

# NACBS REPORT ON THE STATE AND FUTURE OF BRITISH STUDIES IN NORTH AMERICA

## A. INTRODUCTION

This report, commissioned by The North American Conference on British Studies, evaluates the current state of British Studies in the United States and Canada. It has been prepared by a committee appointed by Fred Leventhal, president of NACBS. The members of the committee are Peter Stansky (chair), Nicoletta Gullace, Cynthia Herrup, Dane Kennedy, Brian Levack, Jeffrey Reznick, and Martin Wiener. Jonathan Clark was also appointed to the committee, but he did not participate in the writing of the report. In drafting the report the committee has responded to the widespread perception among the members of the profession that British Studies does not occupy the same position of importance within the academy that it once had. The main purpose of the report, however, is neither to confirm the validity of that perception nor to account for the decline of British Studies, but to devise strategies for promoting and strengthening the field. The report is informed by, although by no means entirely based upon, responses to a questionnaire that was circulated electronically and to a lesser extent in print to the subscribers to *H-Albion* and to members of NACBS. There were very few responses, but those few were extremely helpful, and we would like to express our gratitude to the colleagues who did reply. Their thoughts have informed and helped our deliberations.

The committee has not attempted to accumulate statistical evidence for the widely perceived decline of British Studies. It had neither the time nor the resources to do so. It is readily apparent, however, that opportunities for scholars in our field have been significantly reduced over the past twenty-five years. A net loss in the number of academic positions in British history and to a lesser extent in British literature has made employment of Ph.D.s in these areas more difficult than in other fields. In some cases positions in British history have been redefined as slots in European history; in others they have been converted to positions in non-Western fields. Enrollment in undergraduate British history courses, as well as the number of such course offerings, has declined—in some cases precipitately. One member of the committee, who taught British history classes of more than 100 students in 1970, now attracts enrollments of no more than 50 students in the same courses. Fellowships are not as numerous as they have been in the past, and opportunities to publish have been reduced, perhaps even more than in the profession as a whole.

Although the committee was commissioned to evaluate the state of British *studies*, the greater part of the report deals with the condition and future of British *history*. There are two reasons for this emphasis. First, the overwhelming majority of the members of NACBS, most of the respondents to our questionnaire, and all seven members of this committee are historians. We have

therefore based our report on the condition of the discipline in which we teach and do research. Second, British studies, even though it formally identifies the interests of the members of NACBS and the scope of one of our journals, has not acquired recognition as an organized field of research and teaching in North American universities. Unlike all the other geographically defined area programs, such as Asian Studies, Latin American Studies, African Studies, and American Studies, British Studies has rarely had an academic base in a department, center, or institute. Even more rarely does it exist as an undergraduate major or program in college and university curricula. Without this kind of administrative structure, a college or university cannot recruit and retain a cohesive group of faculty who study Britain from a variety of disciplinary perspectives and thus promote the field as a truly interdisciplinary enterprise.

This report assesses the state of British Studies in five different areas: graduate programs, employment and replacement positions, undergraduate teaching, funding, and publication. It then discusses the possible redefinition or reconceptualization of British history in more global terms and concludes with a set of recommendations regarding the promotion of the field in North America.

## **B. GRADUATE PROGRAMS**

On the whole, in the opinion of the committee, universities have reacted realistically to the decrease in the availability of positions over the past twenty-five years or so. Many graduate programs have diminished in terms of the numbers of students that they admit and some have attempted to treat those few better, supplying fellowship funding for four years or more. In light of the declining job market, some institutions have eliminated their Ph.D. programs. There are some indications, however, of some programs re-expanding and even new Ph.D. programs being established. In our view, this is a mistake and will lead to the production of more unemployed historians. If a program is maintained, however, there are limits to "down sizing." On the one hand, it is irresponsible to train more graduate students than can be placed. Yet in a program there needs to be some "critical mass" for classes to work and for graduate students to have the invaluable experience of teaching one another. Of course, for British graduate students such students needn't be just in the British field but numbers of graduate students can be so low in a program that this can be a problem. What is less often mentioned is that schools need graduate students to assist in teaching and to teach. This is valuable training for the student but it is an area in which the student can be easily exploited and needs to be protected. And, as we are all aware, graduate students either before or after receiving their degrees, are exploited in the sense that they frequently form part of the seemingly ever increasing number of para-faculty. These young faculty receive some income and if the system works well, such positions are equivalents of post-docs and in a few years the person will have a tenure track position. But as we know, the story far too frequently does not have a happy ending. We should be aware, however,

that for better or worse, the system demands a certain number of students. At least in the major programs, the number admitted seems to be realistic and is at low figure that really cannot go lower. It is the impression of the committee--but not based on data--that the major programs manage eventually to place most of their students.

