REPORT ON THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE STATE OF CANADIAN BIBLIOGRAPHY

Most of you at this meeting will at least have heard of the National Conference on the State of Canadian Bibliography, held last month at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver. Although it is too soon for a final appraisal of this Conference, it was and is of such great importance to Canadian bibliography that a report on it to our membership at this time is essential. I notice several members present this evening were also at the Conference; perhaps they will bear with me, but their comments on anything I mention, or neglect to mention, will be most welcome at the end of the meeting.

The Vancouver conference was the first of its kind in Canada, and was held from 22nd to 24th May. The Conference Organizer was Professor Anne B. Piternick of the University of British Columbia School of Librarianship, sponsors of the meeting, and UBC were our hosts. The Conference had taken two years to plan, and funds were provided by International Book Year (through the Secretary of State) and the Canada Council. Over 200 Canadian bibliographical specialists attended, with representatives from a few other countries, and including about twenty speakers on national, regional, subject, and form bibliography, as well as a number of discussion leaders. It is gratifying to report that many of these speakers and discussion leaders are members of our Society.

This unprecedented assembly of bibliographically-minded people (with a few notable absentees who were unable to attend) had been invited for the specific purpose of presenting papers on, discussing, and identifying desiderata in, the present state of Canadian bibliography. It was recognized that the compiling of bibliographies is a solitary occupation, and there was a lively concern for the important opportunity the occasion presented. As a result, the Conference released a torrent of ideas, complaints, and suggestions. Some twenty-four papers were presented, interspersed with several intensive discussion periods, in morning, afternoon, and evening sessions, over the three-day period. Recommendations were formulated after each paper, and these were edited in a first draft, typed, and distributed (with astounding speed) by the Committee on Resolutions and Recommendations, for comment at the final session. This was followed by a resounding summary and concluding address by Professor Roy Stokes, head of the UBC School of Librarianship.

When in their final form, copies of the individual resolutions and recommendations will be forwarded selectively to the Secretary of State, the Canada Council, the National Library, the Bibliographical Society of Canada, as well as to provincial governments as appropriate, and to other influential bodies and individuals. The total proceedings were recorded on tape, and the highlights from

these tapes, as well as all the papers and the resolutions and recommendations, are to be published, as soon as they are edited, in the official proceedings of the Conference. The resulting volume will be a milestone in Canadian bibliography. It is fervently hoped that at least some of the brave resolutions will eventually be adopted: certainly the very magnitude of the Conference must have a profound effect on the future course of bibliography in Canada, and we are all deeply indebted to Professor Anne Piternick, the Conference Organizer, and Bill Watson her associate and a member of our Council, as well as Prof. Roy Stokes, Head of the School of Librarianship at UBC, and Basil Stuart-Stubbs, Chief Librarian at UBC and our Second Vice-president.

Many of the comments and suggestions made at the Conference were directed to the Bibliographical Society of Canada. In fact, we were second only to the National Library I think, in the number of such comments received. The usual suggestion was that our Society should undertake to fill some bibliographical desideratum, to which I generally replied that ours is a voluntary organization of busy people, who could only offer such spare time as we have available; that we have no headquarters building, no secretariate or paid staff, (though we do have a Trojan Secretary-Treasurer and a devoted Council), and no funds other than our membership fees. It was sometimes suggested that we should apply for funds, so that we could undertake more bibliographical work. Well, we *have* done of course, and we have had a little success with the Canada Council; but until recently the Canada Council was not receptive in principle to applications for support of bibliographical projects. It was also proposed that we establish regional or provincial bibliographical associations which would concern themselves with local needs and establish pipelines to our national and co-ordinating body. This is an excellent idea, and one I personally support, but it must be admitted that this too is not untried. Several years ago your executive Council named regional representatives for these very purposes, and so far as I know these representatives have not resigned. I'm not sure, however, because we don't hear from them very often! Another suggestion, this one made at the lively History session, was that our Society should interest itself in undertaking and co-ordinating an indexing programme. Nowhere was ignorance of our activities more evident, because of course we did have an Index Committee for several years, with Mr. Peter Greig as Chairman. It accomplished a phenomenal amount of work as a clearing house, in dispensing advice, as a pressure group urging publishers to provide more and better indexes to books, and in encouraging the indexing of journals. The Chairman arranged a seminar in Toronto, wrote numerous articles on Canadian indexing, and edited an indexing bulletin; but the Committee was ahead of its time it seems, and in the end the Chairman, upon whom the bulk of the work fell, ran out of midnight oil. However, Mr. Greig now has the title Indexer to the Society, so the idea is not dead; it can be revitalized at any time if there is sufficient interest.

