PRESIDENT'S REPORT

19th August 1979

Membership

The first year of The Oral History Association of Australia has been a period of vigorous, if uneven growth, providing a promising foundation for the future. In July 1979 membership was 165. State representation was: WA - 75; SA - 27; Victoria - 26; NSW - 25; QLD - 7; NT - 1, overseas 4 (Malaysia and Singapore). Membership is now around 200 and includes a large number of institutions such as libraries, archives, museums and tertiary institutions.

The point arises whether institutional membership should be separate from ordinary membership.

Branches

Branches have been formed in Western Australia and South Australia. A New South Wales Branch has been formed and negotiations are proceeding regarding its affiliation.

Activities

A successful conference was held at Woodloes, Cannington on 31 March 1979. The South Australian Branch held a well attended all day seminar at the South Australian Institute of Technology on 5 May 1979. An Oral History Workshop jointly sponsored by the NSW Branch of the Library Association of Australia and the Public Libraries Division of the State Library of NSW was held on 23 February 1979 in Sydney. It was well received although participation was limited to 22 persons.

Publicity

O.H.A.A. has been widely publicised in columns of Newsletters and Journals in Australia as well as UK, Canada and United States. It is my expectation that this National Conference will be attended by delegates from Sri Lanka, Kenya, Malaysia and Mauritius as well as all Australian States.

Newsletters

The Association has published Newsletters regularly. Two were published before the inaugural meeting and four since. In addition to the two Newsletter Editors, Mr Lyall Hunt and Mrs Jean Teasdale are working on the first issue of the Association's Journal. It is planned to be published before the end of the year and will include papers given at this Conference as well as book reviews, articles and letters.

Finance

The financial position of the Association is viable if not opulent. The main source of revenue continues to consist of members subscriptions. Among donations received this year I wish to mention $200 from Swan Brewery for use in Western Australia, $100 from The Folk Federation of Australia for administrative purposes, the gift of two tape recorders for use by Western Australian members and a number of smaller but no less welcome gifts. Finance presents one of the main problems of the organisation. During the first few months after the Association's establishment,
application was made to both Australia Council and W.A. Arts Council for grants in aid. Neither was successful and perhaps it is understandable when we have not established our credentials as a nationwide organisation.

Efforts to receive recognition and help from a funding body will have to be renewed in our second year. Success is more likely if we claim to represent the united efforts of oral history throughout the Australian Commonwealth. Until that time, it may be necessary for the national body to retain a larger proportion of subscription moneys than some branches consider ideal. Given the support of all branches we should be able to survive this crisis and be able to reassess our formula of allocation from time to time in the light of experience. The critical point is that this should not become an issue weakening and dividing the oral history movement at a time when we need to convince funding authorities of our strength and credibility as a deserving recipient of support.

Catalogue

There should be urgent and specific consideration of the question of a catalogue and directory of tapes, transcripts or work in progress co-ordinating work across the whole of Australia. To accomplish any sort of directory in Australia requires funding from outside sources and I hope this Conference may come forward with ideas of how this project may be achieved.

Constitution

The proposed constitution contains a proposal to split the functions at present carried out by the Organising Secretary and to create two posts - one of Secretary and one of National Liaison Officer. The proposal is that the Secretary should reside in the State where the National Executive functions, a procedure already adopted by the Australian Historical Association whereas the Liaison Officer would reside in any area and would cooperate with all States and Branches. [This was accepted - Eds.]

Some members suggest the Executive Committee is too large, however it was felt that in this first year at least, wide representation was desirable. The point merits discussion.

[Dr. Rob Pascoe addressed the Annual General Meeting on the draft constitution which had the endorsement of the Executive Committee. He then explained each clause and after much discussion, motions and amendments to the Constitution were carried. The new Constitution is now available.- Eds.]

Organising Secretary

The Association owes an inestimable debt of gratitude to Mrs Jean Teasdale for the sterling work she has put into the effective establishment of this Association. We are fortunate to have someone as capable and experienced at the pivot of our affairs at this time.

Acting President and Executive Members

I also want to thank, very warmly, Mr Lyall Hunt who stepped in as Acting President when Professor Reeves found it necessary to resign, and who has done a marvellous job. My thanks also to Professor Peter Reeves who was first President. My appreciation to Executive Members for their work. Thanks to Mr Graham Powell who continues to look after our interests in the UK, Mr Clive Moore in Queensland, Ms Baiba Irving in
New South Wales, Ms Catherine Santamaria in Canberra and Mrs Wendy Lowenstein in Victoria. My apologies to anyone who has been overlooked.

Conclusion

Upon my return from the UK, I find the Association has made a good start. It is an encouraging scene and I hope the second year is even better.

Professor Geoffrey Bolton
President
The Oral History Association of Australia