Association Business / Affaires de la Société

REPORT OF THE CANADIAN ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE June 2-4, 1980

Richard Lochead, Editor of the C.O.H.A. Journal, welcomed delegates to the first session by noting that the present circumstances marked the first occasion for a C.O.H.A. meeting within the Learned Societies framework. He then explained this course of action followed a decision to that effect taken at the business meeting of the October 1978 conference held in Toronto. Mr. Lochead went on to state that until the Toronto meeting, C.O.H.A. conferences had been annual affairs. At that time, however, it was thought that the Association would benefit from meeting with the Learned Societies because of the multidisciplinary application of oral research. He continued by stating that it was therefore decided that a conference would not be held in 1979 and that the time period between October 1978 and June 1980 would be used instead to plan for the Learned Societies Conference. Mr. Lochead concluded his introductory remarks by noting that, in addition to such planning, a series of regional workshops and conferences were plotted and held across the country in 1979 to help relieve the absence of a national conference during that year.

Mr. Lochead, as Chairperson for Session No.1, then introduced Mr. Douglas Gibson of the MacMillan Company of Canada, and Mr. Rick Butler, author, in a session entitled "Planning and Publishing an Oral History Project". Mr. Lochead noted in his introduction that Mr. Derek Reimer of the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, who was also scheduled to present a paper during the session, had been forced to cancel because of work-related duties. Mr. Gibson, who spoke first, began by explaining his role as a publisher with the MacMillan Company and then noted two types of historical manuscripts which appear at his workplace on an irregular but familiar basis. The first type was that dealing with the local market and the second type was more general but of limited interest. His advice as a publisher was to combine elements of both types of manuscripts as had been done with the popular Salt Water, Fresh Water, which dealt with men and women across Canada who earn their living on the water. Mr. Gibson did note that a manuscript which focused on a limited subject area might be accepted as long as it contained an overabundance of excellent material from which a selection could be made. For the most part, however, a popular theme with a fairly wide scope stood a better chance for acceptance. Beyond that, Mr. Gibson stated that he looked for superiority in writing style, the author's ability to promote his or her book, and the availability of excellent photos. He also noted that he judges the research characteristics of the author when presented with a manuscript. In the context of oral history, for example, did the author travel that extra mile to get one more interview to solidify his research or embellish the narrative with important and interesting material? Or did he or she simply visit a senior citizens' home and take a rough sample of fifteen elderly people as basis for a publication? Mr. Gibson also stated that the ethical side of publishing material gleaned from interviews was monitored closely and that excerpts potentially harmful to the interviewee(s) were not allowed to reach print. Mr. Gibson then went on to explain the various stages in publishing an accepted manuscript, such as chapter themes, chapter order and editing. He concluded his presentation by explaining the final process involved in readying the manuscript for print, including author's preface, photographs and proof reading.

The second speaker in Session No.1, Rick Butler, spoke of publishing a work of history from the author's viewpoint. He explained that the inspiration for his work came from the Parti Québécois election victory in November 1976 and the reaction to

this by some English Canadians which approached hysteria. He stated that he was particularly upset by the way the media presented the situation and felt that some avenue should be explored whereby the average citizen in Quebec could make his or her views known. Mr. Butler continued by stating that a book on the subject and, particularly, a book which employed oral interviews as its major component, would best serve his purpose. His next step was to find a publisher who might be interested in such a concept. Once this was accomplished and a contract signed, research began. Mr. Butler explained that this phase proceeded geographically within the province and that his research focus was the recording of "salt of the earth" opinion from the common man and woman. Mr. Butler then went on to explain his working methodology, including average length of interview sessions, types of questions asked, number of interviews recorded and the follow-up work after research was completed such as transcribing and co-operating with his editor to both reduce and refine the collected material into a satisfactory book format. The final product of this work was entitled Quebec, The People Speak. After publication Mr. Butler had to promote his work, which involved a tour comprising many interviews and public appearances. The author went on to note that the Quebec National Archives and the Public Archives of Canada were both interested in his interviews and papers, a factor which relieved his concern about preserving the collected material. Mr. Butler concluded his address by stating that the research and publishing aspects involved in preparing a book of oral interviews did not differ markedly from that which is required to produce a written work, a viewpoint, according to the author, which is often misconstrued.

