



CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF

SLAVISTS

ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE des SLAVISTES

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT OF CAS

In accepting a second consecutive mandate last year, I set a number of what I hope were reasonably modest goals--goals which I would perhaps describe as "positioning." It will come as no surprise to anyone here that we are undergoing profound changes and these profound changes are occurring on at least two planes, making us as a profession particularly vulnerable. The first change is in our profession as a whole, both in East and West, where the fundamental political changes of the 1990s have created not so much a new "ball game" as a new playing field for which we have to (re)invent the game to be played. These changes come at a time when the post-educational system (both here and elsewhere) is itself undergoing no less profound changes, of which the fiscal realities (however devastating) are merely an external manifestation. To mix my metaphors, it is as if, in a three dimensional world (with the third dimension being our knowledge and expertise), two dimensions have been altered. Survival is the name of the game; adaptation essential. And for this communication and information are essential prerequisites to clear thinking and planning.

This process of gathering information began last year, has continued this year and will need to continue for some time. Last year the CAS Executive met in extended session to examine CAS as an organization, its role and place for us, its members. It was a lively, occasionally heated, discussion, one important outcome of which was the reaffirmation of the need for an interdisciplinary, national organization to which our scattered members could belong and which sponsored the dissemination of our work (along with that of others) through a journal and a regular conference. This view was expressed particularly strongly by those who were geographically isolated and, perhaps surprisingly, by some of those who needed an "area" home as a counterweight to their "disciplinary" home. That there were problems and issues, including depleted numbers, coupled with a number of people at Canadian universities who were eligible to be members, but for some reason were not, etc. goes without saying. In the area of graduate students, Connie Wawruck-Hemmett has done an outstanding job in creating a list of Canadians in the field, both here and abroad, and perhaps a similarly pro-active move needs to be made on the

"regular member" side. Nonetheless, the basic affirmation of CAS served as the basis for the other activities and initiatives.

The public process of examining the discipline in its specifically Canadian context began at last year's Learned's with a panel discussion that focused primarily on what is still called the "Language and Literature" component, even though that is broader than it once was. It is being continued with the session, organized by Andrea Chandler, at this year's Learned's devoted primarily to the "Social Sciences." This must be just the beginning. Hand-in-hand with these, more philosophical, discussions (though with some very practical issues) were some functional initiatives. Two years ago we were able for the first time to connect all the executive electronically. This has not only saved considerable expense and time, but has permitted the executive to discuss the various issues that arose, as they arose. A far more collective form of decision making was the beneficial result. This year a second electronic mailing list was set up, one for the Heads/Chairs/equivalents of "L&L" programmes across Canada. This is now in-place. As part of that process, data is being collected that will identify the status of this part of our discipline across Canada, including staffing, expertise and prognostications. Preliminary results are slowly coming into focus and the picture is not dreadfully encouraging. I can tell you that the viability of the discipline in Canada is by no means guaranteed and that some innovative ideas, such as cooperation in certain areas, should be considered very seriously. Some preliminary talk about cooperation at the graduate level has, in fact, already begun. Results of this survey will be circulated to the List and at least a synopsis will be made available to the general membership (see below). It is hoped that the existence of such a list will make consultation, discussion and, eventually, cooperation of various kinds much more a part of our existence.

A second element of this strategy was to set in motion the "electronification" of CAS. We are not yet anywhere near ready to consider an electronic version of our journal, but I am delighted to announce that, thanks to the efforts of Maxim Tarnawsky and Gust Olson, CAS now exists "electronically" on the World Wide Web. The initial site is at the University of Toronto, where you can visit our home page at www.utoronto.ca/slavic/cas and where you will find various pieces of information, including the CAS constitution (in its still unamended form), the Preliminary programme for this conference and several of the reports at this AGM including this one. Work is underway to put up the membership list, cross-references to other web-sites; over the course of this next year it is expected that an electronic version of the Newsletter, Books Received by CSP and, we hope, a Discussion Forum will be set up. Other projects being considered include a listing of Exchange Programmes, Research Opportunities and opportunities for support. A small committee, consisting of Maxim Tarnawsky, Gust Olson and myself, has been set up to plan this strategy and we urge you all to provide us with your ideas and input. With time, I hope that this cyber presence will not only help us with moulding our own identity, but will increase our profile around the world. Let us all make the most of it!

Let me conclude by thanking all those members of CAS, two executives as well as many ordinary members, who have been a great help over the last few years. I do not need to tell any of you that the pressures on each and every one of us have increased dramatically

over the last few years and therefore the help and advice that have been tendered to CAS are all the more appreciated. I thank you for the honour of having been able to serve you and I know that you will be in good hands with Joan DeBardeleben for the next two years.

Nicholas G. Zekulin