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HISTORY OF MEDICINE NEWSLETTER

The second issue of the newsletter of the Canadian Society for the History of Medicine, edited by Drs. K.B. Roberts of Memorial University and Jean Beaudoin of L'Hôtel-Dieu de Québec. is now available. The newsletter carries news of the society; this issue contains seven extensive abstracts of papers on Canadian medical history at the meeting in Saskatoon.

Short articles are also included. Our readers might note the brief account by Sylvio Leblond of "L'enseignement de la Médecine à Québec avant la fondation de l'Université Laval."

Copies of the newsletter may be obtained from the society, c/o Faculté de médecine, Université Laval, Quebec G1K 7P4.

ACROSS THE EDITOR'S DESK

Occasionally, we receive more than orders for back issues. In this month's mail comes a cutting from the New York Times (Sunday, 9 September) sent by Bertrum Macdonald of the University of Western Ontario. This article, "Amateurs Who Act like Professionals," by Ronald Gross, describes some of the recent American scholarly activity that is parallel to the rise of our field of the history of Canadian science and technology. In history, especially, the amateur has long been active, but the nonprofessionals have made significant contributions in a number of disciplines. As Gross points out, several new fields such as psychohistory, have begun with the work of private scholars who eventually built up an infrastructure (Journals, publishing houses, etc.) by themselves. In other areas, amateurs have long been employed by professionals (e.g. astronomy and natural science). Gross quotes Prof. Robert Stebbins, a sociologist at the University of Calgary, who believes that "Other fields have been benefiting for years from such amateur wings, ...[they] all use legions of nonprofessionals to help gather data. Why not us?" In our own field, the nonprofessional is probably the norm rather than the exception and we are uniquely placed to interact to both our benefits. Since there are so few professionals, we clearly have to build our own infrastructure together, and we professionals must lend a hand to the amateurs whenever we can, while being sustained by their enthusiasm.

* * *

Which brings us back to the problem of a home for 'Canadianists,' discussed in HSTC #11. On the initiative of Dr. G.R. Paterson, President of the Canadian Society of History and Philosophy of Science, there is hope of bringing together the executives of CSHPS with those of the Canadian Society for History and Philosophy of Mathematics, and the Canadian Society for History of Medicine in a meeting in Ottawa, hopefully in January 1980. The purpose is to explore the possibility of some form of union or federation of the three societies, to increase efficiency and to encourage joint local events. Both CSHPS and CSHM have strong contingents of Canadianists. It might well be worth considering that if such a federation can be formed, that a fourth wing, devoted to our field, be formed within the larger umbrella group. This would allow for joint activity but also allow for autonomy and disciplinary initiatives.

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