The second session of the afternoon was entitled "Recent Advances in Cataloguing Oral History Tapes". Chairperson Gary Hughes, C.O.H.A. English Language Secretary, introduced Mr. Dale Treleven from the State Historical Society of Wisconsin who presented a paper entitled "Demonstration of Time Access to Pertinent Excerpts (TAPE) System". Mr. Treleven introduced his topic by offering the opinion that a master tape recording of an interview is just as valuable, if not more so, than the printed transcription of the same interview. He then explained that the preservation of tape recordings in the United States was a less popular concept than simply producing transcripts from these recordings. He noted, however, that at present the expense involved in transcription made the preservation of tape recordings an ever more attractive alternative. This was not the case during the 1940's when recorded interviews were first being produced. The speaker explained that both tape recorders and tapes were expensive and primitive in those years and because of this, tapes were simply erased after transcriptions were made and used again. In addition, the cost of clerical labour was cheap, or as a more desirable alternative, the use of free student labour created a situation where the process of transcription became very popular. At that time as well, researchers and historians were not disposed towards tape recordings as source material and preferred instead the traditional printed or written sources. This attitude was encapsuled by Louis Starr at Columbia University who felt that the tape recording represented only the first draft of the interview. By the 1960's, however, opinions had changed. Mr. Treleven pointed to the improvement in recording technology, its lower price and therefore accessability, as reasons for this shift. At the same time costs for transcription were rising. Still, the use of transcriptions remained popular mostly because there was no alternate system for gleaning specific bits of information from tape recordings. The use of digital counters on recorders for indexing would not prove successful since these were not standardized. Mr. Treleven continued by stating that the development of multi-tracked recorders during the 1950's and their improvement since then formed the basis for the TAPE or retrieval system developed by the State Historical Society during the 1970's. By pre-recording a time code signal on one track and the raw field tape on the other, an efficient retrieval system could be enacted whereby with the help of other finding aids such as catalogue cards and an indexing system, desired information could be located as speedily and, perhaps more important, at a cheaper rate than through the transcription system.

Mr. Treleven then went on to explain more of the methodological procedures at the Historical Society and concluded that interviews need not be transcribed for preservation. He did add, however, that the TAPE system might itself become obsolete within ten years because of the development of digital recording.

This concluded the afternoon sessions and delegates retired until 7:30 P.M. when they reassembled to hear the keynote address of the conference delivered by Dr. Paul Thompson of the University of Essex, U.K. Dr. Thompson was introduced by Richard Lochead who noted that the speaker had written several books based on oral interviews including The Edwardians: The Remaking of English Society and that his address to the delegates was entitled "The Voice of the Past: Oral History". Dr. Thompson explored oral tradition and the fact that cumulative decisions over a time span lead to social and economic changes in society. He also noted that it was the popular moral order which affects human history to a greater extent than the formal mores that a society happens to establish. In speaking of social historiography in Britain during the past century, Dr. Thompson commented that its development or lack of same was hampered by the fact that most historians were male and originated from the middle class with values to match. He felt that the natural emphasis on male-oriented history tended to shroud the contributions made by women and especially the important and direct personal role they performed in bringing up children. These same historians, he explained, postulated that the birth rate in Britain had declined during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries because the working class had copied the middle class in this tendency. In fact, he stated, his research revealed that the movement of working class women to factories, especially textile factories, produced an ad hoc information situation with regard to contraception. In contrast, he noted, working class women servants of the middle class were, by and large, the most ignorant of contraceptive methods. Dr. Thompson concluded his address by remarking on the new information discovered as a result of the application of oral history research within the framework of Britain's social history and the fact that much of it would not have been discovered if traditional written sources only had been consulted. Dr. Thompson's presentation was followed by a lively question and answer period.

On Tuesday morning, Session No.1 was entitled "Oral History Methodology in Studies of Immigration and Settlement" and was chaired by Robert Harney of the Multicultural History Society of Ontario. Mr. Harney welcomed the delegates to the morning session and then introduced the first speaker, Dr. Keijo Virtanen, University of Turku, Finland, whose paper was entitled "The Use of Oral History in the Study of Finnish Migration". Dr. Virtanen introduced his paper by stating that the work he has been involved with at the Department of General History has related mostly to Finnish migration to North America. In terms of oral history, he noted that it was only one of several research methods available to uncover information concerning the phenomenon of migration. He explained that he employed both a macro (general) and micro (individual) approach to his subject area. In other words, the general approach was applied with the use of statistical data concerning migration while the individual approach employed separate interviews with those who had migrated and subsequently returned to Finland or those who had settled in a new country. Dr. Virtanen felt that both approaches were essential for a proper understanding of the migration phenomenon and, indeed, noted that the fact that migration history has a strong demographic and socio-historical dimension made the relation between statistical and oral data quite crucial. The speaker continued by stating that oral history could only be of marginal assistance in measuring migration as a mass phenomenon but in terms of motives for going overseas it offered an invaluable research tool. Dr. Virtanen concluded his paper by describing the physical setup in his department at the University with relation to its oral history research archives and related some of the statistical and individual findings made in the research project thus far.

