

MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE MEETING

held in Ottawa

on January 30, 1978

The President, Jane McCracken, was unable to attend the meeting due to illness and Vice-President Neil Rosenberg took the chair in her absence. After the approval of the agenda, the Executive moved on to the second item of business.

2. C.O.H.A. Conferences

The future of C.O.H.A. conferences was discussed with the view towards changing two fundamental procedures that had governed the Association during its recent past. The first dealt with the electoral procedure, specifically the frequency of elections, which had previously been held on an annual basis during the business meeting at each conference, in accordance with the constitution. It was the feeling of the Executive, however, that elections should henceforth be held every two years and it was recommended that an amendment to the constitution be made in order to effect same. One reason for this decision was based on the past difficulties experienced in receiving nominations for executive positions both by

the Nominating Committee in advance of the electoral proceedings and from the floor during these proceedings. It was thought that spacing the election of officers over a two year period would permit an increase in nominations and thus a more consistent turnover on the Executive.

Following on this discussion, the Executive voted to postpone a proposed meeting with the Learned Societies until 1980, a decision reached in the first part because of the short time interval between the 1978 C.O.H.A. conference and the Learned Societies conference scheduled for Saskatoon in June of next year. A second reason, and one of greater fundamental importance to the C.O.H.A., was the Executive's agreement to establish a conference every other year instead of continuing with the annual format as in the past. This policy was seen as obvious and complementary to the decision to hold elections on a biennial basis. The fifth C.O.H.A. conference in Toronto this autumn will thus be followed by the conference in association with the Learned Societies in 1980 and the biennial format will continue, with or without the Learned Societies, unless the policy is reassessed at some point in the future.

In addition to the election procedure, two other considerations influenced the Executive in their recommendation concerning the frequency of conferences. One related to the increased cost of travel while the other reflected a desire to expand the regional presence of the C.O.H.A. above and beyond that accomplished through the conference format. To this end, it was voted to establish an annual agenda where a conference would alternate in every other year with workshops held on a regional basis. This was proposed with the understanding that the members of the Executive would help to co-ordinate the workshop scheme in co-operation with other interested groups and that several workshops would be conducted in different areas of the country during the alternate year when a conference was not scheduled.

3. Canada Council Rebuttal

The Executive discussed this subject with the view towards supplementing the President's formal rebuttal to the Canada Council regarding that body's unfavorable assessment of the C.O.H.A.'s terms of reference as a scholarly discipline and the inherent threat of curtailing support for the Association's travel assistance grant. In view of the President's absence, the Executive officers present offered their ideas and suggestions on the matter with the intention of later informing the President on the results of their deliberations. Early in the discussion on this topic, the question was asked as to whether the President had received materials by Bruno Jean of Laval University designed to support the C.O.H.A.'s contention of its scholarly significance. This was affirmed and discussion moved on to the international and interdisciplinary nature of oral history. It was agreed that this point should be stressed to the Canada Council and included in the President's rebuttal if this had not already been done.

The question raised by the Canada Council as to whether oral history was merely a technique that could be learned at home was discussed and it was agreed that technique led to theory which led into new perspectives and thus stimulated new kinds of research. Another point raised was that the kinds of documents created by oral historians constituted a new type of social history, and that writers such as Peter Stursberg were developing fresh perspectives in dealing with political history. Another good example of one whose techniques are important to the oral historian was that of Norman Lafleur who has published in ethnology and regional history. In addition, it was thought important to supply the Canada Council with good examples of bibliographic materials concerning oral history, especially since

the Council assessor had quoted only one article, and that a critical one. The Vice-President and Acting Chairman also made a point concerning the oral history course which he is giving in the Department of Folklore at Memorial University and which is being cross-listed by the Department of History. The French Language Secretary added that there were several publications presently used in schools based on the oral history discipline. Finally, it was suggested that the distinction between oral history as a functioning practice and oral history as a subject of study (documents, recorded sounds) should be made.