In terms of quality, the students appear to be as good as ever. As there should be, there are fewer applications but there is no problem in finding superb applications. If anything, more could be admitted if there were funding and jobs. As also is appropriate, the applications reflect current trends with an increase in interests in empire, gender and post-modern approaches. There would also appear to be a rise in interest in Irish Studies. An applicant is well advised to find a faculty member close to her/his interests who is also at a major department. This makes sense in terms of placement and also the quality of the other faculty with whom the student will work, not to mention the quality of the library. Major departments, on the whole, are not strong enough in terms of faculty in any of these newer fields, perhaps most so in the case of Irish studies. But this may well change in the near future, particularly in terms of empire and gender.

Employment: The committee does not doubt that it is the employment crisis which is playing a major role in the present feeling of a more general "crisis" and is one reason for this committee and the sessions at various conferences on the state of the field. One should not romanticize the period before the crisis. In the "good" years up until approximately 1970 it did not follow that one would acquire a position at the institution of one's choice. But the assumption was that one would have a job teaching British history. That assumption can no longer be made by any Ph.D. student, no matter how capable. As was true some years ago, and is reemerging now, there is much talk about using the Ph.D. to work in a non-academic field and this is a realistic alternative. Departments should certainly try to prepare and train their students for this possibility. But this is not the reason that most students have entered graduate programs and they often show little interest in such preparation. The job market has put a tremendous pressure upon graduate students. Some of it has been valuable and the profession has been enriched by their greater participation in conferences, driven in part by an attempt of the profession to be less elite but also driven by the need to acquire credentials for the job market.

From the few questionnaires that were returned to the committee, and from the committee's own sense, there has been a dramatic change in how someone who wishes to be employed should prepare. It would seem that the graduate student whose work is restricted to England domestically, no matter how excellently and how "cutting edge" the work might be, is probably at a disadvantage. Most British students are able to apply for positions in European history. That competition can be equally severe but there is a chance that the British student will have the skills and interests that may interest a particular department. A British student whose interest includes gender is able to apply for

positions in that field. Those students who do comparative Anglo-American work are able to apply for positions in American history. It would also help applicants to be able to offer Irish and Scottish history. But the most dramatic change is the "return" of the Empire as a teaching and research field. British history used to flourish because it was consistent with what a lot of undergraduates and/or their parents wanted from a college education, a familiarity with the Western tradition but also helping their child succeed in later life. The decline of those particular values has hurt the popularity of British studies, even though the field itself has been changed dramatically by these shifts. Now Higher Education is much more involved in servicing ethnic diversity, quite properly. Of course these issues are present in domestic British history, but they are more dramatically present in "imperial" history. It is an extremely exciting area, and in terms of placement graduate students would be well advised to be able to teach in such areas. It is not necessary for students to do their research in imperial or other aforementioned specialties, but they should develop the competence to teach one or more of them. A student should not be discouraged from researching a "domestic" subject, as long as she or he also develops such teaching competency.

As mentioned earlier, a pattern has developed that even after a graduate student has the Ph.D. she/he is not likely to acquire a tenure track position, if ever, until after a few years as a full or part time lecturer. This wait also means that appointments are being made at the assistant professorship level of individuals who not so long ago have had enough experience and quality publications to secure tenure. It also means that publications, even of a well received book, are no guarantee of a position. This period of non-tenure track employment creates an extremely difficult problem for the individual to decide how long to give to the search or when to look for alternate employment. One hesitates to mention it, but it can also be distressing for the American trained graduate student to see positions at American institutions go to those from British institutions. There does seem to be developing, however, some movement in the other direction with American trained individuals receiving appointments at British institutions.

What should the NACBS do in these areas? It has been suggested that it might offer mock job interviews for graduate students. The committee is not sure that that would work well, as the issue for graduate students in terms of interviews, and job talks, is to make themselves attractive to the non-British members of the faculty at the place to which they are applying. The Conference could urge those Departments that are not doing so to prepare their students for the job market and at least some institutions we know of do conduct mock interviews, help the student prepare teaching portfolios and organize job talk rehearsals. The Conference has already done something for graduate students in its vastly increased eagerness for them to give papers. The North American Conference might expand its prizes for graduate students, now limited to the valuable dissertation-year and NACBS/Huntington fellowships. It would be nice if

the Conference could think of ways of persuading administrations and non-British history faculty that British history has dramatically changed with the times and that the billets now occupied by British historians should not, on their holders' departure, be either closed down or assigned to a different field.