The second speaker of the first session was Susan Papp of the Multicultural History Society of Ontario, whose paper was entitled "The Forgotten Generation: Canada's Hungarian Refugees of 1956". The speaker introduced her paper by noting that her research into the topic was based on interviews conducted with Hungarian-Canadians who emigrated to Ontario and, particularly, the Toronto area in 1956 as a result of Soviet intervention in their homeland. The tapes, together with others on the same subject, are stored within the oral history collection of the Multicultural History Society. She then entered into the findings of the project by stating that many stereotypes developed as a result of the refugee situation in Ontario and other areas of Canada. Some of these were that most of those who came were involved in guerilla activities against the Soviets, that many of the emigrants had it easy in their adopted country after they arrived, that most didn't work hard to succeed and that many belonged to the criminal element. The speaker laid the fault for such impressions, for the most part, on the media reportage of the situation between October 1956 and March 1957. She continued by stating that the Hungarians who came were refugees, not immigrants, and given the choice would have preferred to live in their homeland. She also noted that the United States was the more popular choice of those who left for North America and that those who came to Canada did so as a next alternative after the U.S. immigration quota was filled. Of the taped interviews conducted with a sample of these refugees who came to southern Ontario, she found that few of those who did take part in the fighting were willing to talk about it because of relatives still living in Hungary. In addition she discovered that only 2% of those who came to southern Ontario had any criminal record and those that existed were mostly for petty offences. The speaker referred again to the media, particularly the newspapers, as a source of much generalization concerning the refugees. Some of the bylines that appeared inferred that the refugees new-found freedom caused them to do whatever they pleased--report late for work or not at all, etc. The speaker stated, however, that the newspapers failed to mention the fact that many of the refugees acquired jobs on the lower end of the occupational scale such as harvesters and janitors while not infrequently possessing qualifications well in excess of that level. She noted therefore that newspapers were not that reliable a source in studying the refugee phenomenon. The speaker concluded her paper by stating that the 37,000 refugees who came to Canada had a larger impact than the 41,000 who settled in the United States, partly because of the per capita ratio and partly because of the outstanding efforts of Ontario and Quebec in receiving the refugees caused their population to be more concentrated (mostly in urban areas) than in the U.S.A. where they were dispersed across the country.

The third and final speaker of the morning session was Chris Gebhard of the Saskatchewan Archives Board and a recent employee of the Multicultural History Society of Ontario, whose paper related to the Society's oral history collection. Mr. Gebhard reported that the Society had recorded over 6000 interviews since its foundation in 1956. He noted that, while taken singly, these interviews might not reveal a great deal of information but that they do when taken en masse. He continued by explaining the methodology employed at the Society including the fact that researchers are contracted to conduct interviews and/or investigation of other sources and are chosen or matched by ethnic group. Such researchers make personal contacts in the language the interviewee is most comfortable with--the overall breakdown averages out at 50% in the English language and 50% in the mother tongue of the respondent. This average, however, does vary within groups. Mr. Gebhard stated that a researcher who is too close in his or her relationship to the interviewee may find quality information difficult to extract simply because the story or recollections may have been repeated to the researcher several times in an informal atmosphere and, as such, the repetition of this information in a more formal setting in front of a tape recorder may seem to the interviewee inhibiting and/or unnecessary. The largest ethnic group dealt with by the Society has been the Poles. Approximately 600 individuals have been interviewed across Ontario on a wide socio-economic range. The age of such informants has also varied widely, the

earliest interviewee having arrived in 1906 and the latest in the 1970's. Mr. Gebhard stated that testimony from these sources reveals, in general, disillusionment in the home country and/or a sense of adventure combined with pleasant or not so pleasant experiences after having arrived in Ontario. In that province, many found no work or work on the lowest scale during the Great Depression. Those who arrived in the 1950's were full of hope in their new surroundings but often found themselves, like their predecessors, at the bottom of the socio-economic scale. Mr. Gebhard completed his presentation by noting that many of these individuals were nevertheless able to rise in social and economic standing with hard work over the passage of time and that an increase in status, and therefore self worth, could be gained by competing within their own immigrant organizations.

