

The Smith Report: Implications for Teaching and Studying in History

by John Lutz

While giving the overall Canadian University system a passing grade in his just published *Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Canadian University Education*, Commissioner Stuart Smith gave quality of teaching and the structure of graduate programmes, particularly in arts and science faculties like history, between a 'D' and an 'F'. The one man Commission of Inquiry was launched in August 1990 by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada to evaluate the ability of Canadian universities to provide the country with the knowledge and skill necessary for coping with the challenges of the 1990s and the 21st century. It is not a coincidence that the Commission's recommendations have a bearing on issues facing history departments in particular. Among those presenting oral or written briefs were several individual historians as well as the Canadian Committee on Women's History and the Graduate Student Committee of the CHA.

Smith's two main themes were quality of teaching and accountability. Smith reported that: **"Teaching is seriously undervalued at Canadian universities."** He found that: **"few steps are taken to ensure the acquisition and improvement of teaching among new and existing members of the academic profession and that "teaching excellence is not accorded the same importance as research publication"**.

To rectify this situation Smith proposes changes which would require individual departments, as well as graduate faculties to reshape their graduate programs. Smith stressed the need for pedagogical training as part of the doctoral degree and as preparation for teaching assistants. **"Every candidate for a PhD degree should be offered training in modern teaching methods and should demonstrate**

reasonable competence in the teaching function if heading for a teaching career. It should be obligatory that teaching assistants receive such training before being called upon to teach university students." In addition he states, **"Prospective new faculty should be required to demonstrate their teach-**

ing ability as well as their research proficiency when applying to be hired." The Commission also recommended **"that every faculty member, on hiring and at the start of each evaluation period be given the opportunity to decide... whether his/her evaluation will be based ... The Smith Report, p. 4**

Meta Incognita:

Canadian Museum of Civilization Announces Project to Investigate Frobisher's Voyages to Canadian Arctic

In a July 26, 1991 communiqué, the Canadian Museum of Civilization announced a Canadian-led international project to investigate archaeological sites in the Baffin Island area, once known as Meta Incognita, or the Unknown Shore. Named by Queen Elizabeth I, one of the expeditions' sponsors, Meta Incognita was visited three times between 1576 and 1578 by the explorer Sir Martin Frobisher.

After site visits by scholars from the Canadian Museum of Civilization, the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, Memorial University of Newfoundland and the Smithsonian Institution, a steering committee chaired by Professor T.H.B. Symons of Trent University was established in November 1990. The committee, formed to coordinate research activities and assess the preservation requirements of the sites, has been authorized by the government of the Northwest Territories to act in an advisory capacity with regard to the granting of archaeological permits. The steering committee is composed of historians, anthropologists and archaeologists, with representation from the Prince of Wales Northern

Heritage Centre, NWT, National Historical Parks and Sites, the Canadian Museum of Civilization and the Inuit community. Dr. William E. Taylor Junior, Director Emeritus of the Canadian Museum of Civilization will act as the Committee's coordinator for the project. *... Meta Incognita, p. 5*

Inside

Conferences and Calls for Papers ...	2, 6
Co-op History at U of O	5
Heritage Test	3
Graduate Programmes Handbook	10
Important Charge to Travel Assistance Policy for 1992 Learners	8
In Memoria	4
Miscellany	9, 11
News from the Field	6
NHSG Field Trip	4
1992 Learned's at Charlottetown	2
1993 Learned's Themes	3
Prizes and Scholarships	7, 8

History's Co-op Program: Small but select

The following article was edited from an October 4, 1991 article in the University of Ottawa Gazette by Alexander Wooley.

While most associated with higher education are familiar with the extensive commitment of engineering and science faculties to co-operative education or "co-op" programs, perhaps fewer can count themselves so well-informed about the University of Ottawa's History co-op program, one of the first of its kind in the Arts in the country.

