

German-Canadian Studies Newsletter

Volume 1 Issue 1

Editorial

"Help! I don't know who I am..." When I began my five-year term as Chair in German-Canadian Studies at the University of Winnipeg, I was quickly confronted with one startling fact: there existed about half a dozen versions of the name (and, by implication, the function) of this position. I quickly went to work trying to popularize the official version, only to meet with puzzled glances and skeptical looks. Now, a year and a half later, nothing much has changed. I am still receiving mail addressed to so many different chairs that I am starting to feel slightly schizophrenic (or like a furniture store, if you can forgive the pun). And only recently a well-informed member of the community in Winnipeg introduced me as the Chair in German Studies - once again.

So let me clarify:

No, I am not the Chair in German Studies. My position, although partly financed by German-Canadian philanthropists in Winnipeg, was estab-

lished under the federal government's ethnic studies programme - the Canadian federal government, that is. The Ger-



man Government does not in any way contribute to the Chair, although both the German Ambassador, Dr. Sulimma, and the German Consul in Toronto, Herr Fournes, have shown friendly interest.

No, I am not a member of the Department of German or Germanic Studies. I belong to the Department of History.

As a trained historian with some background in sociology, I teach history courses which incorporate some elements from other disciplines, such as geography or literature. The courses deal with immigration and ethnicity in a Canadian context.

This does not mean, however, that I am the Chair in Canadian Studies or Multicultural Studies either. My mandate focuses on German-speaking migrants and their descendants: their experiences as workers, settlers and citizens in Canada. The cultural background is

important.

For lack of a better term, we are speaking of "German Canadians." This does not mean that the Chair does not acknowledge, or respect, the very real differences between immigrants

from German-speaking parts of Switzerland, from Austria, Germany, eastern Europe, Russia or the United States. In fact, the Chair consciously encourages the study of different identities under the larger umbrella of "German." It is not the national but the cultural background that provides the unifying element.

Does that mean that the Chair teaches and publishes in German? Not at all. As I consider German-Canadian Studies an important element of Cana-

dian ethnic studies, I am encouraging publication of research in English or French. This is the only way we can share our findings with our colleagues who are studying other ethnic groups. We should try to communicate our knowledge to the largest possible audience among our fellow Canadians.

Finally, let me assure you that the Chair does not only serve the community in Winnipeg, or even just in Manitoba. Although (due to my teaching

commitments) I have not yet been able to travel as much as I would have liked, I will visit communities across the country in the future. My research certainly covers German Canadians anywhere in the country. The Chair is a national, not a local institution.

Questions? Don't hesitate to write. The correct address is : Chair in German-Canadian Studies, Department of History, The University of Winnipeg...

Publications

The latest volume of the German-Canadian Yearbook (14) is about to be published. Hats off to the folks who have kept this publication going over the years! Please support their efforts by purchasing a copy for your private collection or by asking your library to subscribe. For information please contact Dr. Hartmut Froeschle, St. Michael's College, 81 St. Mary St., Toronto, Ontario M5S 1J4, tel. (416) 926-1300 x3370.

Patrick Opdenhövel, Die kanadisch-deutschen Beziehungen in der Zwischenkriegszeit: Handels- und Außenpolitik 1919-1939 (Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang, 1993). Not an easy book to read - in the best tradition of German dissertations, this book is packed full of information and analysis, printed in an extremely tiny font. However, Opdenhövel's study is the definitive account of the relationship between the Dominion of Canada and Weimar Germany/ the Third Reich in the twenty years between the wars. Whether it is the reparations question of the 1920s, the barter deals of the mid-1930s, the German market for Canadian wheat or Prime Minister Mackenzie King's strange fascination with Hitler: this book satisfies the most voracious of academic appetites. Particularly noteworthy: the author acknowledges the link between international relations and the treatment of German Canadians (26).

Traugott Ochsner: Ein schweizerisch-kanadischer Auswandererroman, by Hermann Boeschstein (Bern: Peter Lang, 1992). This Swiss-Canadian emigration novel, written in the 1930s, is based on the experiences of the author, who arrived in Canada in 1926.

News from the Chair

In August 1994, Dr. Angelika Sauer was appointed to the Chair. She succeeds Dr. Glen Lich who has returned to the United States. Dr. Sauer is a recent



M. Zimmer, A. Sauer and W. Bleek in Winnipeg October 1995

graduate of the University of Waterloo; she also holds Master's degrees from Carleton University in Ottawa and the Universität Augsburg in Bavaria, Germany. Her area of expertise is international relations in the 20th century but she has also developed a special interest in Canadian immigration history.