The second session on Tuesday morning was entitled "International Approaches to Oral History Research" and featured Ronald Grele of the New Jersey State Historical Commission and Dr. James Morrison of the International Education Centre, St. Mary's University. Mr. Grele, also the Editor of the International Journal of Oral History, was the first to speak and his paper was entitled "Oral History Development: The United States Experience". Mr. Grele began by noting the somewhat unique development of oral history in the U.S., stating that in Britain, for example, a strong tradition of social history, and especially that related to the working class, has existed. In the United States, he noted there were many elements in the movement such as the populist tradition harkening back to the Federal Writers Project Life Histories and slave narratives. On the other hand, the elitist approach, as defined by Columbia University, also exists. Mr. Grele explained that these polarities often engender a rather sterile debate and he made the point that it did not depend particularly on who made up the interviewee population but rather what approach was taken by the interviewer which determined the result as an elite or non-elite interview. He stated, as an example, that one could produce a series of interviews describing the importance of societal elites by interviewing blue collar employees and using certain research tactics. He also stated that within these polarities different movements exist. In the non-elite camp are projects which seek to document working class history on very general lines and those which concentrate on community histories. On the other hand, the elitist tradition is divided between such efforts as the Columbia oral history program and the presidential libraries which are essentially archival projects and those commissioned by governmental and private agencies which seek to use the oral history interview as a method of understanding and influencing governmental policy. Finally, he noted, there exist many projects done by local historical societies, public libraries, school teachers and senior citizens' groups which fall between the two camps. He explained that such projects do not necessarily embrace history itself as the primary goal but may instead by aiming at a cross-generational understanding or therapy for the interviewee. Mr. Grele then remarked on the stand taken by Larry Goodwyn of Duke University who criticized oral history projects which concentrate solely on an archival base. He felt these represented not only too expensive a process but such interviews were inapplicable to the future and he raised the question as to what audience the nameless archival researchers were collecting for. He also felt that the only research of value, as far as oral history was concerned, related to that done in the interviewer's own geographic area. Mr. Grele, in commenting on this opinion, stated that Mr. Goodwyn's desire to limit enquiry to one's own area would eliminate potentially useful information that others might wish to hear. He also felt that Mr. Goodwyn's stated desire of returning oral history to a sole function of historical research was doomed to failure because of the wide variety of projects in existence and their lack of cohesion. Mr. Grele did remark, however, that funding agencies may themselves provide an answer to this lack of cohesion since they are becoming less and less willing to fund just any project and usually wish that the potential recipients agree to produce a book or other product before a donation is given. In addition, the Oral History Association in the U.S. has devised a set of standards for oral history research and more academic historians are

using this method than ever before. He concluded that the above factors together with the increasing international connections made by the American oral history movement will create a more homogeneous application of this method than the splintered and factious situation that presently exists.

The second speaker of the session, Dr. James Morrison, presented a paper entitled "The Griot Speaks: Oral History Methodology in Africa". Dr. Morrison commenced by noting that in the 1950's one historian stated that history only began with writing. The speaker, of course, argued that this limited history to literate society and wondered what place pre-literate society occupied under such reasoning since its history was and is entirely dependent upon memory. In Africa, and more particularly, Nigeria where Dr. Morrison conducted his work over a number of years, the history of the colonial period suffered distortions as a result of imperial rule. It was therefore necessary to rewrite Nigerian history from the British takeover in 1904, and since pre-literate society depends upon the spoken word, oral testimony became the primary research tool used to rectify this bias. Naturally, this method was also employed to document pre-colonial Nigerian history. Dr. Morrison explained that his work concentrated on the pre-colonial conditions in the country and how these changed after the British takeover. He stated that the griot or court historian in a village would be his first contact, especially for information on pre-colonial conditions. If this person was unavailable, however, a clan or family head was consulted. Dr. Morrison noted that he never began his enquiry with present concerns since the locals often thought he was a government representative and would be more than willing to voice their opinions about current governmental policies, etc. Group interviews were also conducted with between 10 to 30 elders of a village. Dr. Morrison explained that a tape recorder was not used in such situations because of its distracting influence. In addition, association with the village chief, like the government, was to be avoided since the local elders often distrusted this kind of liaison. They felt that the chief would distort the village history by exaggerating his own importance within its context. The elders, therefore, were best disposed towards imparting information in a group atmosphere. Dr. Morrison did note, however, that private interviews with individuals were sometimes held after a general session. In concluding his paper, Dr. Morrison stated that oral history within the African context has become legitimate. Through its use, it has permitted the griot to speak and be read both in and outside the continent. In addition, he explained, the methodology employed in Africa can be transposed to the Canadian experience with some adaptation, thus demonstrating that no method is mutually exclusive and that only through the process of exchange can the best oral research system evolve.

