

Dialogue/Le Dialogue

Dear Editor:

In response to your "note to subscribers", COHA appears to be a forum more for theoretical and academic workers. The current issue (Volume 10) caters for this sector and the requirements for submission of articles (page 2) definitely focus on learned papers as against the more general interest fare.

Methodology is something that has to be learned by practice. As the founder of the Petroleum Industry Oral History Project in 1980, I have stumbled along, learning all the way. I am still improving on techniques. There is a far more important aspect to oral history — *empathy*, rather than clinical, surgical dissection. This is brought out in Diana Fancher's work on the Junction (Vol. 10), an area that I know from childhood. Both the interviewer and the informant must have a heart-to-heart discussion before the machine is turned on.

Your questions about Canadian content is unimportant. What is important is to foster oral history in Canada.

Your final question is a challenge for you as Editor. If the *Journal* is only going to appear annually, it won't have the immediacy and timeliness of other methods of communication.

Your biggest problem is trying to make the various governments understand the critical importance of oral history. In my case, many of the old-time roughnecks and drillers are dying off. There has been virtually no support from Government. The Petroleum Industry Oral History Project went through a two-year funded program, 1983-85, but the results were on balance quantity but not quality.

You, as Editor, will have to create interest across the country. There is too much technical attention to creation of oral history and who should be the custodians. The tapes belong to everybody, and if there is more popular understanding of this, they will provide a much more essential function to our past history. The Glenbow Museum furnishes an ideal repository for the tapes. There is no reason why other organizations cannot be repositories. It is just a question of organization.

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Dear Editor:

I am taking this opportunity of responding to your request for feedback from *Journal* subscribers. To overcome stagnation, and to discover a more functional path, I welcome this opportunity of commenting on the future of this publication.

By training I am essentially an ethnographer who spend the first 16 working years with government. In 1979, I took the road less travelled by and became a consultant, photographer, writer, cross-cultural tour leader, and host. Presently I am updating one of my books for the Canadian Museum of Civilization: *Traditional Doukhobor Folkways Revisited*. And apart from that I am preparing for the 100th Anniversary of Doukhobors in Canada which is to be celebrated nationally in the mid-1990s.

I am mentioning my personal experience, because much of it, in relation to minority groups, involves doing oral history/ethnography. Besides my anthropological training, I have learned much from others along the way, including ideas from journals like your own, or the Society of Applied Anthropology, and the Canadian Folklore Studies Association. In addition, I have attended conferences by these and other associations.

The COHA *Journal* is valuable in this wider context of things, a process that prevents us from becoming too insular. In order to make this publication more relevant and dynamic, I would suggest the following:

1. *Include some photographs* to enhance our visual senses and in the process to encourage us to use well our senses of seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling, and tasting.
2. Introduce a substantial *Professional Exchange* section that would serve as a sharing of experiences by the membership. Things like: what exciting projects am I involved in and a description of the innovation or uniqueness of the research process; requests for professional assistance; how I used my senses creatively in my work; evaluative and critical comments about ongoing papers and book reviews; and challenging ideas to think about.
3. Introduce another section on *Oral History and Ethnography in the Global Context*. Tie this in to the fact that we are all rapidly approaching the 21st Century. Stimulate people to evaluate and orient their present habits to fit the next century. Leave no stones unturned. Prepare for the new era.

Do you think that these three sections, presented in *perestroika* fashion, would disorient the membership enough to stimulate them to leave their lethargic or stagnant state to one that is more active and participatory?

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