Dr. Sauer teaches in the history department. Her course "Canadian Immigration and Settlement," which fits German-speaking immigrants in the overall picture of Canadian immigration history, is attracting an average of 35 students. A small and research-oriented third year seminar deals with German-Canadian identity as an example of ethnicity in Canada. In the winter of 1997, Dr. Sauer will offer an experimental 3rd year course called "History of International Migration: The German Experience" which explores the German Diaspora on five continents in the context of different migration patterns over the past two centuries.

Over the past 15 months, Dr. Sauer has attended several conferences. In February 1995, she was in beautiful Grainau, Bavaria, to present the conclusions of her dissertation on "Canada and the German Problem" to the Association of Canadian Studies in German-Speaking Countries. In late May 1995, she presented a paper entitled "The New Kid on the Block: German-Canadian Historiography in the Context of Canadian Ethnic Studies" to the conference of the German-Canadian Historical Association. A few days later she was back in

Montreal to present "Christian Charity, Government Policy and German Immigration to Canada and Australia, 1947-1952" to the annual meeting of the Association for Canadian Studies. In September she was invited to the joint University of Manitoba - Universität Trier conference to present a paper on "Canada and Germany in 1945." Two other papers on Canadian-German relations in the 1940s were delivered in Winnipeg and Ottawa in October and November.

A particularly pleasant event was the German-Canadian panel at the Biannual Conference of the Canadian Ethnic Studies Association in Gimli, Manitoba in October. Hans Werner, Dr. Wilhelm Bleek, Dr. Matthias Zimmer and Dr. Gerhard Bassler presented papers on aspects of immigration, adaptation, and identity formation. In a separate session, Bettina Steinhauser talked about Austrian immigration to Canada after 1945. These events were sponsored by the Chair, but their success is owed to the fabulous participants.

German-Canadian Studies in Winnipeg

Since January, Winnipeg's German-Canadian community has been treated to a new lecture series in the cultural centre, Treffpunkt Winnipeg Canoe Club. On every last Tuesday of the month, different speakers present informative yet entertaining lectures on a wide range of topics within the field of German-Canadian Studies. Dr. Gaby Divay started us off with

the fascinating real-life soap opera of author Grewe/Grove and his "wife" Else. Hans Werner got the audience thinking with his musings on history and memory, with illustrations from his interviews with ethnic German immigrants. Dr. Angelika Sauer followed with her thoughts on the "soul-fishing" (i.e. proselytizing) activities of Canadian churches among postwar immigrants. We are now looking forward to Dr. Manfred Prokop's April lecture on the hidden recesses of the Austrian soul.

Upcoming Events

One of the highlights of the German-Canadian Studies' academic year is the international workshop "German-Canadian Identity: Methods and Results" which will take place in Edmonton, Alberta on 4-6 October 1996. Initially the brainchild of Dr. Matthias Zimmer, DAAD Professor in Political Science at the University of Alberta, it is organized in conjunction with the Chair in German-Canadian Studies. A group of 15 academics and graduate students from Canada, Austria and Germany will meet to discuss methodological problems and empirical results. The goal of the conference is to stimulate new research, and to establish a network of experienced and junior researchers in the field. One afternoon of the workshop will be dedicated to an exchange of ideas with the German-Canadian community of Edmonton.

Research Projects

Hans Werner recently defended his M.A. thesis on Volksdeutsche postwar immigrants at the University of Manitoba. He is currently considering a Ph.D. in the area.

Alexander Freund, whose groundbreaking M.A. thesis on German immigrant women in Vancouver was completed at Simon Fraser University in 1994, is starting his Ph.D. at the Universität Bremen under the supervision of Dr. Dirk Hoerder.

Dr. Wilhelm Bleek has applied to the Stiftung Volkswagenwerk for a research grant to collaborate on a research project on ethnic German identity in Canada and Namibia.

Dr. Angelika Sauer has embarked on a comparative study of 1950s migrants from the Federal Republic of Germany in Canada and Australia.

Dagobert Broh has just completed his Ph.D. at Concordia University with a dissertation on "Aufbau", a German-American newspaper. Dagobert immigrated from Germany in 1937. He is 91.

WE WANT YOU! Maybe you don't know it yet, but that messy drawer, the box in the basement, your brain hold invaluable treasures for present and future historians. Help us preserve our heritage by writing down or recording your memories, and by not condemning any

of your old letters, diaries etc. to the dustbin of history.

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German-Canadian Studies in Cyberspace

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