

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

It could be argued that there is no need for a Chairman's letter this year since the Chairman has already circulated several letters to the membership of the Archives Section. It is on the basis of those form letters - the purpose for sending them and the nature of the response to them - that this brief report can be defended or justified.

The Executive which you elected last June believed that it would be useful to examine the state of the archives profession in Canada and particularly the membership and activities of the Archives Section. We asked ourselves such questions as: "How effectively can we achieve the aims which are stated in our new Constitution?" "Does the Section have the support of all types of persons who can strengthen the association and benefit by its activities?" "How can it be improved?" "What projects should it undertake?"

Because we didn't have the answers to these questions, we referred them to you and the response was most encouraging. You - some of you at any rate - expressed the view that our membership should be increased and that it should include more persons who are engaged in archival work in a sub-professional capacity, persons who are engaged in records management, restoration and other specialized fields. Accordingly we appealed to you to assist in recruiting new members and our membership has increased considerably within the last two or three months.

Some of you expressed the view that there should be more frequent contacts between members, more than one meeting a year, a continuous activity which would mean more involvement and participation. A response to this need is a movement towards regional meetings. Perhaps l'Association des Archivistes du Quebec (founded in December, 1967) is an example of this. A proposed meeting of archivists in the western region is another and there are indications that other such meetings may be held. It is important, however, to ensure that regional groups strengthen rather than weaken the national association. Another method of participation which may be considered is the formation of standing committees whose members could promote their special fields by correspondence and joint projects. Oral history might be one example of this.

Many of you felt that there should be more frequent news. Several suggested newsletters or bulletins in addition to the Canadian Archivist. My request for quarterly news items for the American

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Archivist was in part an experiment - to see if there was enough news to report and if you were willing to report it more frequently. The result had not been particularly promising except for the province of Alberta.

The need for a directory of Canadian archivists was expressed frequently, both for information and as a means of assessing the state of the archival profession. I think we must consider some sort of directory at our next meeting.

The relationship between archivists and historians was mentioned by several members. Some felt that we should emphasize the development of a distinct profession which would serve historians but not try to duplicate their work. Others felt that the close relationship with historians should be encouraged, that it is a source of valuable support and that there is a large area of common interest.

Several subjects were suggested as deserving more attention. Among them were records management, restoration, finding aids, an archives manual which would be equivalent to a Canadian professional textbook, business archives, to mention only a few. The chief recurring theme, however, concerned acquisition and other facets of cooperation between archival repositories. In response to this widespread concern the Executive arranged a session at the annual meeting to air the whole question of jurisdiction, minimum staff and facilities, copying arrangements and so on. Dr. Lamb has agreed to act as Chairman and several of our most distinguished members have agreed to serve on a panel. It is hoped that there will be a large attendance and that all will participate in a frank and free discussion.

There is not a great deal to report in regard to concrete results but I believe that we are moving in the right direction - towards a more representative and more active association, with more attention to important subjects and projects, and towards a stronger association which can make steady progress towards the attainment of the aims of the Section:

to encourage and foster professional standards, procedures and practices among Canadian archivists; to disseminate and distribute information relating to the Archives profession; to provide a common meeting ground for all types and classes of archivists in Canada; and to provide leadership and guidance wherever needed in the fields of archives administration, education and practice; to promote the preservation of historical documents and to encourage their scholarly use; and to encourage the publication of historical studies and documents as circumstances may permit.

- Wilfred I. Smith

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