There is of course nothing definitive about the five volumes to date and nor should they be unduly lauded. Yet, they come closer than anything previously written in providing authoritative guides to basic archives administration. It is to be hoped that the Series will expand in their afterglow.

Gordon Dodds
Archives of Ontario

Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence of the Standing Joint Committee on
Regulations and Other Statutory Instruments, nos. 13-67, 1975-76. Ottawa:
Queen’s Printer. (Text in English and French) Available from Printing and
Publishing, Supply and Services Canada, 270 Albert St., Ottawa, K1A 0S9.

On 19 December 1974, the House of Commons referred the “Guidelines for Mo-
tions for the Production of Papers” and the subject matter of Bill C-225, “An Act re-
specting the right of the public to information concerning the public business,” to the
Standing Joint Committee on Regulations and Other Statutory Instruments. The Com-
mittee, with Senator Eugene Forsey and MP Robert McCleave as joint chairmen, then
began a series of hearings to investigate all aspects of public access to government
information at the federal level. The Committee called on individuals inside and out-
side government, including the sponsor of Bill C-225, Gerald Baldwin, MP for Peace
River. The testimony and submissions presented between February 1975 and April
1976 have been printed in Issue Nos. 13 to 67 of the Committee’s Minutes of Pro-
ceedings and Evidence.

Several Issues of the Minutes of Proceedings hold special interest for archivists,
either for their illumination of the broader aspects of the problem or for their concen-
tration on questions of direct archival significance. The “insiders’” view is ably
presented by Mitchell Sharp, then President of the Privy Council, and by two public
servants, Gordon Robertson, Secretary to the Cabinet for Dominion-Provincial Rela-
tions, and D.F. Wall, a member of the Privy Council Office. Their testimony and the
latter’s report, “The Provision of Government Information,” — which may be seen as
a forerunner of Secretary of State Robert’s discussion paper, Legislation on Public Ac-
cess to Government Documents, published in June 1977 — are printed in Issue Nos. 13
and 32.

Among submissions from “outsiders,” the testimony of Dr. Donald Rowat of
Carleton University (Issue No. 15) and Professor Maxwell Cohen of McGill University
(Issue No. 50) is of particular interest. Dr. Rowat is perhaps the first Canadian
academic to address the question of access to government information, in two articles
published in the Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science in 1965 and
1966. Professor Cohen, the author of Secrecy and Foreign Policy, gives a provocative
and searching overview of the problems inherent in balancing the public’s need for in-
formation and the government’s need to operate with a degree of confidentiality.

On the archival side, Issue No. 61 prints the testimony of the Dominion Archivist,
Dr. W.I. Smith. The members of the Committee showed a surprising interest in the
role of the Public Archives of Canada in government information policy and im-
plementation. Canadian archivists interested in access problems might do well to seek
out this Issue and read Dr. Smith’s testimony.

For some unknown reason, Canadian archivists missed a second opportunity to in-
form the Committee of archival concerns about access to government documents. On
30 March 1976, near the end of its deliberations, the Committee agreed to hear the
views of the Association of Canadian Archivists, but for some reason, perhaps lack of
time, they were not called upon. It is cheering to note, at least, that the Committee
learned of the existence of the fledgling Association, and heartening also to see that ar-
chivists are recognized as having something to offer to the discussion of this very dif-
ficult area of public business.

The Canadian literature on the question of access to government information re-
 mains limited despite considerable recent public agitation. The Minutes of Proceed-
ings of the Forsey-McCleave Committee provide the most extensive collection of opinion
and argument on all sides of the question, and may be recommended to anyone with an
interest in probing the matter.

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A first annual report has been published by the Multicultural History Society of
Ontario, a non-profit corporation formed in 1976 and funded by lottery revenue. Its
objectives are to promote and advance studies in the history of ethnocultural groups
within Ontario, to collect and catalogue relevant materials, to arrange for their safe-
keeping and accessibility, to encourage the publication of primary research on the
ethnocultural groups and to publicize their important contributions to the growth and
development of Ontario. It is a handsome production, with imitation parchment pages
and a cover displaying facsimile “ethnic” documents.

The contents are standard fare as annual reports go, including lists of personnel and
board members, a financial statement, charts outlining research distribution, and a
partial list of accessions. Professor Robert Harney, President of the Society, manages
some skilful pen work to present the objectives and aims of the society while describing
nearly every activity. However, he leaves the reader asking how and when the materials
will be transferred to the Archives of Ontario, which is stated to be the primary
depository of material collected.

Some of the aims of the Multicultural History Society — the promotion of ethnic
studies, the publishing and publicizing functions — are not traditional archival occupa-
tions. The selection and acquisition of materials for preservation, their arrangement
and description, however, are. Although Maurice Careless, Chairman of the Society's
Board of Directors, states that the Society's task is “above all archival — to collect and
save,” the Society functioned for a year without an archivist on staff, an oversight
seemingly vindicated by the fact that “in the ten months before [they] had a profes-
sional archivist or archival space, not a single piece of material entrusted to the Society
by researchers was misplaced or damaged.” The exact role of the archivist now hired is
not clear. Researcher/collectors outnumber archivists thirty-five to one (with the ex-
ception of archivists employed by the several co-operating institutions). Their training
consists of a seminar and instruction by Professor Harney and the librarians on the
methods of tape recording historical source material and of gathering and submitting
photographs and written material. This is followed by the archivist’s instruction in
technical procedures. Among the responsibilities suggested for the archivist, those that
stand out are: “copes . . . with the concern and occasional hostility of those who repre-
sent more traditional provenances and collecting jurisdictions,” and “maintains the
balance between the enthusiasms of our crusade to save ethnocultural and non-English
language material from oblivion and the more deliberate and professional tempo of
archives development.”

These statements show an awareness of the existence of archival principles, but the
Society's “principal [sic] of ethnicity as an organizing principle for [their] collection of