

From the Editor

FOREIGN Language Departments and the "New Paradigm"—this was the title we gave to the ADFL summer seminars this year, Seminar East at Connecticut College in New London and Seminar West at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. I have just returned from Vancouver, and my mind is still churning with the many ideas and arguments encountered in the last two weeks as I went from sea to shining sea and back again. Something other than jet lag and postseminar euphoria is, I hope, responsible for the heady feeling that the North American continent is buzzing with energetic and clear-thinking foreign language professors who are contemplating and often effecting real and sensible changes in the way they teach their students, organize their research, and run their departments. I still hear the diverse voices of chairs from across the continent, in plenary meetings and discussion groups, over dinner (to say nothing of breakfast)—and on boats.

This was not only the year of the "new paradigm," it was the year of the boat. We talked in the sun, wandering around a three-masted bark in Connecticut's Mystic Seaport, and we walked the decks of our chartered paddle boat in the cool wet winds of Vancouver, taking cover to eat dinner and talk some more in the saloon, looking out at the splendid gray and misty mountains along the coast. Many of the papers given at the two seminars will surely appear in the *ADFL Bulletin* in the coming year, and perhaps some reports from the discussion groups, but there is no way to reproduce all the individual discussions, neither their atmosphere nor their content. I have no wish to preempt papers soon to be published, but I would like in this, my last editorial for the *Bulletin*, to sort out in a modest way one or two of the main threads of seminar ideas that are still weaving themselves into a pattern in my head and tying in with thoughts already expressed by writers in this issue of the *Bulletin*. One assuredly banal but overriding thought of my own, which you may put down if you wish to jet lag and shining seas: In this year of 1991, we are all in the *same* boat, and if we pull together in a sensible way, we shall not sink.

Lest you think you are dealing with a softheaded optimist, I direct your attention back to the title of the 1991 seminars: the discerning reader will note a degree of healthy skepticism in the quotation marks around the expression "new paradigm." When David Goldberg and I sat down last fall to consider suggestions made by the ADFL Executive Committee for seminar topics, we were surrounded by press cuttings in which the expression "a new paradigm in higher education" was being merrily bandied about. People had suggestions for restructuring all areas of the university, academic and administrative,

and some of the desired changes seemed to have a direct bearing on the work of foreign language departments—globalizing campus education, for example, and internationalizing the curriculum. Everywhere there were calls for general improvements in undergraduate education, including some explicit appeals to the foreign language departments of universities to do a better job of teaching foreign languages. In my Winter 1991 editorial, I voiced some of my own misgivings about the real-life readiness of university administrations as well as foreign language faculties to take the practical steps needed for foreign language departments to play a serious role in major "paradigm changes." Nonetheless, it seemed to me that it was important for ADFL to consider directly where we stood in relation to such putative changes. So we set out in the seminars to look at aspects of the "new paradigm," cautiously enclosing it in quotation marks, and asking some of the difficult questions that needed to be asked.

At Seminars East and West, plenary speakers and speakers from the floor told of programs on campuses in which foreign language departments were working with other departments across their institutions to "internationalize" the educational experience of students and faculty members in history, social sciences, business, and other fields. Speakers also addressed some of the associated pressing administrative questions that surround the teaching of language, not only "language for special purposes" but language from the beginning to the point where it can be used for any purpose at all. At Seminar East, we held a plenary session on the position and responsibilities of the person who organizes language courses within a large department. As Bettina Huber suggested after surveying the position nationwide, the "language coordinator and TA supervisor" does a job tantamount to that of deputy chair. Lively discussion ensued on the practical matter of rank, title, prestige, and remuneration of such a position, as well as on the larger question of whether "benign neglect," commonly accepted and even welcomed by some language coordinators, is really the most that they and their programs can expect from the senior literature-teaching professoriat. At Seminar West, we looked directly at the growth of separate organizational units formed to take on the task of language teaching, namely, language centers. Again the question of benign neglect arose, leading one to wonder whether the benignly neglectful and apparently powerful "language department" may not one day wake up to find itself displaced to the periphery—not, be it said, those foreign language departments whose chairs showed themselves at the seminars to be well aware of

and well prepared to deal with potential shifts in institutional priorities.

Underlying such changes and rumors of changes was a whole series of interlocking questions and problems that we put to the discussion groups as well as to the plenary speakers:

- We talk of serious work across the curriculum, involving various cultures, various nations, various disciplines, but how can we possibly bring students to the high language level needed for such work if we teach them for only four years at college?
- What is the place of the traditional, largely literary, curriculum of the foreign language department if major new structural and curricular changes are effected?
- How can many of us even contemplate major innovations when we have such small and ever-shrinking budgets that we have a hard time even keeping our present programs going? But can we survive at all if we cannot adapt to new circumstances?
- Curricular innovation and structural change, as well as an emphasis on language teaching at all levels, presupposes that professors will put in large amounts of time on reeducating themselves and preparing new courses. Is this time going to be recognized and rewarded? Does not, in other words, a paradigm change in structure and curriculum mean a paradigm change in the faculty reward structure?

We separated these questions topically into distinct discussion groups, but their interconnectedness was such that frequently a discussion group addressing one topic, such as *Managing Big Changes with Small Resources*, found itself discussing with great concern topics ostensibly covered under the heading of another group, such as *The Reward Structure: Real and Ideal*. This was of course exactly what we had hoped in setting up the program, since in practice not one of these problem areas can be tackled in isolation from the rest.