What these various suggestions reveal is that the work of our Society is not widely-enough known. Perhaps we should have an active publicity Committee. Perhaps, too, an occasion as exciting as the Vancouver Conference stimulates more mental than manual activity: it is easier to propose than to dispose. Unquestionably we could use a larger membership, to share the burden of work to be done and to provide funds to bring numerous worthy projects into

publication. I am happy to say that as a result of the Conference a dozen persons have indicated an interest in becoming members. Perhaps there are some of you here this evening who are not as yet members and who may wish to support our cause? If so, we have application forms at the ready!

Through the courtesy of Queen's University Library, a few copies of the Report of the Committee on Recommendations and Resolutions, in its interim form, have been made especially for this meeting tonight, and I hope most of you now have one. When the Report is in its final form, we hope to arrange for a copy to be sent to each one of our members. For the present, I would like to draw your attention to those recommendations directed specifically or inferentially to the notice of the Bibliographical Society of Canada.

Firstly, a separate resolution, expressing the feelings of the entire Conference, calls for the establishment of a permanent National Advisory Council on Bibliographical Services for Canada. This agency should be broadly representative of academic, library and bibliographical societies (that's us!). We would be represented on the Council. It was pointed out by an Australian at the Conference that a similar body already exists in his country, called the Australian Advisory Council on Bibliographical Services, and that this Council has regional Committees right across that country. The major functions of this proposed Council would be identifying needs and assigning priorities for bibliographic projects, recommending worthy ones for funding, and assisting in the national co-ordination of activities through a clearing-house.

One recommendation (no.4) is that the Canada Council and the Bibliographical Society of Canada explore jointly methods by which the Council might support bibliographical endeavour and the publication of Canadian bibliographies. We have already taken up this Recommendation with Mr. André Fortier, Director of the Canada Council.

It is urged (no.13) that the National Library of Canada or some other appropriate national organization (our Society not specifically mentioned) undertake publication of a bulletin on Canadian bibliography for the purpose of making short bibliographies and other material of bibliographical interest available. I think this is an excellent proposal, but I should point out that the BSC does issue a small occasional Bulletin already, and the problem is to get members to send in their news!

Further on (no.17), it is proposed that the Bibliographical Society of Canada be pressed to establish the organization and procedures necessary to "the complete indexing of retrospective newspapers and periodicals". I've already commented on that rather tall order, though undoubtedly such indexes are desperately needed.

Finally, under the General heading (no.60), it is recommended that the Bibliographical Society of Canada, or a continuing Conference on Canadian Bibliography, should maintain a consultative body or else a register of bibliographers, for the purpose of aiding and advising those embarking upon bibliographic or indexing projects. Well, the advisory work of our late Indexing Committee has already been mentioned. As to a register of bibliographers, our membership list, published from time to time in the *Papers*, might serve this purpose. Or, perhaps we could publish the names of bibliographers who are prepared to find the time to act as advisers. I suspect though, as with the

other recommendations, that supporting funds will have to be found if we are to expect any practical results.

In conclusion, I would like to suggest that some thought be given to the possibility of members forming bibliographical work groups in each province or region, dedicated to putting the recommendations of the Conference into effect: by encouraging others, by the example of their own efforts, and by forming pressure groups seeking to influence provincial governments and other bodies. Eventually, these working groups might form themselves into provincial bibliographical societies, supporting the aims and objectives of the national society at the local level.

I have already spoken too long, but I hope this has given you an intimation of the work of the National Conference on the State of Canadian Bibliography. If anyone has questions or comments, I shall be available at the end of the meeting. Perhaps others who attended the Conference might also stay behind, to answer any questions you may have.

WILLIAM F.E. MORLEY