### **C. EMPLOYMENT AND REPLACEMENT POSITIONS**

Perhaps no issue has been of greater concern to British historians than the decline in employment opportunities in British Studies. While all Western area studies have seen a dip in recent years, few disciplines have had further to fall than British Studies. In the 1960s some university history departments employed as many as four British historians while today the replacement of a single Britainist can be hotly opposed by faculty -- particularly in non-Western Studies -- who consider British history to be old-fashioned, hide bound, conservative and boring -- a discipline of old men in tweed coats who still hanker after the stuffy and sexist atmosphere of the senior common room.

While reasons for this decline have been ably discussed elsewhere, one that has not been touched upon yet is the intellectual fall-out of the end of the Cold War. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the apparent "defeat" of communism in 1990 pulled the rug of relevancy out from under all disciplines that had depended for their rhetorical thrust on proving or disproving Marxist paradigms. Issues of central concern to British historians, such as worker radicalism, bourgeois revolution and transitions to capitalism began to seem like studies of local rather than global interest, while their mirror opposite, detailed studies that countered Marxist claims, seemed to be wasting breath on disproving discredited theories. Furthermore, the impetus that the collapse of a "bi-polar" world gave to globalization was reflected in academic departments that acquired Africanists, Asian Studies specialists and Latin Americanists at an unprecedented rate. Since expansion in non-Western areas took place in an environment of stable or declining University budgets -- itself a by-product of the end of the Cold War which had fueled unparalleled investment in higher education -- new specializations were added at the expense of old disciplines and the forecast "wave of retirements" took place without creating the anticipated bonanza of jobs in areas like British Studies.

The presence of more non-Western specialists in academic departments also had another result. Many of the newly hired specialists studied regions that had been colonized by Great Britain and resented Britain's intellectual hegemony both in American academe and in the world at large. Indeed, no group has been more vocal in its condemnation of British Studies than those historians whose work focuses on the impact of imperialism on colonial subjects and who have had the most contact with colleagues in non-Western areas. New work in post-colonial theory, gender and empire, imperial legislation and indigenous resistance movements has helped formulate an attack on British studies from

within and has been adopted -- albeit in a caricatured form -- by those wishing to argue against British replacement hires on political grounds. These demoralizing trends, along with the recent deaths of luminaries such as Edward Thompson, Raphael Samuel and Lawrence Stone, have cast a pall over British historians who have been more inclined to accept these criticism and lament the end of an era than to mount a spirited defense of British Studies.

Possible Solutions. It is important to qualify this rather bleak set of observations. From the responses to our survey, it was clear that many history departments, especially in Canada, still regard having at least one British historian on the faculty as essential to maintaining a well-rounded curriculum. Student interest in British Studies also remains brisk in departments throughout the U.S. and Canada, with many respondents reporting classrooms full of students eager to learn about British history, particularly the British monarchy and Britain's efforts in the two World Wars. It is also clear from reviewing *Perspectives* that while British Studies will probably never regain its preeminent position in American academe, employment opportunities have not completely dried up. If they are to improve, though, British historians will need to make the case for British Studies. And British historians at every level will have to equip themselves to meet the exigencies of the job market whether for themselves or for their students. We suggest the following possible approaches:

Advice for Graduate Students and Graduate Mentors. A student wishing to market himself or herself successfully may need to have an expertise that goes beyond domestic British history. Although domestic history continues to draw students, anecdotal evidence seems to suggest that domestic historians have difficulty securing positions on that basis alone. Many respondents felt that students with trans-national, Atlantic or imperial topics would be more competitive on the job market. While Committee members generally agreed with this impression, one member pointed out that trans-national focuses might be less relevant in medieval and Tudor history. We all agreed, however, that such assessments need to be confirmed with a more detailed study of hiring patterns. What does seem to hold true, though, is that administrators and colleagues worry that faculty members offering five or six courses per year in British Studies will not be able to fill their classes. This is not to discourage scholars from working on domestic or even local histories, but to suggest that such valuable enquiries be integrated with a broader range of teaching interests.

Several survey respondents suggested that mentors should try to provide the Ph.D. student with teaching experience in areas like world history -- a very plausible subject for a British historian -- to enhance his or her marketability. It is also advisable to include a teaching portfolio that shows a range of desirable courses. Most departments considering a British hire have at least a few members who would like to see traditional offerings in Tudor/Stuart, Hanoverian, modern British and British Imperial history. (It is important to check the AHA *Directory of History Departments* before applying for a job in order to see what is

already covered by other faculty members and what is needed in the department). In addition to these core subjects, Ph.D. students might prepare syllabi for two or more of the following: Western Civilization, world history, Atlantic history, women's history, European surveys, Indian, African or Irish history (if expertise allows), history of Sexuality or Race or, in the case of a comparativist, a course on the other area of investigation -- say modern France or Italy. Unless an advertisement explicitly states "excluding Britain" go ahead and apply for modern or early modern Europe jobs. Try to interest the search committee with a compelling project description and a range of desirable course offerings and be prepared to speak knowledgeably about non-Western areas and European history more generally. The prospective hire needs to show that the hiring institution can get more with a British historian than with a specialist in any other field! Thanks to Britain's global empire, there is a strong foundation for this claim, especially when the hiring institution requires a European specialist with the capacity to teach world history.