One particularly interesting crossover topic emerged from the Seminar West discussion group that met to discuss the question *New Structures: Threats or Assets to the Traditional Curriculum?* Some thirty of the seventy or so seminar registrants elected to join this group. The group leaders, Elvira Garcia and George Peters, reported that the group had not spent a great deal of time worrying about the threats new structures posed to the traditional curriculum but had gathered information about new programs and new ideas for curricular change from within their own ranks and had asked themselves the hard question of where teachers for new courses were going to come from. This concern brought up the topic of what went on in the graduate programs of foreign language departments. How could intensive training in specialized literary research produce teachers for the coming decades if the public expected these teachers to teach

history, culture, film and the arts; to work with colleagues in fields as far apart as business and anthropology; and, on top of all this, to do a responsible job of teaching all levels of a foreign language. The urgency of this question was such that the group put the following resolution to the participants of the well-attended final plenary session of Seminar West:

Discussion Group New Structures at the ADFL Seminar West (1991) recommends that the ADFL adopt a resolution that graduate departments of foreign languages and literatures recognize and act on the diversity and changing needs of foreign language programs at North American colleges and universities by including the theory and practice of teaching foreign language, literature, and culture as integral components of their graduate degrees.

This resolution was discussed at length and received unanimous support from those present. It will be passed on to the ADFL Executive Committee, and it is hereby passed on to you for your reactions.

The interesting "crossover" element here was that we had not put questions of graduate education specifically on the agenda at Seminar West, but they emerged spontaneously in this way as crucial elements in the overall equation. Unwittingly they echoed a major topic of the previous week's Seminar East, where we had indeed sought out two plenary speakers and a discussion group specifically to address various aspects of the connections between undergraduate and graduate programs. Speakers there raised and proposed answers to a number of questions: Why do so few students go from our undergraduate programs into our graduate programs? Why are students emerging from our graduate programs so woefully unprepared to teach what they usually have to teach when they are employed by undergraduate colleges? How can we teach students who are not native speakers of the target language enough of the language and literature at the college level to equip them to go into graduate school work as it is now conceived? Should we even be asking this question, or should we rather change or modify our conception of graduate work? The resolution from Seminar West seemed to echo back from the other coast as one answer to questions raised at Seminar East. But like any answer that proposes real change, it raises new questions.

We want to improve the undergraduate curriculum. But to do this, we need new kinds of teaching and new kinds of teachers at the undergraduate level. Where will they come from? We look to the graduate schools to produce some of these new teachers. But to teach a new curriculum at the graduate level, we need new kinds of teachers there too, and where are they going to come from? There comes a point, dear reader, where we have to say, ungrammatically if necessary, that they are us. New curricula, new teaching—we are going to have to do it. And we are going to have to involve ourselves

much more than is our wont with what comes before and after the undergraduate curriculum. We all know that a four-year college career is not enough for a student to learn the four skills of a foreign language to the point where he or she can use that language for professional purposes, be they commercial, cultural, or literary-critical. Do we really want our students to reach that point, including those students who cannot afford to go and live in the country of the target language? Then we must see to it that they start learning the language long before they come to us at the university. We cannot shrug off the responsibility for how this is supposed to happen. As Dale Lange indicates in this issue of the *Bulletin*, we have to open our eyes in undergraduate foreign language programs to the fact that we are teaching teachers. Whether or not we recognize this as part of our job, our students are in fact going out to teach in the secondary schools of the country. Are we giving them what they need? Many of us also teach in graduate school and enjoy what we regard as the luxury of teaching our own specialized fields. And why should we not? But if we want to establish our departments in the mainstream of our institutions now, and preserve them at all in the institutions of the future, then we shall have to be able to do a decent job of teaching language and of teaching many aspects of culture. For this we shall need new college teachers, and we shall have to open our eyes in graduate foreign language programs to the fact that *we too* are teaching teachers. Katherine Arens describes in this issue one single-handed attempt to train graduate students to teach culture. I look forward to reading of other curricular experiments at the graduate level when, after this issue, I return gratefully to my former role as reader of the *ADFL Bulletin*.

In my editorial in the Spring issue, I urged readers to write letters to the editor and hoped that I would be able to publish a page of them in this issue. I must regretfully report that no one other than contributors of articles wrote. Had it not been for the seminars, I would have ended my year as editor of the *Bulletin* with the depressing sense that ADFL members do not have very much to say to one another. The exhilarating discussions on the East and West coasts certainly gave the lie to that, but one contributor to this issue did give me a salutary view of the ADFL when she wrote in a letter, "The ADFL is or could be a powerful and influential national network, if it would reach out beyond its in-house Seminar East and West discussions." This contributor was Irmgard Taylor, who coauthors in this issue an article urging an "extended continuum of language learning for young Americans." The question of articulation—secondary school to college to graduate school—was much debated at the seminars, but if these debates and all the other interconnected debates of the seminars are perceived as "in-house discussions," then indeed the ADFL will remain a "could be" as far as its national power and influence is concerned.

Now that my year as interim, part-time director of ADFL has come to an end—the year of the boat—I am looking back on time spent and asking myself, Are the debates of the seminars continued in the undergraduate and graduate schools when the participants go home? Does the *Bulletin* go out from the chair's office and get read and discussed in undergraduate and graduate departments? We are all in the same boat, but how many of us know it?

Dorothy James