Begun in the fall term of 1988 by professors Jean-Guy Daigle and Paul Lachance, the program remains the former's responsibility, as both its co-ordinator and "his baby." From the modest beginnings of just three applicants to this fall's crop of twelve interested students, the history co-op concept has carved a niche for itself through stressing a certain exclusivity. Says Daigle:

"We have a high degree of quality in our program. Seven students will be accepted this term. Our standards are high: honours students usually apply at the start of the second year, with a minimum GPA of 6.0 and 54 credits to their name. They must also have two letters of recommendation from professors in the department and have taken at least one methods course."

Advantage to the co-op student include valuable work experience gained, the opportunity to forge contacts in the workplace, financial benefits, and a further bonus, peculiar to the location of the program in a bilingual region: **"improved language skills."** But the path is not always rosy and Daigle concedes two disadvantages: **"It takes them five years to get their degree (working four rotating work terms), and these kids never get any holidays!"**

Daigle usually sees a student and meets with his supervisors some three or four weeks into the student's work term. Co-op students are required to submit a 15-20 page report at the completion of their work terms, describing the new skills learned and how they are better historians for their efforts.

To the employer goes a student possessing the qualities exemplified and developed by a history undergraduate program:

research skills, powers of analysis, the ability to sift through information to find the pertinent, and the capacity to write effective letters and well thought-out reports. Until now, most of those employers have been federal government departments and agencies, but Daigle is hoping to see this base broadened in the very near future to include the private sector.

Of the future for history, as indeed for all Arts co-op programs, Daigle is guardedly

optimistic: **"With the cuts in the federal government, we have to be careful. Our students will face increasing competition from other universities (particularly Waterloo and Sherbrooke), students and agencies, for a smaller number of jobs. But though we have concerns for the future, we will survive. We do not want to get too big: we must keep the program small and emphasize our quality."**

Meta Incognita

from page 1

While the Frobisher sites, first identified in 1861 by American explorer Charles Francis Hall, were briefly investigated by Royal Ontario Museum archaeologist Walter Kenyon in 1974 and by William Fitzhugh of the Smithsonian Institution in 1981, no major archaeological investigations have yet been undertaken.

The Frobisher sites are relevant to a number of issues of broad national interest to Canadians, including Arctic sovereignty. Frobisher's expeditions represent the beginning of the search for the Northwest Passage, one of the foundations of European interest in Canada generally, and of Canada's claim to possession of the Arctic Archipelago specifically.

The project will also shed light on the early exploration and settlement of Canada, and the exploitation of its natural resources in commercial ventures. The Frobisher expeditions, motivated in part by the explorer's mistaken belief he had struck gold, are believed to be one of earliest ventures by Europeans to mine metals in North America. They are therefore also relevant to the history of European exploration of the New World, particularly the history of Elizabethan navigation and mining.

Intercultural relations between the indigenous peoples and European explorers and settlers is another major area of research interest. Frobisher's final expedition, in 1578, included an attempt to establish a colony of 100 men, (England's first North American colony) on Kodlunarn. (The name Kodlunarn is Inuktitut for "White Man's" Island). Given evidence that

memory of the English visitors survived for at least three centuries in Inuit oral tradition, researchers hope to use oral interviewing techniques to investigate whether the Frobisher expeditions had any significant effect on Inuit culture.

Preservation of an important national historic site is also a priority. Kodlunarn, declared a national historic site in 1964 by the Canadian government, is in need of protection. Most of the material evidence retrieved from Kodlunarn by Hall, for example, was taken outside Canada and has already been lost. Sightseeing visits to the island during the past few decades, a developing tourist industry, vandalism, and natural erosion are putting the site at increased risk.

The Meta Incognita Project is funded in part through participating institutions and partly through private scholarship. Work on Kodlunarn, or at other sites in the region where Frobisher mines or settlements were located, will be conducted this summer by researchers from the Canadian Museum of Civilization, the Smithsonian Institution, and several Canadian and American universities. Oral history research among the Inuit is foreseen for next winter, and a later phase of the project will involve UK-based scholars in archival study of untapped sources.

For further information on the project, contact Stephen Alford, Special Projects Officer, Directorate, Canadian Museum of Civilization, 100 Laurier Street, P.O. Box 3100, Station B, Hull, PQ, J8X 4H2. (819) 776-7127.