In discussing the letter of rebuttal to the Canada Council, it was agreed that it would be useful to publish the final text in the C.O.H.A. Journal. The question raised by the Canada Council assessor concerning the usefulness of conferences was then given attention and it was thought useful to describe the new format impending at this year's meeting as a response to such criticism. Further, the Executive thought it necessary to point out that the conference tapes sold following each C.O.H.A. meeting have done very well and serve as an indicator of the demand for information on the topics presented by those who were unable to attend such meetings. This type of response underlines one of the important functions of the C.O.H.A. which is, simply, to provide information about the theories and techniques of oral history to the many people who begin projects without advance knowledge of this discipline. This is accomplished through the conference format, through the C.O.H.A.'s publications and through contact at the local level, especially by the C.O.H.A. Executive. In this connection, the Executive felt it important to note that the Canada Council Explorations Program funds many thousands of dollars for projects with various kinds of oral history dimensions. In addition, other federal government programs such as Young Canada Works, Canada Works and New Horizons fund oral history projects or projects where oral history assumes a significant element. It is precisely these people and others in similar circumstances who need information and guidance in oral history theory and methodology, assistance which the C.O.H.A. is qualified to provide through the processes already outlined. It was agreed that this point should be made in the letter of rebuttal to the Canada Council. One final point concerned the assessor's apparent confusion between Sound Heritage, the journal published by the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, and the C.O.H.A.'s Journal. The Executive agreed that this should also be noted in the letter of rebuttal.

4. The 1978 Conference

The Executive felt that Toronto was a good site for the conference and agreed upon the tentative dates of Friday, October 13th and Saturday, October 14th.* The Executive was informed that the President had been in contact with Mr. Harold Moulds of the Ontario Medical Association who had offered his services as a local arrangements chairman. It was agreed to accept Mr. Moulds' offer and to give him freedom to pursue local arrangements for the conference with the qualification that the Executive would prefer a downtown location if possible. One sponsor that had been previously advanced was the Ontario Archives and the question was raised as to the facilities that would be available to the C.O.H.A. if this location was chosen. The Treasurer reported that Mr. Moulds had not been in touch with him but had been in contact with the President on the matter of local arrangements. While discussing this topic, the question arose as to the theme of the conference, and one suggestion was that of "Oral History and Education".

The matter of registration fees was then discussed and the Executive

*Editor's Note: The meeting will be held at the Skyline Hotel.

suggested that such fees should be lowered from \$25.00 to \$20.00 and that this latter sum could be broken down to \$10.00 a day or \$5.00 a half-day. It was also decided that instead of having a reception one night and a banquet the next, the reception could be dispensed with and only the banquet held. The location of the banquet would be left to Mr. Moulds. The Executive also considered a number of possible speakers for the banquet, but it was eventually agreed to once again check with Mr. Moulds for his suggestions.

The format for the conference was then discussed and, acting on a suggestion made by the President previous to the meeting, the Executive agreed to the following structure: panels on Friday, October 13; a workshop and business meeting on Saturday, October 14. Attention was then given to the composition of the panels in general and it was decided to plan for three per session such that if a panelist were to drop out, for one reason or another, the session would not become too empty. It was also thought that each panelist should be allowed twenty minutes and each panel ninety minutes, thus permitting adequate time for both introductions and questions. Titles for the panels were then considered and several suggestions were made. Two of these consisted of a discussion on copyright and legality of consent forms, with a lawyer participating, and a panel made up of interviewers discussing the interview experience. The French Language Secretary agreed to investigate arrangements for each of these possibilities. Another suggested panel would follow the proposed theme of the conference, "Oral History and Education", and would consist of educators who use oral history as a legitimate teaching technique. One possible participant in this session was the Ontario Educational Communications Authority. Members of the Executive then suggested names of a number of individuals who might be willing to present papers. It was also ventured that several members of the highly concentrated academic community in the Toronto area might be approached.

The workshop structure was then considered and the Executive suggested that there be three such workshops and that each be repeated three times in the time slots: 9:00-10:30 a.m., 11:00-12:30 p.m. and 1:30-3:00 p.m. The regular business meeting would follow the last workshop. The reasoning behind this workshop structure was simply that all those participating in this arrangement could attend each of the sessions. The Executive proposed that the first workshop be on the interviewing process and would include a staged interview or a situation where the participants would interview one another. The English and French Language Secretaries agreed to handle this particular workshop. A second workshop would concentrate on transcription and editing and would include discussions on such things as equipment costs, time and various problems associated with documenting the recorded product. The Vice-President agreed to chair this workshop. The third workshop would involve discussions and demonstrations on the storage and use of recorded material. One final consideration on the workshops was that of recording them. This, however, would involve equipment and, in fact, a number of equipment needs would arise through the presentation of workshops. It was thus suggested that Mr. Moulds be contacted about taping facilities.

