EDITORIAL

The Journal of Canadian Studies: Still Committed to "Knowing Ourselves"

To concretely highlight the new partnership between the ACS and the JCS we are offering you the opportunity to better know the future objectives of the JCS.

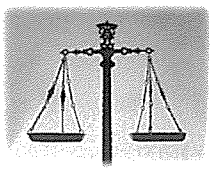
Over the last three decades, the Journal's experience has reflected the interdisciplinary mission of Canadian Studies and the larger "Canada" project. The Journal remains committed at the turn of the century to the cause of "knowing ourselves," in Tom Symons's memorable phrase. But the "ourselves" that we are trying to know has been and is changing rapidly. We at the JCS intend to track and analyse the changed Canadian project, to encourage, exhort and help the development of the appropriate interdisciplinary tools, concepts and approaches required to this end, and to explain and illustrate to ourselves and the world what it is that makes Canada unique.

What are the changing circumstances on which we want to focus? Take, for example, Canada's "nationhood." What is the meaning of the Canadian "nation" at the end of the millennium? Is it Macdonald's "national dream"? Trudeau's vision of a bilingual and bicultural nation? There has been a steady questioning and unpacking of the idea of the two founding nations, an increasing uneasiness about the bilingualism project, a schizophrenia about the meaning of distinct society, a dizzying expansion of Canada's ethnic mosaic, a remarkable political experiment in the north, and an acceptance that aboriginal nationhood is an idea whose time has come. Canada can more easily be characterised as a multiple nation and it expresses a set of nationalisms. Is Canada the first post-modern nation? What is it that others see in us that they find attractive or interesting? We want to help to develop adequate tools and concepts to understand this multiple nation, and to assist the evolution of discourses and institutions—political and otherwise—to serve this emerging reality.

Canada's recent economic experience can be conceptualised in similar fashion. Indeed, what is the Canadian economy? The parade has passed on the national project surrounding Macdonald's National Policy, as a result of the West's political economic muscle, technological change and the national embracing of internationalisation and free trade. The West played the advance guard in disrupting the postwar Keynesian consensus around the welfare state. As deficits, taxes, regulations and Crown corporations dissolve, the notion of the "public" Canada disappears as well, to be replaced by...? In the place of earlier visions, what has emerged are north-south trade flows, cross-border regional economic areas, and an internationalisation so intense (and periodically perverse) that Canadian governments cannot seem to manage their domestic economies and currency. Here, too, we need to develop appropriate interdisciplinary tools, concepts and approaches to analyse these changes and to suggest political economic alternatives.

What do Canada's citizens make of all this? Indeed, who are they? Increasingly, they are not members of our two "founding nations," as Canada has embarked on one of the world's most profound exercises in multicultural existence. This plays out increasingly in cities—and the reality of Canada's urban existence is one of the great unanalyzed dimensions of Canadian life. Race and gender issues loom larger in social and political reality, as does the place and role of aboriginals. More and more, our art, music, literature and theatre reflect these multiple Canadas and their nationalisms.

These are the themes, issues and challenges that we want to see reflected in the Journal's pages. We want the JCS to track the great transformation of the Canada project and to contribute to the development of a "Canadian Studies" with appropriate interdisciplinary tools and approaches. We want to contribute to the epistemological debates informing these developments, to advance the evolution of interdisciplinarity, and to firm the foundations of Canadian Studies. We want to shape the contours of the research setting, by presenting the latest developments and by mapping the terrain of future exploration. We want to engage in the pedagogic challenges confronted by teachers of Canadian Studies in their classrooms. These are the issues and projects that will be played out in the pages of the Journal over the next few years, particularly the millennium issues in 2000-01. ■



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For the JCS Board

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