At the conclusion of this paper, delegates adjourned for lunch. The first session of the afternoon was entitled "Innovation in Documentation: The Role of the CBC in Oral History Research and Development" and the initial speaker was Bill McNeil, a CBC broadcaster. Mr. McNeil began his talk, entitled "Broadcasting Oral History", by explaining the beginnings of his fascination with oral history and tradition while growing up in Cape Breton. He then recalled the storytelling abilities of family members and nearby residents concerning such events as the 1909 Glace Bay coal miners' strike. Mr. McNeil continued by explaining that he carried this grounding of oral history and tradition with him when he was hired by CBC Sydney in 1950. His interest in this area eventually produced a series of interviews with senior citizens in Canada in preparation for the Centennial in 1967. These interviews then became the basis for a continuing series entitled Voice of the Pioneer which began on CBC radio the same year and is still continuing. In his selection criteria for the program, Mr. McNeil stated that he looked for features that are dramatic as well as entertaining. The speaker then proceeded to play several excerpts from selected Voice of the Pioneer broadcasts in order to illustrate this criteria. He also noted the educational and archival value inherent in doing the program and explained that program tapes were stored in the CBC

Archives. Mr. McNeil concluded his presentation by discussing the methodology employed while working in the field, including the tape recorders employed for this purpose.

The second speaker during the afternoon session was Mac Reynolds, an author and interviewer with the CBC who presented a paper entitled "Political History, Oral History and the CBC". Mr. Reynolds introduced his paper by explaining that he would be discussing his work with both the MacKenzie-Papineau Battalion veterans and Tim Buck, leader of the Canadian Communist Party. With relation to the MacKenzie-Papineau Battalion, Mr. Reynolds stated that he was not a member of the unit and therefore did not share their experiences during the Spanish Civil War. He nevertheless was interested in their story and made preliminary attempts to contact several of the veterans. A number were reluctant to respond and Mr. Reynolds explained that such reticence might have continued had he not been laying the groundwork for a biography of Tim Buck at the time. Mr. Buck had been contacted by Mr. Reynolds originally for information concerning the Communist Party's role in sending members and sympathizers to Spain. The speaker explained, however, that this liaison developed to the point where a biography of the leader through taped interviews was agreed upon. Because of this liaison, Mr. Buck reassured several of those veterans who had been reticent to meet with Mr. Reynolds that the interviewer could be trusted with any oral recollections or other material they wished to give him. When this word was transmitted, several multiple interviews resulted and, later on, veterans began to seek the interviewer out himself. Mr. Reynolds stated that there were about 150 veterans left in Canada and that they were divided into two age groups. One of these had a mean age of 70, had had military experience in World War I and used this to advantage in Spain. The second group had a mean age of 50, no military experience and were generally either in the labour camps or unemployed when they enlisted. Many enlisted from the west coast since the climate in that location was the most benign for unemployed men. Mr. Reynolds stated that the recordings done with the veterans have been placed in the CBC Archives. He also noted that he worked on the adaptation of transcripts from these recordings for a stage play on the MacKenzie-Papineau Battalion and that many of the veterans who were interviewed for the project were on hand to witness the performance. With regard to his work with Tim Buck, Mr. Reynolds stated that the interviewee gave a detailed account of the Communist Party's origins in Canada in 1921 and his attraction to and enlistment in the movement. Mr. Reynolds explained that he made sure that Mr. Buck gave his recollections and feelings of such incidents as the Nazi-Soviet pact and the Khrushchev revelations despite the fact that Mr. Buck was at first reluctant to do so. Mr. Reynolds also noted that it soon became clear that Mr. Buck didn't want the interviewer or anyone else interpreting his career as General Secretary of the Party and he therefore did a lot of work in preparation for the interviews. Mr. Reynolds concluded his paper by stating that once the interviews were concluded, the Party assumed control of the recordings and a biography was written. The final work was not, however, satisfactory to Mr. Buck and several of his associates and eventually led, in part, to their expulsion from the Party.