Addressing Administrators and Faculty. When arguing for replacement positions in British history, it is important to dispel the caricature of fuddy-duddyism that plagues the field. It may be worth pointing out to colleagues that British Studies have been historiographically central to the development of Marxist history, Feminist history, Gay and Lesbian history and post-Colonial theory as well as to more traditional constitutional, diplomatic and legal studies. British history also provides a good avenue into European history in general since it doesn't pose a language barrier for students. Student interest in study-abroad in Britain provides a reliable constituency for lower division offerings, while a new hire with a competency in the British Empire could knit together the curriculum by bridging the gaps between Western and non-Western history. Furthermore, British history lends itself particularly well to interdisciplinary programs. Not only does British history provide a logical background for students studying English literature, but, depending on the area of expertise, British historians can offer links to Women's Studies, Cultural Studies, African Studies and Sexuality Studies Programs, vastly enriching curricula throughout the university or college considering a new hire. Finally, it is important to reiterate the fact that British history continues to attract students. There is an incommensurability between the perception of a "demise" in British history and survey results that suggest keen student interest in British Studies. Given the increasing attention to enrollments by administrators throughout North America, Britain's drawing power cannot be overemphasized when making the case for a replacement.

Conclusion. The reputation of British historians as Anglophilic apologists has proved much more enduring than might have been expected, considering the changing nature of British historiography since the 1960s. This perception -- which in some cases contains a grain of truth -- has fueled a post-colonial backlash devolving upon the discipline of British Studies itself. Yet while British imperialism has come under steady attack from practitioners of the "new" imperial history, the reevaluation of its legacy has fostered interest in British

Studies even in the age of Britain's global decline and its half-hearted absorption into Europe. Studies of the British Empire -- particularly as they deal with subject peoples or the process of globalization -- have a multi-cultural and multi-national vibrancy that has proved quite appealing to hiring committees interested in the links between European, American and non-Western areas. British historians will surely benefit by appealing to these interests and in so doing help to revive interest in British Studies as a whole. Indeed, only by reinvigorating interest in British Studies -- in all its variety -- can we hope to improve the outlook for the many talented young scholars conducting research in every area of British history. To this end, it might be helpful to move beyond internal debates over the merits of trans-national versus domestic history and to promote the historiographical richness of British Studies as a whole while learning to teach beyond the confines our own national and disciplinary borders.

#### **D. UNDERGRADUATE TEACHING AND PROGRAMS**

There is general agreement that British history no longer holds its traditional claim to attention in the American academy. Moreover, although it appears to have maintained its position better in Canada, signs of a similar trend have begun to appear there as well. This has had both practical and intellectual consequences: a shrinking number of courses and positions, particularly before the nineteenth (or even twentieth) centuries, and a crisis of confidence among British historians in what they are doing. What rationales for the study of British history can be argued within universities and to foundations? How can new approaches to undergraduate teaching help address these problems? What kinds of courses offered by faculty trained (at least in part) in British history have been, and would likely be, effective in increasing the interest in British history, and demand for British historians?

Such courses ought not, of course, be considered or planned solely on the basis of undergraduate appeal. They should - and readily can - address important historical and intellectual issues that perhaps have not been sufficiently discussed, or that have become more evident and more pressing in recent years. In other words, what will best keep members of the profession of "British history" in North America not only in jobs but in a state of intellectual vitality is to be ever-active in altering old courses and developing new ones (sometimes in collaboration with faculty from other historical specialties or other academic disciplines). The responses to the survey sent out by this committee in fact demonstrates that this is already being done in many places. This report hopes to make such efforts more generally known, within and without the profession, and to encourage further efforts in this direction. Such efforts ought to stimulate and increase undergraduate interest in the study of British history. Market trends are not our nemesis, but our opportunity.

In future, rather than relying on a strong anglophilia among students and their families, the study of Britain must stand or fall on its broader significances for the history and present situation of humanity. Far from being an unfortunate forced adjustment, this is an opportunity we should eagerly grasp. The history of Britain is arguably the most important "national" history precisely because it has been the most intertwined with, and influential upon, other histories worldwide, in all their dimensions - political, economic, social and cultural.

This is true in a number of ways. First, for many centuries the English state and people have been involved in complicated relations with their nearest neighbors, eventually incorporated into the British state. Courses on Irish history and Scottish history (and perhaps Welsh history) not only have a sizable undergraduate constituency, actual or potential, but in combination or alternation with courses on either English or British history can open new perspectives on the development of each of these peoples and of the state that came to subsume them. Such perspectives add much to questions of universal application such as state formation, imperialism, ethnicity, and cultural contact, conflict and interchange.

