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# Second Congress of Translator and Interpreter Associations of Canada : an editorial report

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**THE SECOND CONGRESS OF TRANSLATOR AND INTERPRETER ASSOCIATIONS OF CANADA : AN EDITORIAL REPORT**

by LEWIS BERTRAND, New York

After an interval of eight years since Congress I, the Second Congress of Canadian Translator and Interpreter Associations was held April 26-27 at the University of Montreal, under the chairmanship of Jean-Paul Vinay. M. Vinay is head of the Department of Linguistics at the university and editor of the Canadian Associations' *Journal des Traducteurs*.

At the Congress numerous special and provincial translator and interpreter groups as well as translator and interpreter training groups were represented. Montreal and McGill universities, for example, are among the institutions that conduct training courses. The object of the congress was "Organization of the Profession."

Friday evening, April 26, the steering committee met to map out the work of the congress proper.

Saturday started with a plenary session, attended by some 200 persons, including a good number from Ottawa, out of an all-told membership of about 700. Each person paid \$7.00 admission.

The plenary disbanded shortly in order to break up into four committees or study groups, as follows :

1. *Organization of the Profession*. Chairman, Emile Boucher.
2. *Translator Training*. Chairman, J.-P. Vinay.
3. *F.I.T. Translators' Charter*. Chairman, L-Kos. R. Zubkowski.<sup>1</sup>
4. *The Conference Interpreter*. Chairman, Blake T. Hanna.

After a prepared luncheon at the university's *Centre Social* the plenum of 200 reassembled to hear the chairmen report on their committee sessions. Each chairman presented *vœux* and motions based upon the committee discussions. The plenum then adopted resolutions, among them that :

(a) A committee of delegates from each of the groups represented shall go on functioning after the congress, as a continuous coordinating committee, to further the work of unification.

(b) The Translators' Charter Committee shall prepare a re-draft for re-submission to F. I. T.

(c) A roster of Canadian translators and interpreters begun by M. Gabriel Langlais shall be brought up to date.

(d) The congress shall reconvene within a year.

Somewhere between times an intermission was called for the luncheon, then again for tea; and in the evening two buses took delegates to Le Chalet, overlooking Montreal, where everybody again had snacks, socialized, and was greeted by City Councillor Euclide Laliberte on behalf of the Mayor of Montreal.

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After late notice received from Canada, Dr. Gode appointed this reporter to attend the Second Canadian Congress as ATA observer; and Bernard Bierman followed suit by appointing him for NYMCATA. Toward the end of the second plenary your reporter was able from the platform to extend greetings to the congress from ATA and NYMCATA and to give an outline of their history and development. Canada ATA members Lise Laroque-DiVirgilio and Mr. E. Dezo asked your reporter to be remembered to ATA. At Le Chalet the presence of a New York observer was again pointed out and your reporter enjoyed a long chat with the Mayor's deputy.

The congress was conducted wholly in French.

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(1) Mr. David Fortin was sitting in for M. Zubkowski.

¶ **Commentary :**

(1) Jean-Paul Vinay revealed himself as a model chairman both at the plenary and committee level. All who asked were given the floor, some repeatedly; and they all observed just bounds of time and discretion in the presentation of their views.

(2) The congress stood for a uniformity of interest that contrasts markedly with the variegated pattern represented in ATA-NYMCATA. Except for references to outside languages made principally by this reporter in the committee on translator training, the only languages dealt with at the congress were English and French, the nation's official languages.

The bilingual situation that pervades much of Canada's daily life and thought makes it possible for a solid corps of language specialists to be employed on government, semi-governmental and corporation staffs, which in turn enables Canadian translator and interpreter organizations, located principally in Ottawa and Montreal, to enjoy, as some of them have done for decades, a vigorous existence based upon peculiarly similar concerns of the individual members.

This uniformity of interest which years ago caused provincial and specialized groups to organize can be taken as cue to point up in our own behalf the achievement of ATA, which, since as recently as 1960, has ingathered some 300 translators scattered over a wide geographical area, encompassing a spectrum of languages that includes, to mention a few, English, French, German, Russian, Greek, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, the Scandinavian, Hebrew, Arabic, Japanese, Tagalog and Swahili, with a vertical range that extends from commercial correspondence to the niceties of belles-lettres and the responsibilities of international diplomacy and space-age science.