The third speaker of the afternoon session was Robin Woods of the CBC Archives in Toronto, whose paper was entitled "Aural and Oral History and the CBC: An Introduction With Illustrations". Mr. Woods began his paper by distinguishing between aural history, which he described as historical sound recordings, and oral history created by individuals or groups where the vocal recollections recorded are of primary concern. He felt that aural history was that designed for the ear and gave, as an example, the early recordings of radio broadcasts in Canada between 1919 and 1932. This recorded item presently numbers in the hundreds of thousands and about one fifth of the total has been catalogued. Mr. Woods stated that each day recordings of this type were added to the Archives and that it was his hope that more access to the collection would be afforded to scholars working in the area. He noted that one avenue currently being explored was the copying of portions of the collection for storage and use in the

Public Archives. Mr. Woods then demonstrated this recorded format by playing excerpts from, amongst others, Prime Minister Mackenzie King's 1927 Diamond Jubilee broadcast and war correspondents' reports between the years 1943-45. After these recordings were played, Mr. Woods explained that in 1960 the CBC decided to collect and preserve the best of its programming in some form of historical order and that this has been done. The criteria for selection included the degree of creative expression, historical accuracy and interpretation and sociological value. With regard to oral history as a function of programming, Mr. Woods stated that the first interview of this type on record was that of a survivor of the Birkenhead disaster in 1856 which involved the sinking of a Royal Navy transport in the vicinity of Cape Horn. A portion of this interview, recorded in 1941, was then played. Mr. Woods noted that during the 1960's there was a period of about five years where the CBC developed an oral history program outside of its regular broadcasting activities. The first segment of this consisted of approximately twenty hours of tape with veterans of the Boer War. This was followed with a variety of other oral history projects. By the end of the decade, however, funds for this type of outside activity were no longer available. There were a few exceptions to this policy, one being "The Voice of the Pioneer" which is still broadcast. Mr. Woods concluded his presentation by speculating on the future role of the CBC Archives, its programming component and a new initiative at the corporation entitled "Ventures" which will hopefully create and streamline material of historical importance as well as preserve it and make it accessible to scholars and the general public.

This concluded the Tuesday afternoon session whereupon delegates boarded public transit for a tour and reception of the Montreal Military and Maritime Museum on Ile Ste. Hélène.

On Wednesday morning, the first session was entitled "New Directions in Oral History Research". The first speaker, Stewart Davidson of the University of Ottawa, presented a paper entitled "Pioneers in Physical Education and Sport in Canada". Dr. Davidson began his paper by noting his initial dubious opinion of oral history, an opinion which gradually changed when the method was integrated with other sources in his work on physical education and sport in Canada. The speaker explained that he interviewed fifty pioneers in the field for his study and these have been transcribed, indexed, catalogued and deposited in the Public Archives. He noted that the study of sport within Canada's educational system has only been a recent phenomenon within the scholarly community despite the fact that it has had an important influence on Canadian society, especially on shaping the educational system itself. Dr. Davidson continued by stating that he undertook considerable preliminary study of the events or trends in Canadian sports history considered to be important and then matched individuals to these events in which they played a leading role. The speaker explained that many events or themes received treatment including the role played by the YMCA and YWCA, the development of the Canada Winter and Summer Games and the various legislative acts that have affected sport. The speaker then proceeded to describe his oral history methodology and followed this by discussing a number of his findings. He stated that in the years after World War I, only the Margaret Eaton School in Toronto and McGill University in Montreal offered physical education courses and these were only open to women. An excerpt from a tape relating to the establishment of the Eaton School was then played. Dr. Davidson also mentioned research done in connection with the Protestant and Catholic school systems in the Province of Quebec. He discovered that differences between the two systems were particularly notable with regard to the physical education programs of each. The Protestant school system was better endowed with facilities and teachers and, in fact, it was not until 1950 that gymnasiums as such were introduced into the Catholic school system. Dr. Davidson noted as well the interview done with a pioneer physical educator in northern Ontario who passed along his knowledge and encouragement to many of his students, several of whom subsequently

became physical education teachers themselves. Dr. Davidson concluded his paper by stating that the employment of oral history, at least in the current instance, provided an extra dimension to his study, especially in its "raw" recorded form as opposed to the transcriptions of the tapes.

The second speaker of the first morning session was Gaéten Gervais of Laurentian University whose paper was entitled "The Franco-Ontarian Institute's Oral History Project". M. Gervais prefaced his remarks by stating that the Franco-Ontarian Institute conducted the first phase of their project during the summer of 1979 and that it was his intention to describe the parameters of research and the methods used to conduct same. M. Gervais stated that research for the project concentrated on two main themes: the rediscovery of the daily lifestyle of another time and the work habits and attitudes within the social history of Franco-Ontarians. M. Gervais explained that the geographic bounds for such research was limited to central northern Ontario and that this consisted of about four hundred interview hours with hundreds of informants. The speaker noted that in order to accomplish this, a comprehensive system of filing and indexing was implemented together with the employment of a fairly detailed questionnaire. M. Gervais concluded his paper by stating that once the results of the project are fully documented, it is hoped the resulting information will provide an interesting picture of traditional Franco-Ontarian society as broken down into its ideological, social, cultural and religious components.

