

## MISCELLANY

*Edited by MICHAEL SACLIER*

### **Society of Archivists**

By the time this appears in print the results of the meeting of the steering committee of March 2 will have been distributed to the profession for discussion and (hopefully) the results of that discussion will have been fed back to the committee.

The decision on whether such an association should be one limited to or controlled by the professionals or one which is, like the **British Records Association** or the **Society of American Archivists**, open to all, can be made only by the professionals. Consequently the committee asked the corresponding members to limit meetings to discuss the matter to persons working as archivists, manuscript librarians, etc. In the event of a general association being approved by a majority of professionals attending these, the scope of future meetings will of course be extended.

The steering committee agreed on a timetable for future steps which while necessarily very tentative because of the uncertainties involved in drafting a constitution looks towards a general meeting in the spring to adopt a constitution and form an association.

### **Canberra Archivists' Group**

Canberra archivists have formed a group along the lines of the Sydney Archivists' Group to meet informally as opportunity offers to hear papers from members or visitors, discuss matters of mutual interest, and socialise. A well-attended first meeting was held on March 14 when Miss Thea Exley of the Australian Archives spoke about her attendance at the I.C.A. conference in Moscow in 1972, and visits to a number of Russian archives and the national archives in Paris and Ottawa. The second will be held on April 24 when the Group will welcome Mr. Stanley Sutton of the India Office Library.

### **The Lamb Report and the Future of the Commonwealth Archives Office**

A milestone in the history of Australian archives was passed on March 7 when the Special Minister of State, the Honourable Lionel Bowen, M.H.R. tabled the report of Dr. W. Kaye Lamb in the House of Representatives. The Minister's statement should be more widely available than the all but non-existent reports in the media and the text follows:

"For the information of honourable members I present the report on the development of the National Archives commissioned from Dr. W. Kaye Lamb, former Dominion Archivist of the Public Archives Of Canada.

"Having considered the recommendations made by Dr. Lamb, the Government has decided to upgrade and expand the operations of the Archives Office so as to develop a greater public interest in the wealth of historical material which forms part of our national heritage.

"To this end it is hoped during this session of Parliament to introduce legislation to establish within the Department of the Special Minister of State an organisation to be known as the Australian Archives and to be headed by a Director-General.

"The legislation will provide that the Australian Archives have as its broad aim the development of a National Archives system which, in co-operation with the States and other organisations will ensure the preservation of archival resources which document the history of the Australian nation and which are of national significance, research value or of general public interest. It will also provide for Australian government agencies advice and assistance for the efficient administration of archives, provide and maintain the public right of access in accordance with government access policy, and promote the utilisation of archival resources for informational, research, education, cultural and other purposes.

"The position of Director-General of the Australian Archives is soon to be advertised and will be open to persons both within and outside the Australian

Public Service. The position will call for a person with demonstrated capability in the establishment and administration of a new organisation, including the promotional activity necessary to present the Australian Archives as an organisation of interest and benefit to all sections of the community.

“When the Director-General has been appointed a small task force will be set up under his leadership to examine in detail a number of aspects of this new initiative. Other members of the force will be a senior academic, a State archivist, and representatives of the Public Service Board, the Department of the Special Minister of State and the Treasury. The task force will consult with appropriate authorities and within three months of its appointment bring forward for government consideration specific proposals which will include the further development of the building programme for the national and regional repository/retrieval centres, the assessment of the organisation and staff requirements for these centres, a survey of the needs and interests of users, review of salary levels for archivists and senior departmental registry personnel in the light of the changing archival activities and a programme for the recruitment and training of archivists.

“The aim of all these measures is to create an Australian Archives of a level comparable to that now provided by the National Library of Australia in its own field”.

Space will not permit a detailed analysis of the Lamb Report here although such is certainly warranted by the importance of the document. In general it strikes me as a sensible and restrained piece of work which may disappoint some as being less adventurous or imaginative than perhaps it might have been in some areas – for example on the development of the concept of a “National Archives System” – but there is no point in criticising the report which might have been when the reality is as positive as it is.

The report should be read and digested widely, by archivists, those who train them and academics who use archives. Unfortunately this is unlikely to be possible given the smallness of the edition. It will not be available for purchase from the Australian Government Publishing Service so, if you want a copy, write to the Commonwealth Archives Office. I understand the demand has been surprisingly heavy so, given the time lapse between publication of the report and of this note it would not surprise me if there were none left. Write anyway – we might see a second impression.