5. The Editor's Report

Léo La Clare proposed that the Bulletin and the Journal be combined and that the resulting publication appear twice a year. Mr. La Clare cited rising costs and the heavy workload of producing two publications as the major reasons for this recommendation. He saw the combined publication as being one with a blend of news, short articles and substantial articles and suggested that the new format would be closer to the Journal than that of the Bulletin and would be printed on higher quality paper than either of these publications. Mr. La Clare projected that on the basis of printing 500 copies per issue at 70 pages, the cost would be \$950.00 or \$1,900.00 per year. This estimate, however, is higher than the present cost of

producing one Journal and three Bulletins. Suggestions were made in order to lower the estimated cost, including cutting back on the number of copies printed from 500 to 400 and reducing the number of pages per issue. It was pointed out that there would, in any case, be some reduction in mailing costs since the Bulletin costs \$.15 to mail while the Journal costs \$.30. By producing only two issues of an expanded Journal, the saving would amount to the cost of mailing one Bulletin per year. The new scheme would also reduce the Editor's workload from four deadlines a year to two.

In discussing the particular content for the Journal, the Executive first considered the President's suggestion that a workshop or technical column be included but the general feeling was unenthusiastic and it was eventually decided to ask the President to expand upon the idea at a later point. The Executive's lukewarm response was principally due to the fact that much of the technical information is out of date quite soon after it is published. The discussion on this subject continued for some time and one of the recommendations was that bibliographical references to existing technical information be included instead of the suggested regular column. Discussion then moved on to the schedule for the proposed expanded version of the Journal and it was suggested that a spring issue be published within the March-April time frame and an autumn issue in the August-September period. The Editor reported that specific content for the spring issue was all but finalized and would include a report on the present Executive meeting, early news on the fifth C.O.H.A. conference in Toronto, short articles and reviews, record reviews and four substantial papers. The autumn issue would also include four major articles but the remaining shorter contributions have yet to be finalized although there will definitely be advance information on the Toronto conference.

6. Public Relations and the Recruitment Committee

During the regular meeting period, the Executive discussed the role of Mrs. Daphne Bolestridge of the Native Brotherhood and her voluntary position in charge of the recently created Public Relations and Recruitment Committee. The President had previously corresponded with Mrs. Bolestridge on the subject and her willingness and enthusiasm to carry out this type of work was both appreciated and accepted on an informal basis. She had been supplied with C.O.H.A. stationery, envelopes and pamphlets for recruitment purposes and had expressed her hopes of augmenting the membership rolls considerably. The Executive decided that the present informal arrangement should be kept pending development of her particular role in association with the C.O.H.A. It was also felt that Mrs. Bolestridge would benefit by meeting the members of the Executive and in discussing the particular aims and functions of the organization. This was done later at a luncheon meeting with her in which possible areas of action on her part were also discussed. During the course of the meeting, Mrs. Bolestridge suggested the printing of membership cards but the idea failed to prompt much support from the Executive in view of the related costs and the somewhat dubious benefits that might result.

7. Executive Member Responsibilities

The Executive discussed the Vice-President's responsibility of regulating membership lists and forms and it was agreed that the present system of typed membership forms for the membership lists constitutes a somewhat confusing situation at times, especially with respect to renewals and cancellations. The Treasurer then agreed to develop a printed form with spaces for addresses, address changes and renewals.

8. New Business

The only item of new business not on the agenda concerned the process of countersigning Association cheques, a process which, although not always followed in the past, was still in the constitution and created the awkward situation of having to mail cheques back and forth. The Treasurer thus recommended that the constitution be revised such that this practice be suspended in order to streamline operations.

9. Treasurer's Interim Report

The Treasurer reported that as of January 28, 1978 the Association had received monies totalling \$1,130.10 and had spent \$509.48 of this total for a running balance of \$620.62. He then proceeded to make projected estimates for income and expenditures during the current year. The estimated income of \$2,355.00 was reached on the basis of membership renewals for 1978 including 175 individuals, 65 institutionals, 35 subscriptions and the sale of 15 copies of the Journal. In addition to this income, a rough estimate of added income was projected through new membership subscriptions and Journal sales (40 individuals, 10 institutionals, 10 subscriptions, 10 Journal X 2). The figure arrived at was \$530.00 and when added to the rough balance of \$550.00 from 1977 and the estimated income for 1978, the total projected income for the present year equalled \$3,435.00. The Treasurer pointed out, however, that this rough total could vary greatly depending on the number of renewals, new members and possible donations.

The expected expenditures for 1978 were then outlined and included \$95.00 for stationery and membership forms and \$1900.00 for two issues of the Journal. The Treasurer noted that the latter figure might be lessened if the number of copies and pages per copy were reduced as suggested during the discussion on publications. Mailing costs of \$230.00 were added to the printing costs such that a total projected expenditure of \$2,225.00 was anticipated for 1978. Subtracted from the estimated total income for the year, it left a rough estimated operating balance of \$1210.00.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

Gary Hughes
English-language secretary