(3) Noticeably absent in the objectives currently set by the Canadian congress is the goal of a Translator House and Library such as that put forward by NYMCATA, the American Translators Association's New York Metropolitan Chapter which came into being in 1962 in a campaign of just a few months that stressed the House and Library and attracted to it over one-third of ATA's total membership.

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¶ **Conclusions :**

In this commentator's view therefore a number of instructive conclusions can be drawn.

(A) From the Canadian congress ATA-NYMCATA can learn how an annual membership meeting can be made functional, with attention focused on professional and organizational theory, practice and growth.

(B) From the book of our Canadian fellows ATA-NYMCATA can well take a leaf for holding up to the attention of our USA university, foundation and government authorities — the latter national, state and municipal — so that they may appreciate the interest, recognition and support which their opposite numbers in Canada bring to bear toward the translator and interpreter as one who carries on a profession that is crucial and of direct public concern and interest.

(C) Accordingly ATA-NYMCATA should give crash attention to the creation of the Translator House and Library as an outstanding object lesson which the USA group can offer its compeers abroad, and as symbol, too, of the American translator's coming of age. From what I observed at the congress, if the Canadians were to adopt a like objective, as well they might, they would in all likelihood beat us to the line, unless we ourselves work in good earnest for a Translator House and Library as of now.

(D) While no single Canadian group today has the 300 members which ATA can boast, once amalgamation is achieved Canada will stand to ATA in the proportion of 700 to 300. Consequently both unity and numbers should be conscious ATA goals as well.

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Canada is engaged in bringing independent groups into a single fold. ATA, on the other hand, is essentially an all-national entity already. In spite of this difference in present structure, the congress raises the question whether the unified Canada group and ATA, each on its own, are not headed for an ultimate similarity of structure, distinguished by only secondary differences.

In other words, this report proposes a basic confrontation of method in ATA development from this point forward: whether emphasis shall be laid upon the creation of highly autonomous geographical chapters — Philadelphia (Delaware Valley), NYMCATA, Pittsburgh, Washington D.C., California, etc. — and whether the approach thereby should be to achieve a 500 ATA membership quickly, with a planned evolution toward an ATA national, which, but for some members-at-large, will be a unity composed of numerous live chapters, with the ATA Board acting as elders to oversee the whole for guidance and coordination.

Discussion of planning on these lines could start now and be made the crux of the program at the 1963 Annual ATA meeting.

I shall be glad if the desirability of such discussion will be apparent to a sufficient number who will make themselves vocal so that the ideas here presented may be implemented.

(New York, May 2, 1963).



## TECHNICAL TRANSLATION IN INDIA<sup>1</sup>

The importance attached by the founders of the Institute, 50 years ago, to reference work in scientific investigations resulted in a steady flow of books and journals to its Library, not only in English but in several other European languages: German, French, Russian, Italian, etc. Those in charge of the Library made it a point to build up a large collection of specialized dictionaries and other books of linguistic importance. It can be said that today there is hardly a subject in science and technology which is not represented on the Institute Library's list of specialized dictionaries. The book capacity of the Library has grown to 81,000 volumes and 1,460 current periodicals. Of the latter, 12% are in non-English languages.

With the growing importance for technical translations, it was decided to introduce special language courses in German and French to make the scientist more self-reliant and thereby reduce the pressure on the Translation Service. Students who were found to be proficient in translation work were included on the panels of translators set up for the various departments of the Translation Service. This dual activity, translation service cum instruction, has created a new situation in a scientific institution: even with a limited understanding of the language, the student is now in a position to read abstracts or follow entire

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(1) This is a short digest of a detailed report sent to us by the Indian Institute of Science in the relatively small city of Bangalore (c. 450,000), capital of the State of Mysore, Southern India. This report should prove interesting in that it reveals the importance of translation in a new independent country wishing to match the growth of the most modern countries in the world. — *Roger MOISAN*.