

Douglas:

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Jim

A NEWSLETTER for educators in Canada interested in writing and reading / theory and practice. Issue #1. September 1982.

This newsletter is offered to educators in Canada as a forum for intensifying the relationship between theory and practice in the processes and pedagogies of writing and reading. It will serve both informative and polemical functions.

We assume that its readers--most of them educators at post-secondary levels--seek to understand better the ways language (especially written language) is acquired, processed, and used. We assume that a primary motive for acquiring that understanding is to bring it to bear to improve the teaching of writing and reading. Finally, we assume that those who read (and contribute to) this newsletter are interested, more specifically, in such matters as these:

research into language-use processes, especially writing and reading;

theories of reading and theories of composing, and research into both;

the history, nature, and uses of rhetoric;

discourse theory, discourse structure, discourse analysis, discourse processes;

cross disciplinary approaches to studying the nature, acquisition, and uses of language and language processes--as, e.g., contributions from linguistics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, text linguistics, anthropology, philosophy [as, e.g., Speech Act Theory, Ordinary Language philosophy, semiotics], artificial intelligence, developmental psychology, cognitive psychology, and so on and on;

theories of, and research into, the processes of reading literature (as, e.g., reader-response [affective] criticism and its theoretical underpinnings);

the roles of language in learning and knowing.

In other words--those this time of **Chris Bullock** of the University of Alberta--the subscribers to this newsletter will be "interested in approaching writing and reading and literacy as serious subjects of interest in their own right, not just as "problems" or fodder for testing or objects of administrative technique". They will not "only want to hear pep talks or find out classroom

techniques" (Mike Moore of Sir Wilfrid Laurier University). They will not give credence to pedagogical practices not soundly and explicitly grounded in the best of research and theory.

This newsletter has been a long time coming. Russ Hunt (whose primary interest is in reading) and I (whose primary interest is in writing) started talking about its possibility some two or three years ago, after having attended and participated in several conferences in the States. What happened was that the more we got caught up in the energy of the "revolution" going on there in the fields of writing and reading / theory and pedagogy, the more we became aware--and frustrated--that the heat of that revolution was doing little to raise theoretical and pedagogical temperatures here in our Great White Academy. Educators in Canada, we felt, were not being alerted to the advances being made in theory and practice in the States, England, and Australia--primarily because our two major professional journals, A.C.U.T.E.'s English Studies in Canada and C.C.T.E.'s English Quarterly, were (for whatever reasons) not actively engaged in seeking the changes that seemed to us to be needed. Because the only way we could find out what our colleagues in other Canadian colleges and universities were thinking and doing was to talk with them at American conferences, we saw the need for a Canadian print forum that would allow us to exchange information and ideas more efficiently and less expensively.

Ironically and symptomatically, matters began coming to a head last March in San Francisco, when a group of us again wished aloud that we could communicate with one another by some means that did not involve crossing international borders. The actual decision to launch the project was reached in July when seven conferees making up a "Canadian Caucus" at the Wyoming Conference on Freshman and Sophomore English gathered around a picnic table to talk about what might be done. Their names: **Chris Bullock** (Alberta), **Anne Greenwood** (U.B.C.), **Russ Hunt** (S.T.U.), **David Reiter** (Cariboo College), **Jim Reither** (S.T.U.), **Susan Stevenson** (U.B.C.), and **Kay Stewart** (Grant MacEwan Community College). Following that meeting, Russ and I sent out a letter, asking people for suggestions and for names of people who might be interested in joining such an enterprise. The response was, I think, extraordinarily gratifying--and, again, symptomatic: This newsletter is being sent to more than seventy educators in Canada.

The next step, as I see it, is to continue efforts to reach all those in Canada who might share our interests. I therefore ask you to contact others you think might wish to participate, make copies of this newsletter and pass them on, and send me names and addresses of people you can't directly reach. (Also, send along any address corrections that need making.)

Since this is a newsletter--and a fledgling at that--please send your suggestions regarding matters you would like to see addressed, announcements you would like to see made, areas you would like to see covered, features you would like to see included. Here are some possibilities we have discussed and hope to incorporate:

I intend to compile, with your aid, some lists--of people with expertise who could serve as consultants; of journals that address ideas, knowledge, theory, issues vital to us; of conferences worth attending; of foundational books, articles and studies; and so on. (Send me your lists and recommendations.)

We will publish reviews of and guides to key items on those lists: Who are the really valuable consultants? What can we expect to find in which journals? Which conferences should we attend? Which books and articles should we read to help us ground ourselves in the best in current theory and practice? (Russ, on sabbatical leave this year, studying at Indiana University, has promised a "quick review" of several "energizing articles" he has come across in the last couple of months. I urge you to write to me to offer your own reviews of and guides to these things.)

You can expect announcements of all kinds--of books and articles forthcoming, if I'm told of them; of issues of journals that might have special relevance to our interests; of conferences and meetings; of the availability of expertise; and so on. (Send your announcements.)

I solicit and will publish descriptions of writing and reading programmes currently in operation or being proposed or implemented in Canada--or elsewhere, if their relevance is clear. What problems are they trying to solve? How are they solving them? What theoretical contexts govern their design? (Write to me.)

In the long run, we intend to self-destruct: What we need is a journal, really, but we expect it will take a year or two to get one going. (What are your ideas for a journal?)

In the meantime, perhaps this newsletter can help to provoke meetings and conferences that will allow us to address these matters from a Canadian perspective and in a Canadian context.

The list could go on, but I think it's time you had a chance to send your lists. Write. Send information, ideas, items to publish. Let's get this newsletter into its running shoes.

I'll be taking on the primary editing duties for this year, but we can expect to hear regularly from Russ Hunt. His current address: Tulip Tree House, Apt. 316, Bloomington, IN 47401.

I'll publish a list of subscribers in either the next issue or the one after that. Sometime before the end of the year I'll be asking you to send me a few dollars to help defray the costs of and mailing this newsletter. A month or so later I'll firm up the mailing list. For the time being, however, I'll send a copy of the newsletter to anyone whose name I receive.

Would you like to serve as "regional correspondent"? Let me know.

COHORT REPORT: **Nan Johnson** (U.B.C.) reports that (1) The English Quarterly, according to **Tom MacNeill** (one of EQ's new editors), is looking for more submissions relating to college/university issues; and (2) the co-chairs for both COTE 1983 (Montreal) and COTE 1984 (Fredericton) are "interested in receiving suggestions for themes, topics, speakers, etc., relevant to post-secondary interests". Space will allow only two addresses:

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McGill University
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Pauline MacKenzie (co-chair COTE 1984)
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Nan believes that the more suggestions that come from our quarter, the better. I agree, and I add that I also believe a newsletter such as this can serve as a clearinghouse for suggestions relating to such matters. Sit down, write them out, and send them.

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