

GROWING PAINS: HOW THE BIRTH OF THE ENTOMOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA AFFECTED THE IDENTITY OF THE ENTOMOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF ONTARIO

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The histories of the Entomological Societies of Ontario and Canada are inextricably entwined. Both lay claim to the same founding story and early historical narrative¹, yet also maintain their identities as distinct organizations. Superficially, the history is simple: the Entomological Society of Canada (ESC) was founded in 1863, and changed its name to the Entomological Society of Ontario (ESO) in 1871. The name change reflected the geopolitical changes of the period (Ontario was one half of the Province of Canada when the society was formed and part of the rapidly growing Dominion of Canada when the name changed), as well as a pledge of annual financial support from the government of Ontario received in that year (Saunders 1883). Despite its new name the ESO continued to operate as a national body for almost eighty years, with branches across the country. However, in the period after the Second World War a number of members began to suggest that it was time for the formation of a truly national society. Thus, in 1950 the ESC was founded and began to fulfill its chief function: “to serve as a national society and as the parent association of, or as the link between, the other entomological societies in Canada” (Ozburn 1950).

The foundation of the new ESC effectively resulted in the demotion of the ESO to a regional society. Although other histories written on the subject indicate that this was a smooth transition (Spencer 1964; Holland 1966; Connor 1982), in this paper I argue that the appropriation of their role by the national society caused a great deal of conflict between the two societies as the members of the ESO were forced to reevaluate the purpose and identity of the Ontario society. I will show how this anxiety was manifested in disagreements between the parent society and its offspring over a number of matters in the period between 1950 and 1963, as well as how the ESO began to redefine its identity in the years after 1963. Specifically, I will examine the conflicts and issues surrounding the disposition of shared assets and the organization of annual general meetings, as well as the societies’ publications. This paper will also provide the first written history of the ESO in the years after the foundation of the ESC. It is not my intention to stir up old controversies or animosity, but to provide a written record of this period in the history of both societies – a record that I hope will prove to be both informative and interesting to its readers.

¹ See for example the web pages for each society, which contain the same description of their origins: *About the ESO*, online, no date, available at: <http://www.entsocont.com/> (accessed: 1 May, 2008) and *History of the Entomological Society of Canada*, online, no date, available at: <http://esc-sec.org/> (accessed: 1 May, 2008)

A Complicated Relationship

The foundation of the ESC created a society whose affairs were so entangled with those of the ESO that, much like a divorce, a legal agreement was required to sort out which society was responsible for what. The Instrument of Agreement, developed after much negotiation between the two societies, was signed on 1 November 1954 and applied retroactively to the activities of the previous three years (Ozburn and Baker 1954). The Instrument formalized a number of the arrangements that had been vaguely outlined in the original motion approving the formation of the ESC (Ozburn 1950). These included the point that the ESO should retain possession of its library, a collection of some significance accumulated throughout the life of the Society, as well as the periodicals received in exchange for the societies' publications. It also defined the understanding that membership in the ESC was compulsory for members joining the ESO. Its main purpose, however, was to clarify the responsibilities related to the joint publication of The Canadian Entomologist, an internationally recognized journal which had been published continuously on a monthly basis since 1868. Although it seemed clear that a journal with that title should be published by a national society, after having published it for more than 80 years the ESO was not ready to give it up completely.

By the end of the 1950s, the Instrument of Agreement, whose articles had been designed to help the ESC get off the ground, was causing a great deal of friction between the two societies and was in serious need of revision. In 1957, inspired by a conflict over the distribution of shared membership fees, a special meeting of the ESO Board of Directors was called to address some of the issues that had been "smouldering for years" (Dustan 1957a) between the two societies. The ESO found itself in a difficult position; they no longer wanted to be "tied to the Canada Society" (Dustan 1957b), but they also did not want to lose their share in The Canadian Entomologist. By 1958, however, the ESO was forced to admit that "for all intents and purposes the Canadian society had assumed full control" (Peterson 1960) of the journal. A revised Instrument of Agreement was developed in 1960, in which the ESO relinquished its rights as publisher of the journal but retained certain residual rights (Peterson et al. 1960). From the ESO's perspective, chief among these residual rights was the request that their historical role be acknowledged in perpetuity on the inside cover of The Canadian Entomologist; the particular wording of this clause was the subject of much negotiation (Peterson 1960).

