

## CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Since Alan Ridge penned the first "Chairman's Letter" in 1966, each subsequent epistle has referred to the subject of archival training in Canada. And with very good reason, for as Mr. Ridge pointed out, professional status and training are topics completely interdependent. The awkward subject of training cannot be ignored in 1970 when Carleton University is scheduling another course in Archival Principles and Administration at the request of this Section and with the essential cooperation of the Public Archives of Canada.

The course was last offered in 1968 when 31 students registered; at the beginning of March, 1970, only 8 applications had been received, a number hardly sufficient to warrant its presentation.

Why have the number of applicants fallen so drastically? How are we going to provide future training if our professional enlistments are so few? What are likely to be the future requirements and opportunities of our profession in Canada?

Perhaps our chief problem is the size and nature of Canada itself. We are large enough and sufficiently sophisticated to want some archivists, but not large enough or sufficiently mature to require a regular annually or biennially trained supply. We, too, suffer from the national bug-bear of Regional Disparities. Our largest national institution, the Public Archives of Canada, is probably the only employer taking on a number of new archivists every year, and it organizes its own internal training programme and does not send its recruits to the Carleton course. Other archives, all much smaller, may retain the same staff members for many years and add no new positions to their establishments. If this is the case, where do applicants from training courses come from? And if they come as independent, self-supporting students, where do they find employment as graduates?

The decade of the 1960's saw a great increase in the number of archival positions in Canada, but the 1970's open in a period of financial austerity which affects all levels of government, the universities and indeed all other areas of archival activity. The era of expansion appears to have vanished - for a while at least - and in the present period of stability, people holding positions are not leaving them quickly for better opportunities elsewhere. Many, if not most employed professional archivists, have already taken the general introductory course in Archival Principles and Administration. Therefore, should the Carleton course, or one similar to it, not be offered again until attrition has taken its toll of archivists presently employed, or a new period of expansion has created a number of new positions?

In one respect, archivists seem to be in a much sounder position than librarians, for most archivists only take professional training once they are employed, whereas library schools seem to be producing graduates who are experiencing increasing difficulty in finding jobs equal to their professional qualifications. This is a widespread problem, for I have recently noted graduate students' associations protesting against professional schools in universities turning out graduates without any

consideration of the number of employment opportunities likely to be available in Canada in the respective professions.

The Archives Section seems to me to be facing two training problems, the first related to new recruits to the profession and the second to experienced archivists who probably have long since taken the course. The first problem we have been attempting to answer for some years; the second hardly seems to have been considered.

One solution to the first problem may be to change the locale of the Archival Principals course from time to time, offering it, for example, at Ottawa in 1970, and at Quebec City, or in Western Ontario, the Maritimes, British Columbia, or the Prairie Provinces in 1972, or '73 or '74.

An answer to the second problem may be to organize brief regional courses or seminars in different years on such specialized topics as public records management, automated finding aids, church records, land records, court records, document restoration, map collections, microfilm procedures, or photograph collections. Such courses might be of particular importance to experienced staff members, both professional and clerical, who would welcome the opportunity to study recent developments in special fields of interest. The meeting last October of archivists from the three prairie provinces, described elsewhere in this issue, proved to be such a successful gathering that I am confident that similar regional meetings could be effectively adapted to serve archival training purposes. No doubt, we will have adequate opportunity to discuss the professional training problem formally and informally during the Canadian Historical Association meetings to be held at the University of Manitoba in June.

As for the 1970 programme of the Archives Section, it has been intentionally scheduled to avoid conflict with the presentation of papers in Canadian history to the C. H. A. as a whole. This proved to be rather difficult to accomplish this year.

Consequently, the Archives Section programme is scheduled for the afternoon and evening of Tuesday, June 2nd, although the C. H. A. meetings are advertised to begin on the morning of June 3rd. I hope, perhaps vainly, that this arrangement will prove satisfactory to all, inconvenience few, and infuriate none of our members. At least the archivists should be spared the agonizing decision of whether to attend a panel of a topic of importance to their profession or the presentation of a paper by an historian of national eminence, which may be an historic event itself.

The Business Meeting will have to consider a resolution respecting the Standing Committee on Oral History, and its relationship to the Archives Section and to the Canadian Historical Association as a whole. The resolution reads: "The Symposium on oral history recommends the creation of a standing committee on oral history of the Archives Section of the CHA".

In the evening, a panel will be presented entitled "Donors, Taxmen and Archivists". A somewhat similar subject has been considered for the programme in past years, but for various reasons, it has never been arranged. However, in view of the much discussed Benson White Paper with its proposals affecting capital gains, valuation day and etc., as well as the appearance of international auction houses in Canada with their

developing commercial interest in manuscripts, I trust we will be able to give this topic of growing importance a thorough and useful airing for the first if not the last time.

I hope a large number of our membership will be able to attend our annual meeting at Winnipeg in June.

- John A. Bovey

#### THE JOURNAL OF THE SOCIETY OF ARCHIVISTS

Our colleagues in England have gone "mod": Volume four of the Journal of the Society of Archivists has been completely reset. The first issue (April, 1970) has a light terra cotta covering, good lettering and a most pleasing appearance. The articles (printed on acid-free paper) cover a wide bank of interest, and there is increasing awareness of modern records and the new technology.

Professor Christopher Brooke, in "The Teaching of Diplomatic", makes a plea for its study, not for its own sake but in relation to bureaucratic necessity as an aspect of administrative history. He points out that little has been done on English diplomatic from 1290 to modern times, and stresses its underlying continuity with the earlier period.

Among other articles, there is a useful survey of English history and Dutch archives and another on the present organization and working conditions of Scandinavian archives. Dr. Felix Hull has some wise things to say on modern records, and there are technical notes on fungicides and use of thymol for document fumigation. There is also a short notice on the Canadian Archivist which is much appreciated, and has prompted this reciprocity.

In Britain, subscription to the Journal is on a sliding scale according to income, but Commonwealth members who are practicing archivists may join the Society of Archivists and receive the Journal, published twice a year, for one Pound, ten shillings, or about \$3.84 which is very good value indeed. Applications for membership should be sent to Hon. Secretary, Mr. Peter Walne, M.A., County Record Office, County Hall, Hertford, England. Ed.

The Editor would like to thank his secretary, Miss Linda Spicer, for her tireless efforts in setting up and preparing the typescript reproduced in The Canadian Archivist.