of trade unionism, co-operative organizations, friendly societies and labour political movements—whether Scots or otherwise—that survived in Scotland, and also those records of Scots working class movements preserved outside the country.