

# Canadian studies

Canadian Study Centres, programmes and regional groupings in the UK.

CSWG = Canadian Studies in Wales Group

LCCS = London Conference for Canadian Studies

SWCSG = Southwest Canadian Studies Group



As the *CP Empress of Scotland* steamed up the St. Lawrence River towards Montreal, two sixth form students from Britain stood on deck and watched the city they had only read about become a reality. They were discovering Canada for the first time, turning text-book descriptions into first-hand experience.

Although visiting Canada from Britain was somewhat unusual in 1957, studying the country was not.

However, over the next two decades, the study of Commonwealth countries would slowly decline in the UK, as attention shifted towards the developing world, the US and the rest of Europe. The Canadian baby would disappear with the imperial bathwater.

In recent years, however, that decline has been dramatically reversed – largely through the efforts of people like the two visiting sixth formers, who have maintained connections with Canada and who have been closely involved in setting up formal programmes of Canadian studies in the UK.

Today Canadian studies helps to promote an

understanding of Canada in Britain. It does this primarily by encouraging and supporting teaching, research and writing about Canada in the UK's universities, colleges and polytechnics; by bringing together Canadian and British academics in collaborative ventures; and by introducing Canadian dimensions into Curriculum Development projects in secondary schools.

## Investment worthwhile

The formal structure of Canadian studies can be traced to the mid 1970s, when the Department of External Affairs in Ottawa began an academic relations programme in countries, like the UK, which were Canada's major international partners.

In Britain, Canadian government representatives, senior public figures, Canadian and UK bankers, industrialists, and academics all agreed that an investment of time, energy and money in a Canadian Studies programme would do much to increase interest in Canada, and to revitalise the relationship between the two countries.

The result was the Foundation for Canadian Studies in the UK – an educational charity, recognised by both Canadian and UK tax authorities. It has raised funds from the provinces of Alberta, Nova Scotia and Ontario, from the private sector, and from the Canadian government.

At the same time, the British association for Canadian Studies (BACS) was inaugurated as the learned society for Canadian studies in the UK, and a flagship Centre of Canadian Studies was set up at Edinburgh University.

In addition, the Canadian High Commission in London established its Academic Relations Section with a ten-point programme to support Canadian studies in the UK. This section works closely with the Foundation, with BACS and with Canadian Study Centres, Regional Groupings, and Programmes that have since been established in Britain.

## Growth been impressive

Over the last ten years, the growth of Canadian Studies has been impressive. From the one centre in Edinburgh, there are now eleven higher-education institutions throughout the UK formally committed to Canadian Studies.

During the same period, membership in BACS has increased four-fold, nine specialist groups have been set up, and a full time administrative coordinator has been appointed.

The driving force behind this growth has been the commitment of the people who have worked hard to create a community of 'Canadianists', and who have managed to establish the systematic network which has given Canada a much higher profile in academic and other circles.

Typical of their work was the inaugural seminar of the Newcastle Programme in Contemporary Canadian Studies which was held in March of last year. It was jointly organised by the University and the Polytechnic of Newcastle upon Tyne working closely with both Durham University and Sunderland Polytechnic. It was

## British Association for Canadian Studies (BACS)