Second, British history is indispensable to an understanding of the histories and current state of a great many countries and regions. British historians should be involved in area studies programs (most obviously South Asia, but also the Caribbean, Africa and even Latin America). In this category should certainly be placed the emerging study of "Atlantic" history. A wide range of courses could be created here by those trained primarily in British history, on their own or in association with specialists, historical or contemporary, in these areas.

Third, the huge diaspora of peoples from the British Isles has created both a worldwide community of peoples sharing a great deal, but has done much to making English the closest thing to a world language. This effect on world history is vast and largely unexplored, though its origins go back centuries in British history. A history of the English-speaking peoples, their similarities and differences, and their collective role in world history, would make a stimulating, and attractive, course (without having to carry Churchillian baggage).

Fourth, the Empire itself is becoming more widely taught, not only as the military and political "expansion of England" and its ways, but also, of course, as a story of complex relationships between the colonizing and the colonized, and of two-way flows of influence. One useful technique in such courses, when taught alone by British historians, is to bring in historians (or political scientists or anthropologists) who specialize in the colonized or influenced peoples to analyze events and developments already being covered in the course from "the other side." Exciting arguments and broader, more complex perspectives often ensue, on the part of students and often faculty themselves.

Fifth, as is suggested elsewhere in this report, British history is perhaps the best single avenue of inquiry into the large processes of "globalization" in all its many dimensions - political, economic, social and cultural. As creators of the first true "world system" and the first world market, and as the originators of industrialism, the British occupy a unique position in human history. Historians trained in British history should be in the forefront of both general world history courses (at least from c.1500 on), but should be joining other faculty to create thematic courses on aspects of globalization.

Sixth, there is great scope for providing undergraduates with a chance to compare British history with that of other states, either somewhat similar or strikingly different. Again, in such courses insight into large questions of general relevance can be gained, deeper perhaps than that offered in purely contemporary courses on such questions. Depending on the historian's own training and interests, exciting courses can be offered comparing British with American, French, German, or Japanese histories, or several, as in a course on "comparative modernizations." In such courses, specialists in the "other" history or histories could perhaps co-teach; if that is not practicable (as it often is not) they can still be drawn upon as a resource, and perhaps as an occasional visitor to class. When the faculty lacks such persons, the need for such a course is even greater, and can better be filled by one trained in British history than in most other historical areas. Comparative courses can focus profitably either on similarities across nation-states or on dissimilarities. Take, for current example, a comparative history of Britain and Yugoslavia focusing on problems of state-formation and ethnic relationships. A course on the relations (embracing much more than only political) between Britain and Europe over the past several centuries could explore a central theme of British history, one of very current political (and cultural) concern. Comparative history can also join with imperial history in exploring comparative empires, whether post-1500 or earlier. What creates empires? what destroys them? How can, and do, empires differ? All of such courses bring the invaluable gift of the sense of historical context to issues and subjects usually taught (if taught at all) in American universities solely by social science specialists with usually extremely thin awareness of the role of history in shaping contemporary contexts, or as a storehouse of alternative possibilities.

Seventh, recent developments in English departments have opened new possibilities for British historians. English scholars newly interested in history and historical context are often highly receptive to interchange and collaboration with British historians. Some British historians have co-taught courses with faculty members in English literature. But co-teaching is not necessary; these colleagues can be a great resource, whether in encouraging historical interest among their own students, or in occasionally participating in British history courses. English departments have also been strongly moving to expand their curriculum in post-colonial literatures, that is, English writing beyond Britain, America and perhaps the former Dominions. This is equipping such departments

with specialists who have much to contribute to the imperial and global dimensions of Britain, and even to rethinking of "internal" British cultural and social history. And of course, the emergence of English as the second language of the world, where it is not already the first, only adds to the indispensability of British history.

Eighth, British history should be an essential resource for many other historical and academic studies, such as the history of science (collaborative courses on "the age of Newton" or "the age of Darwin", for example), the history of economics (dominated for several centuries by British thinkers), and especially the history of law - that of the United States most obviously, but also of the various legal systems throughout the world influenced by English law. Of course, existing law school and university courses in American legal history deal to a degree with English materials, up to 1783, but very often (particularly in the law schools) with little sense of historical context and sometimes little historical information. Law schools need more historians of England and Britain, not only for the period before American independence, but also (though this need is rarely indeed felt) for the modern period, when the two systems began to diverge in deeply significant ways. Law schools have begun to make joint appointments with history departments, but much more could be done, particularly with English historians.