The final speaker of the first morning session was David Millar of the University of Winnipeg whose paper was entitled "Oral History and Social History: Researching Women, Labour and the Family". Dr. Millar explained at the outset of his presentation that it was intended more as a review of recent trends in social history, especially that involving working men and women, than it was a report on the speaker's own research and findings in this area. Dr. Millar proceeded to divide his presentation into five parts, focusing initially on union history, then the history of the unorganized, women as paid and unpaid workers, the significance of the family in the above subject areas and finally new frontiers for research, including rural history and the history of small towns. The speaker noted that the different research areas listed were, in fact, not that different on closer inspection and stated that the move to integrate studies such as those dealing with paid and unpaid female laborers and union and non-union workers should be continued and encouraged. Dr. Millar pointed to recent findings involving working class women which dispelled the assumption that they were all relatively unskilled and not machine-orientated or that they remained paid workers only until they were married and could settle down. Similarly, the importance of the family and especially kinship ties to labour recruitment and organization has been undergoing critical assessment recently and, according to Dr. Millar, should serve to demonstrate the increasing integration of these supposedly unrelated factors within the social history context. The speaker concluded that the use of oral history as a research tool was and is critical to these discoveries and new trends and, when combined with quantitative data, should result in a redefinition of the traditional way in which labour history is viewed.

The second session on Wednesday morning was entitled "Interdisciplinary Techniques in the Oral History of Labour and Business". The first speaker of the session was Dr. Jim Turk of the University of Toronto whose topic was "Surviving the Cold War: A Case Study of the United Electrical Workers of Canada". Dr. Turk began his paper by explaining that during the 1940's and early 1950's, anti-communism in the Canadian labour movement reached a fever pitch. This coincided with events in the United States where repression was more severe. It was a time when left-wing elements in Canadian labour became the target of governmental and private attacks. Left-wing union leaders were purged, membership restrictions introduced and left-wing unions destroyed. A major exception to this purge was the United Electrical, Radio and

Machine Workers (UE). Dr. Turk pointed out that the union nevertheless suffered. Its Quebec wing was decertified and its membership nationwide dipped from 21,000 in the late 1940's to 19,000 by the early 1950's. It did, however, survive, and did so due to a number of reasons. The speaker stated that, in the first instance, the union stressed rank and file participation from its inception in 1937. It recognized the importance of the stewards' councils and the meetings thereof as well as the connection between these councils, the union leadership and the rank and file. Secondly, the union published more leaflets and pamphlets than other unions and these contained social and economic analysis of present conditions. Dr. Turk stated that he focused his study on four locals--Hamilton, Peterborough, Brockville and Toronto. Two of these plants were operated by General Electric, one by Westinghouse, and the other by Phillips. The speaker explained that the UE had an annual convention and many meetings and that its structure, as noted above, was very democratic. The union leadership made sure never to disagree in public but worked out their difficulties in closed sessions. It also followed grievances judiciously and tried to avoid strikes. If these were unavoidable, the union attempted to limit these to the local level since it recognized that strikes could prove extremely damaging. Dr. Turk stated that during the height of the communist witch-hunt in the United States, the international local which was centered in that country, attempted to purge the UE leadership in Canada. This proved unsuccessful and was due in part to the fact that the "red craze" was less severe in Canada than the U.S.A. In addition, however, the officials and shop stewards of the union had become hardened and adept at handling red-baiting tactics and charges and the rank and file became used to hearing of or being subjected to such attacks. He also noted the fact that while the Communist Party was prevalent to an extent within the union, a democratic structure prevailed. Dr. Turk then commented on the role oral history played in his study and stated that this form of research helped to overcome the enormous bias of written evidence produced by the union. Leaflets and minutes of meetings indicated the result of decisions but not any disparity which existed on the road to those decisions. Newspaper reports were often not sympathetic and trumpeted company policy. The speaker, however, did state that he had difficulties in using the method. The first of these was who to interview. A list of shop stewards active in the 1940's and 1950's was followed up and it was discovered that two thirds of these men had passed away. This confronted the speaker at the outset with a systematic bias. In addition, of the one third sample left, only those who had been involved in events, either on one side or the other, could be relied upon. And finally, of these few, it had to be remembered that the inter-union, intra-union and management-union battles of the late 1940's and early 1950's were very bitter, tended to recall sensitive areas, and often provoked black and white recollections. Nevertheless, when combined with extensive archival research, "lengthy interviews with participants show how the structure and operation of the union, the nature of the electrical industry and its work process, and the character of the attack on the UE, allowed it to avoid the fate of similar unions during the Cold War period".

