

\$10,000 to the Department of Slavonic Studies at the University of British Columbia for the year 1954-55.

Response from Students

The response from the student side to these new ventures in academic studies has been good, though not as great in some provinces as in others. The acid test is, of course, how many students elect Slavonic courses (language, literature, history, geography, institutions) for serious study over at least one full year. In the University of British Columbia the results obtained have been gratifying, not less than four hundred "elections" of this kind being made every year. Of these a substantial per cent do serious work in languages (chiefly Russian), and a number of honours graduates have gone on to do higher studies elsewhere. On this account the writer feels justified in setting down rather more in detail what is going on.

During the last nine years the University of British Columbia has added to the curriculum of the Faculty of Arts eleven courses on Area Studies of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Some of these subjects are: The Cultural History of the Slavonic Peoples; Central Europe; The Economic History and Geography of the U.S.S.R.; Slavonic Literature in translation; The Peoples of the U.S.S.R.; The Theory of the Soviet State; The Structure and Organization of Soviet Planning. Such Area Study courses are designed to familiarize more Canadian students with the general background of the nations of Eastern Europe, and of course they lay heavy stress on the U.S.S.R. Basic to this, however, the Department of Slavonic Studies, consisting today of a staff of eleven full-time teachers, offers up to six years of instruction in the Russian language—including the M.A. degree—and four years of instruction in the Polish language. But the field of Comparative Philology and Linguistics is not neglected. Students *specializing* in Slavonic studies, as opposed to those who are taking courses as electives in a general Arts degree course, may and indeed must, study on a comparative basis several other Slavonic languages. There is a seminar extending over two years on comparative Slavonic linguistics which provides a theoretical reading knowledge of Czech, Slovak, Ukrainian, Serbo-Croat and Slovene.

National Interest Served

All this may seem a little ambitious, and one might perhaps ask: how is the national interest of Canada served by such developments? There is little doubt that it is well served. Canadians are increasingly conscious of the part their country is playing in international affairs and the position it occupies in the comity of nations; and with this conviction comes a recognition of the need for Canadians to broaden the sphere of their interests and knowledge. It is refreshing to encounter this, as one does constantly, in our university life. Moreover, most Canadian students are happily free from undesirable preconceptions about other peoples, and possess a healthy willingness to find out all they can about their neighbours. When it comes to the more specific question of demand for young people possessing a sound knowledge of Eastern Europe and principally the Soviet Union, the requirements have not been great, but they are already increasing, and the fact remains that at present the demand is higher than the supply of suitably qualified persons.