These suggestions should not be taken as a rejection of "internal" British history. This history is not only important, and richly rewarding to study, but most of its major issues in recent years should be of interest students in other disciplines as well: the development of its criminal and civil law and its administration, as both the origins of, and modern contrast with the United States, but also many others: the nature of class and class consciousness, the complexities of gender, the relationships between religious structures, beliefs and practices and other aspects of life, the complex requirements and contradictions of an evolving democratic polity - in all these areas some of the most insightful work being done is coming from historians of Britain. We need to make these better known among our students and our colleagues.

All of these proposed directions for undergraduate teaching, "internal" as well as "external," should encourage interchange and collaboration with both other historians and scholars in different disciplines, which will be of mutual benefit. The future of British history as a field of study and teaching in America lies largely in closer interaction with other scholars in history, the social sciences and the humanities.

To sum: many possibilities for new kinds of courses are opening up as British historians see their field as part of the total history of humanity. Many are already being given; many more could be. Moving in this direction will increase undergraduate, administrative and public interest, and at the same time intellectually enrich the field.

Study Abroad: With the rapid growth study abroad as a regular feature of many college programs, and the simultaneous increased appetite of British universities for tuition payments, it is quite easy for an American undergraduate to spend a term or a year at a British university. Given the shared language and cultural familiarity, Britain should continue to be the leader in this area. Some committee members have found such study, even if in quite another field, often stimulates an interest in the British past, and often leads to enrolling in one or more British history courses. Thus, study abroad, educationally valuable in itself wherever it takes place, can help sustain and strengthen student interest in our field.

## **E. FUNDING**

An important element of the perceived crisis in British studies has been the belief that funds for both pre and post-doctoral research are diminishing. It is true that many of the traditional sources of research funding for North Americans (Fulbright, Mellon, SSRC, Canada Council (now SSHRC), NEH, ACLS and Guggenheim) have become less accessible and less lucrative in the last decade. The competition for what remains is intense, and changes in the job market have made it more so. Entry-level jobs carrying the expectation of prior publication mean young scholars need money to do more research earlier; entry-level scholars without permanent positions need funding when (as is often the case) their temporary employers exclude them from university research competitions. An increasingly international pool of academics who work and are assessed for tenure in North America need grants unrestricted by citizenship requirements. And the end of a formal retirement age has in some instances extended the ability of older scholars to remain in granting competitions from which they would have once bowed out.

It seems to this committee that while there are always too many people chasing too few dollars, the new problem is less one of absolute quantity than of changing availability; research grants are shifting in ways that do not fit easily with traditional expectations. More grants are restricted in their scope and their intention, geared towards short-term production rather than open-ended research. There is more institutional supervision and (because there is more desire for tangible results) more attention accorded the final rather than the exploratory stages of a project. The proliferation of in situ semester or year-long grants (i.e. site-restricted NEH and the newly-endowed equivalent Mellon grants at the Folger, Newberry and Huntington) favor scholars who can use collections in particular libraries. Some universities have established internal leaves through their own humanities centers, but only a few of these (Stanford being the best example) offer year-long grants to outside scholars. For these as well as for grants at the more general residential centers (National Humanities Center, Woodrow Wilson, Institute of Advanced Studies), one's collegiality and overall 'fit'

as well as one's project may be important in getting grants. These changes complement trends in employment and publishing; they encourage accessible presentation, topical rather than geographical thought, and interdisciplinarity. Implicitly, however, they privilege projects using microfilm, printed works and the Internet over those dependent upon 'fieldwork.' They sometimes favor the less ambitious, but more predictable proposals. And they makes more difficult the interactions that came readily to a profession where most people returned repeatedly to a small number of sites in London. Such trends, if carried too far, could, ironically, have the effect of making both the research and the cultural horizons of British studies scholars more rather than less parochial.

An assessment of the changes in funding looks very different from different career stages: there are fewer year-long grants, but many new smaller ones for dissertation research; several new, albeit highly competitive, post-doctoral possibilities; a shift in senior funding towards residential centers.

For **dissertation** research, the NACBS dissertation year fellowship and the Huntington Library/NACBS fellowship offer the only fellowships (1 each) specific to British studies; 3 or 4 additional graduate students in the field are likely to be funded by Fulbright in any given year. Of the more general dissertation fellowship competitions that do not exclude those interested in work in the United Kingdom, many target special interests or populations (Social Science Research Council, Charlotte Newcombe, American Association of University Women, etc), but students who frame their dissertations broadly can secure such funding. Canadians are also eligible for moneys from their provincial governments and (pre and post doctoral) from the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Council. The NEH also has a dissertation-writing fellowship (restricted to those with US citizenship).