It is likely that much of the conflict between the ESC and the ESO was due to their dual claim to the history of one of the oldest scientific societies in North America; it wasn't clear which, if either, had more of a right to it. This ambiguity stems from the fact that, although the organization had Ontario in its name for seventy-nine years before the founding of the national society, it spent the first eight years of its life with the designation of Entomological Society of Canada. Most histories of the subject written by entomologists take the stance that "though provincial in name, the Society was always national in outlook and objectives" (Holland 1966) and claim the whole record as that of the ESC. The only analysis written by a historian puts forward the opposite opinion; that the ESO was effectively only ever a regional society and that there was no "truly and officially national, professional scientific society" (Connor 1982) of entomology until 1960 when the ESC assumed full control of The Canadian Entomologist. Regardless of which viewpoint

is correct, it seems likely that “the frictions and conflicts of interest” (Dustan 1957a) between the two societies were not only result of the ESO being upset by the assumption of its national role by the ESC, but also by what it saw as the appropriation of its history.

One Hundred Years of Entomology

Shortly after the revision of the agreement between the ESO and the ESC, the societies were faced with another challenge to their harmonious existence: the celebration of the 100th Annual Meeting of the Society. In previous years, the annual meeting had been one of the most important traditions for the ESO. Special exhibits and scrapbooks were put together for the 25th, 50th, 60th, and 75th Annual Meetings², large celebrations were thrown for many of these events, including invitations to and participation by representatives of societies and institutions across Canada, the United States, and even the United Kingdom and Europe³. When the ESC was formed, it was decided that its annual meeting would always be held in conjunction with one of the provincial societies – the former branches of the ESO (Ozburn 1950). In its first ten years of existence as an independent society, the ESC held joint annual meetings with the ESO four times. In light of both this and their shared history, it is not surprising that the ESO and the ESC chose to co-organize the 100th annual meeting in 1963. However, given the already established disagreements and resentments that were brewing, it seems inevitable that the situation would end badly.

Celebration of the centennial anniversary became a matter of intense debate and controversy between the two societies, highlighting the underlying tensions between them. On the surface, much of the debate was about the location of the meeting. At the 1960 Annual Meeting of the ESO, the membership voted to hold the centennial meeting in Guelph, a place that many felt was “inseparably linked with the growth and development of the Society” (McBain Cameron 1962). The ESC centennial committee, however, felt that the meeting should be held in Ottawa, a “location in keeping with the importance of the event” (Holland 1961). The centennial committee presented and won support for their case at the 1961 ESC Annual Meeting in Quebec. The matter went back to the ESO membership at their 1961 Annual Meeting, and after “rather extensive discussion” (Holland 1961), ESO voted to keep the Guelph decision. This resulted in a flurry of angry letters between the board members of both societies, and a special ballot sent out to the membership asking which decision they felt should stand – Guelph or Ottawa. The results of the ballot were dramatic; the decision came in at 80 votes for Guelph and 81 votes for Ottawa, with two votes for Guelph coming in after the deadline had passed (Wressell 1962b). The centennial committee got its way and the meeting took place in Ottawa. The closeness of the vote, however, indicated that beneath the “whole contentious mess” (Wressell 1962a) of the location of the centennial

² Programs of many of the Annual Meetings are available in the Entomological Society of Ontario Collection, University of Guelph Archival and Special Collections, Boxes 9, 16 and 20.

³ For example, the scrapbook for the 50th anniversary celebrations included telegrams and letters of congratulations from 35 groups and institutions, and attendees of the meeting included representatives from an additional 56 different societies, institutes, departments, etc. Entomological Society of Ontario Collection, University of Guelph Archival and Special Collections, Box 19.

meeting, a deeper divergence between the two societies had formed.

Modern Times

In the decades following the centennial celebration, the ESO seems to have become more resigned to its “now wholly provincial” (Holland 1961) role. As the ESC went on to address matters of national policy in science⁴, the ESO became more concerned with keeping their society solvent and relevant. In 1969, the Society gave away one of its most valuable assets, the library it had negotiated to keep from the ESC, to the University of Guelph. It did this despite the original efforts it had gone through to hold on to the library, and despite the fact that it was “worth at least \$50,000” (McBain Cameron 1969), because the space the library was occupying in the Biology buildings was needed, and the ESO could not afford to move them elsewhere (Herne 1968). The ESO also became more interested in letting the ESC take on tasks that it might previously have handled. For example, in 1985 the Public Education committee decided to stop pursuing the idea of creating a brochure to promote careers in entomology because of the “feeling” that it should be “developed by the national society” (Anonymous 1985). Perhaps most surprising, especially in contrast to the issues of the centennial celebration, is that the 125th annual meeting of the ESO seems to have passed with a minimum of fanfare. It was not held jointly with the ESC, and the ESO secretary remarked in the January newsletter that the meeting had “a smaller turnout than usual” (Smith 1989) of only seventy attendees. Although there was a speaker at the meeting who reviewed the contribution of the ESO over the years, the President reported that “financial support was not found for a proposal to prepare a history of the Society” (Jaques 1989).