The second and final speaker of the session was Gil Levine of the Canadian Union of Public Employees whose paper was entitled "Documenting Public Sector Union Growth: The Role of Oral History". The speaker began his talk by stating that he had been on full time staff with C.U.P.E. since its foundation in 1963. As such, he explained that he wanted to document on tape those who were important to the Union's founding and, towards that goal, has been interviewing individuals fitting this description since 1977. He continued by stating that the material has been placed in the Public Archives for use by researchers dealing with labour history. On that topic itself, the speaker commented that the study of labour history has increased during the past decade. Its concentration, however, has been on private unions and not the public sector. Since this sector represents the largest single block of unions in Canada, it was the speaker's opinion that such history should be written and disseminated. He also felt (and, in his study, carried into action), that it was not necessary to interview

respondents long after a particular event or series of events occurred so as to ensure the proper amount of detachment and objectivity. It was his contention that interviews should be conducted while events were current and not decades afterward. He then pointed to his own example, stating that he was a participant in the history which he researched and, rather than a disadvantage, he felt this to be an advantage. The speaker then referred to some background information in connection with his study and particularly the fact that C.U.P.E. was formed in 1963 as a result of the merger of two public sector unions--the National Union of Public Employees with a membership of 50,000 and the National Union of Public Sector Employees with a membership of 30,000. He noted that leadership elements in the two unions had engaged in bitter debate, with each faction attempting to dominate the other both before the merger and after, up to 1967. A decade after a final peace had been established, the speaker began to interview the principal individuals on both sides and found that the bitterness had dissipated during the intervening decade. The speaker then reiterated his belief that interviews should be conducted as close as possible to the event or series of events in question. He then concluded his presentation with a profile of Patrick Lenihan with whom he recorded twenty hours of tape, charting his history and progress from the Irish Rebellion of 1917 to his membership in the IWW in the 1920's and his experience as a union and Communist Party organizer during the Depression and, finally, his involvement with public sector unionization in the 1940's and the National Union of Public Employees. Mr. Levine stated that Lenihan's "career reflects both the roots of the public sector unions in this country and the possibilities of oral history".

This concluded the Wednesday morning sessions. After lunch, delegates attended a joint session held in conjunction with the Canadian Folklore Association, entitled "Oral History and Life Histories". The first papers presented were from members of Memorial University's Folklore Department and they were, consecutively, Martin Lovelace, "Oral History and the Mythology of Newfoundland Settlement"; Laurel Doucette, "Application of Folklore in Historical Research"; Jane Dunsiger, "Oral History: Its Application in Cross-Cultural Research". The final paper of the session was presented by Debra Meeks of Mount St. Vincent University who met with the C.O.H.A. but read her study in this session because of its folklore connection. The title of her paper was "Stanley Collins and His Diary of Songs". She began her paper by describing Stanley Collins as a singer-songwriter from Scotsville, Cape Breton, who has composed over forty songs in a traditional manner. Inspired during his teen years, perhaps because both his natural and adopted family were musical, Stanley's compositions reflect the lifestyles and environment around the community of Scotsville. The speaker gave an example of this by referring to "The Beer Barrel Wedding", a Collins composition that was written about the good time the Scotsville people had at a local wedding reception. Besides the gaiety of some events, the more sombre side of life was also portrayed, such as the tragic deaths of local people. The speaker stated that Collins composed a number of these in ballad form using traditional structure together with a common stock of themes and images to flesh out the structure. Collins did depart somewhat from the conventional model in subtle ways but the traditional form remained a base in his compositions. The speaker concluded her paper by stating that Collins should be appreciated as both an artist and as an amateur folk historian because his songs reflect both the traditional folk song style and the life of the community in which he lived.

This ended the session format portion of the conference. At 4:00 P.M. the Association held its business meeting and the conference was brought officially to a close. It was felt that the sessions had been successful on the whole and the experience of meeting in conjunction with the Learned Societies was deemed worthwhile. Both the new executive and the delegates expressed their anticipation of meeting again with the Learned Societies at Dalhousie University in June of 1981.

Gary K. Hughes
English Language Secretary