LETTER TO THE EDITOR

November 10, 2003

Canadian Issues
Letters
ACS
a/s UQAM
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Dear Editor,

In their article, "Textbook Wars: Canadian Style," *Canadian Issues/Thèmes canadiens* (October 2003), textbook authors Margaret Conrad and Alvin Finkel modestly describe the history of their textbook, *History of the Canadian Peoples*, as being "almost as interesting as the history of Canada." Teachers and students are, however, the sole judges of the quality of textbooks. Yet we do question the affirmation that our colleagues make in their article: "If it is true that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, we realized that we had hit the mark when our major competition — Douglas Francis, Richard Jones, and Donald Smith, *Origins* and *Destinies* — subsequently came out with a new edition that mimicked our text in nearly every respect: illustrations, footnotes, selected readings, and historiographical debates, as well as more regional and social history."

Conrad and Finkel are correct in one regard. Our second edition did indeed include "illustrations, footnotes, selected readings, and historiographical debates" (debate boxes). But contrary to their accusation, we didn't get the idea of illustrations, footnotes, and selected readings, from them, as our first edition in 1988 already contained them. As for the debate boxes, they were new, but how could we copy the idea from their books, as our second edition came out in 1992, and their books only appeared in 1993, as the bibliography of their article clearly states? We continually revise our texts, and have included a new feature, Community Portraits, in our upcoming fifth editions, *Destinies* (December 2003) and *Origins* (early 2004).

Everyone has a right to an opinion, but especially as historians, it is imperative to get our facts straight.

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