Financial problems became more critical for the ESO as it was forced to turn its secondary publication, The Annual Report, into the primary journal of the Society after letting go of The Canadian Entomologist for good. The Annual Report had never been as widely read as The Canadian Entomologist; its continued publication was carried out in large part to fulfill an obligation to the Ontario government. One of the stipulations of the 1871 grant from the Ontario Council of Agriculture was that the society must furnish an annual report on “insects injurious or beneficial to agriculture” (Saunders 1883). For this reason, the papers published in the Report were often less representative of the range of papers presented at the annual meeting than they were focused on economic and applied issues of entomology. In an effort to change this image of the journal and boost readership, in 1959 the ESO changed the name of the periodical to the Proceedings of the Entomological Society of Ontario and began actively to solicit papers of all types. It is not clear how closely the two events are related, but shortly after the name change, the Ontario Department of Agriculture proposed to withdraw its financial support (Boyce 1968). The ESO was then faced with the problem of supporting the cost of publication itself, which

⁴ For example, the ESC became heavily involved in the Biological Council of Canada in the 1970s and provided a number of briefs to the Federal Government on various issues such as the teaching of Biology in Canadian Universities and the publication of Canadian Science Journals, see Boxes 1 and 2 in the Entomological Society of Ontario Collection, University of Guelph Archival and Special Collections.

left them wondering if The Proceedings were “worth the struggle”, especially “since most entomologists publish elsewhere anyway” (Salkeld 1968).

Although the ESO had difficulty maintaining the relevance of and interest in its publication over the past thirty years, it persevered, in large part due to the fact that the Board has been “reluctant to break a series” (Ellis 1984). Once the society was responsible for the cost of the publication, it was forced to institute a page charge policy, requiring authors to pay for each page of their articles. This meant fewer manuscripts were put forward, and that one of the tasks of the editor was to constantly badger the membership for submissions (eg. Ellis 1982, Prévost 2002, Richards 2006). Fewer submissions made it harder to stick to the annual publication schedule; a variety of creative means to catch up were employed, including publishing in one volume all of the papers presented at annual meeting symposia (Anonymous 1985b; Kevan 1987; Bolter 1990), as well as dedicating volumes to particular entomologists (Anonymous 1985a; Richards 2007)⁵. In 1989, severe financial troubles obligated the ESO to solicit and accept donations from a variety of sources, including a large pesticide company, in order to continue publication of the journal (Kinoshita 1989). The most recent efforts to increase the profile of the publication included renaming it again in 2003, this time as the Journal of the Entomological Society of Ontario (Prévost 2003), as well as making it available online (Richards 2006). During all this time, “discontinuing The Proceedings” was “out of the question” (Marshall 1989), an attitude which emphasizes the ESO’s particular commitment to its history.

While much of the evident tension between the two societies appears to have dissipated after the 1963 meeting, the ESC continued to experience problems with the ESO that it did not encounter with other provincial societies, specifically related to the organization of joint annual meetings. One past president of the ESC did not hesitate to point out Ontario as an example of the “problems [that] do exist in some regions” (Cooper 1976). It was perhaps for this reason that the ESC executive voted in 1977 to hold a joint meeting with the Entomological Society of America in 1982 in Toronto without the support of the ESO, a decision that the Ontario society felt left them “out in the cold” (Smith 1977). Finances and annual meetings were another issue. Beginning with the 1963 meeting, the ESC attempted to establish a procedure for the sharing of profits and losses related to joint annual meetings (Munroe 1962). As of 2005, the ESC was still trying to formalize this process. Although most of the other provincial societies have abided by the “rather loose arrangement” (Shore 2005) of sharing half the profits of joint annual meetings with the national society, the ESO has not always been cooperative; after the 2001 joint annual meeting in Niagara Falls the ESO declined to give any of the profits to the ESC (Hunt 2001), causing much consternation in the national society. However, after the 2008 joint annual meeting in Ottawa the ESO gave 51% of the profits to the ESC (C. Scott-Dupree, personal communication), a sign of the generally amiable relationship that currently exists between the two societies.

⁵ Interestingly, volume 116 (1985) as well as volumes 137 and 138 (2006 & 2007) were all dedicated to D.H. Pengelly, former secretary and treasurer of the ESO. As far as I am aware, no other person has had volumes of the Proceedings / Journal dedicated to them.

Conclusion

All previous histories of the ESO and ESC have ended their narratives at or shortly after the celebration of the centennial; in reading them one gets the impression that the creation of the national society had been the ultimate goal of the ESO. This paper has shown that this was not the case, that it took at least a decade for the members of the ESO to adjust to their altered role as a provincial society and that occasional remnants of this strain remain in evidence to this day. Furthermore, the shared history and subsequently tumultuous division of the two societies created a distinctive connection between them that deserves to be celebrated and explored. This investigation should be of interest to those wishing to produce more complete histories as the 150th anniversary of organized entomology in Canada approaches.

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