Although the Mellon foundation has sponsored dissertation proposal seminars at selected universities, there is currently nothing comparable to the old NEH program dedicated to exploratory travel to collections. The Folger, Newberry and Huntington Libraries, however, run extensive short-term grant schemes open to doctoral students; university libraries such as the Beinecke, Firestone and Widener recently have followed suit; institutions such as the Ransom Humanities Center and the Yale Center for British Art run similar short-term programs. All of these grants require residence; most cover living expenses for only one to three months; obviously, they assist only those whose work focuses on their collections. Small grants from both sides of the Atlantic are also available to North Americans interested in particular research topics such as the history of medicine, demographic history or women's history.

For most students, dissertation money for research and for writing will come from their home universities, and the process of producing a dissertation is one of balancing writing and teaching duties. Since many programs now accept only students whom they will fund, this dependence is less dire than it once was.

And some institutions have established internal competitions to supplement multi-year graduate fellowships.

The picture brightens considerably for those who make it past the degree stage; little **post-doctoral** money is directed specifically at scholars of Great Britain, but all of it is available to such scholars. Money for research abroad, except as funded by one's home university, is not plentiful, but neither is it impossible to find. The NEH has a summer stipend specifically for younger scholars; the American Philosophical Society and the British Academy offer short-term grants for travel. Younger scholars are often exceptionally competitive for the many small-scale library grants noted above (as well as others) and can be successful in the general competitions for moneys from the NEH, Mellon, and ACLS.

Prestigious multi-year post-doctoral fellowships linked to teaching continue at institutions such as Columbia, Chicago, Michigan and Stanford, although there are worrying signs that these programs are becoming survey-teaching labor pools rather than opportunities for teaching and research. Smaller topical programs with one- or two-year post-doc fellowships seem to be in a growth phase (recent examples include programs at UCLA and Rutgers). The largest grants are typically restricted to people at the mid-stage of tenure-track appointments; those in search of potentially permanent employment will find the search for research support much, much tougher. The Newberry, the Huntington and the Institute of Advanced Study have residential programs specifically intended for assistant professors who need time to turn dissertations into books. Many of the research centers for senior scholars reserve at least one fellowship for a junior scholar. And several research universities have instituted sabbaticals for assistant professors without tenure.

Perhaps the most intriguing change has come, however, in funding for **tenured** scholars. On the one hand, they are the primary recipients of many of the grants noted above; on the other hand, the priorities of long-term granting have shifted in a way that does not always fit easily with research and familial needs. Money for short-term work home and abroad comes most readily as it has long done, from the sources noted above (home universities, NEH, British Academy, American Philosophical Society, short-term fellowships at libraries) in open competition with younger scholars. Several colleges at both Oxford and Cambridge offer research homes for scholars on leave, but only if they bring independent funding. Year-long fellowship options, however, have become less common: the NEH is less well-funded, less secure and less adventurous than it once was; the Guggenheim is now more strictly a one-time grant; both of these as well as the ACLS are insufficient to underwrite significant time in the United Kingdom. In addition to the residential library fellowships, the number of which have increased in recent years, the most available long-term money comes from residential research centers such as the Institute of Advanced Study, the National Humanities Center, Woodrow Wilson, etc., and from humanities centers

within universities. A small number of theme-based research centers broaden these options for those lucky enough to have work that fits the chosen theme (the Shelby Cullom Davis Center and the Clark Library are the most prominent examples here). Because a larger proportion of these moneys come from private rather than governmental sources, the competition for them is international rather than national; more importantly, they are attractive only to scholars who can travel easily, and who need time to write rather than direct archival access.

Two decades ago, someone entering the academy in British studies could expect a successful career to include substantial amounts of sabbatical time in England and very little leave time spent with scholars in other specialties; for someone entering the profession now, the proportions may well be reversed. The old moneys for time in the United Kingdom are giving way to new moneys for library stays, post-doctoral fellows, and humanities center tenures. NACBS could undertake several projects that would ensure that scholars can make the best use of these new options:

- A website grants register to help people keep up with the growing diversity of possibilities
- A website microfilm/Internet resources register
- Competitive funds for short-term grants for travel to archives outside the United States
- Should funds permit, sabbatical fellowships situated in the United Kingdom, perhaps at the IHR or within the Oxbridge structure
- Outreach to private fundraising sources whose topical interests dovetail with ours (on the model of the Wellcome grants in the United Kingdom)

## **F. PUBLICATION**

British historians share a widely held belief that publication opportunities in their field have declined during the past twenty-five years. Whether that decline has been any more dramatic than in other fields of history or in other academic disciplines remains unclear. It is also unclear whether the decline has taken place only in the publication of books, especially monographs, or whether it has occurred in all types of published academic work. In any event there is widespread agreement that the publication of articles and books by British historians has become a more challenging enterprise than it has been in the past. This does not mean, however, that publication opportunities have disappeared; they are simply more difficult to identify and exploit. Competition, judged by the ratio between submissions and acceptances of manuscripts, has also become very stiff, but that is true throughout academia.

