

## WILSON GIFT BOOSTS CANADIAN HISTORY AT MCMASTER

*H.V. Nelles, L.R. Wilson Chair in Canadian History*

A multi-million dollar donation by Lynton Ronald (Red) Wilson, McMaster University's Chancellor and noted businessman-philanthropist, will transform Canadian History at Mac over the next five years. The Wilson gift, matched in part by the University, will expand teaching and research capability and support faculty efforts to reposition the field of Canadian History within the emerging Global History framework.

McMaster University is fortunate to have as its Chancellor and major benefactor L.R. "Red" Wilson, who is also a strong supporter of Canadian History. His initiative and contribution sparked the formation of *Historica*. For the past five years he has funded the Wilson Centre and Professorship in Canadian History at McMaster. And he has provided major funding for a new Liberal Arts building and programme at McMaster. The renewal and substantial increase in his commitment to Canadian History at McMaster will take the form of the L.R. Wilson Institute for Canadian History. With its own resources the Institute will sustain a Wilson Chair, an independent research programme, and new undergraduate courses. The Institute will also support postdoctoral, doctoral and masters students.

This academic year Stuart Henderson, the first Wilson Postdoctoral Fellow, joined the faculty in the Department of History at McMaster specializing in Canadian History, Nancy Bouchier, Ken Cruikshank, Ruth Frager, Michael Gauvreau, Richard Harris, Viv Nelles, John Weaver and David Wright. For next year the Wilson Institute will soon be advertising opportunities for two postdoctoral fellows as well as two teaching fellows, and will provide additional scholarship support to graduate students at the MA and PhD levels.

The Institute will sponsor a small, self-directed research programme related to its mission. It will also be able to create partnerships with other research organizations for special projects and conferences.

The Wilson Institute has as its mission the rethinking of Canadian History within a globalization framework. This perspective involves studying the ways in which Canadians have contributed to and been influenced by transnational or supranational phenomena such as international migration, Diaspora politics, religious movements, changing conceptions of human rights, gender and civil society, popular culture, epidemics, wars, and global finance and trade, to take just a few examples.

Continuous engagement with the world across many fronts has been an important factor in shaping the unique and changing culture of Canada. External influences have been selectively absorbed, resisted and domesticated. Canada and Canadians have in turn projected images of themselves and made distinctive contributions to this global social, political, economic and cultural exchange. Canada, if not born global, was reared between empires and certainly has become a global entity. At McMaster we want to rebuild Canadian History to reflect that more directly.

We will go well beyond the old Canada in World Affairs approach to Canadian History, and the more recent immigration-driven multiculturalism paradigm. We want to focus our research and teaching efforts at understanding the many cultural, technological, economic and social linkages that have an impact upon our internal relations and provide the channels through which Canadians interact with the world.

We intend to foreground a Canadian history of interactive transnational engagement. In doing so we think we will write a history for ourselves that will travel better and connect with other histories in the emerging global history frameworks. We hope too it will be a national history not of celebratory exceptionalism but rather of critical comparability.

Globalization has not only changed our lives, embedding us in a deeper international matrix as the current global financial and economic crisis shows, but it is also reshaping the way we think about history. We must make our place in that broader narrative. This is an opportunity to be seized with enthusiasm and thanks to a generous donation from a great believer in Canadian History, L.R. Wilson, McMaster University over the next five years will be doing just that.