The number of journals in which articles on British history are published has not diminished significantly during this period and may have actually increased. Within that group of periodicals there are still relatively few journals

devoted exclusively to British subjects, such as *The Journal of British Studies* and *Albion*. We can feel particularly proud of the contribution that the Conference has made in its sponsorship of those two journals. Articles on British topics also appear regularly in journals covering European history, such as *Sixteenth Century Journal*, *The Historical Journal*, *Past & Present*, *Eighteenth Century Studies*, and *The Journal of Modern History*, as well as those that recognize no geographical boundaries, such as *The American Historical Review* and *The English Historical Review*. Whether the percentage of journal articles on British topics in those journals has declined cannot be determined. In any event a large percentage of articles on British subjects appear regularly in journals dedicated to thematic fields, such as *The Journal of Social History*, *Law and History Review*, *Economic History Review*, and the *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*. As literature fields have become more interested in historical materials, so historians might publish in the many journals devoted to literary studies. Some British historians have begun to publish articles on the internet, but the utility of such publications for the purposes of academic promotion has yet to be established.

The total number of books published on British topics, especially by North America presses, does appear to have shrunk considerably over the past twenty-five years. Once again, however, the situation has not reached crisis proportions. Presses in the United Kingdom still offer the largest number of opportunities in British history, while John Donald continues to support a fairly large list in Scottish history. A number of books on British topics continue to appear as volumes in series devoted to British themes, most notably the series published by Cambridge University Press, Manchester University Press and Macmillan. The Royal Historical Society has recently revitalized its monograph series. The total number of titles published in these series, however, remains relatively small, and more books in British history probably are placed with presses because of their thematic appeal than because of their concern with Britain. The NACBS might wish to explore the possibility of sponsoring a series of monographs in British Studies, with a preference for publishing "first books," with a North American press. Another possibility involves the use of e-book technology to develop a similar series, but publication in digital form raises the problems with promotion and tenure discussed above.

## **G. BRITISH STUDIES IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT**

The committee has been charged to take the temperature of our particular profession. As has always been the case, different historical approaches seem to play a more dominant role for certain periods of time. As historians, we know that change is inevitable but sometimes it doesn't appear that way! Since the second World War, special attention seems to have been paid, over the decades, to political history and the nation state, then social history, then quantitative history, then cultural studies and theory, and now the "new" imperialism. The committee feels strongly that the particular historian must follow the path that appeals most

strongly to her or him. But it is also appropriate to pay attention to what is happening now and to present the field as it appears to this committee at this moment. It is our impression, as has always been the case, that these developments are viewed with differing degrees of enthusiasm among our colleagues as they are in the committee itself. These are exciting new approaches. The committee wishes to make it clear, however, that in the discussion of imperial and world history which follows, it is attempting to be descriptive, not prescriptive.

The challenge that confronts those of us who share a professional commitment to the study of British history is to demonstrate that we can respond in new and meaningful ways to an environment that has grown less favorable to prior claims for the importance of our subject. We must make our case to multiple constituencies--to our students, to our colleagues, to our deans and provosts, and even in the some respects to our regents and legislatures and neighbors. All must be persuaded that British history retains relevance to American education and that it matters more than some of the other subjects to which limited resources might otherwise be directed.

Many of us believe that we must overcome the insularity that has too often afflicted British history. To remain viable, we need to demonstrate that the history of Britain is not merely an "island story," but indeed a world story. This group is not advocating imperial history per se: it, too, is susceptible to insularity in some of its preoccupations and practices. It is referring instead to an appreciation of British history as an avenue of inquiry into the larger processes that have transformed the globe and the relations among its inhabitants. Though the term globalization strikes some as too triumphalist and trite to carry serious analytical weight, it does at least allude to the importance of an historical transformation that transcends national boundaries, a world-incorporating phenomenon that is at once political and social, economic and cultural, technological and intellectual. Historians of Britain--or more particularly of Britain in relation to the rest of the world--are as well prepared as anyone to understand the course and character of this global process.

It hardly needs stating that much of the most interesting scholarship in recent years has pursued lines of inquiry that offer insight into this issue. We have seen studies that interrogate traditional conceptions of Britain and Britishness, rethinking the boundaries that have been drawn around these subjects. We have seen efforts to push the parameters of British history to the limits of its influence, incorporating the experiences of those peoples--Africans, Asians, and others--whose collision with this expansionist state transformed their societies and mentalities. We have seen increased interest in the construction of the national self, the representation of the racial and the gendered other, the promotion of knowledge for the purposes of power, and much else that has obliged us to reconstrue what we mean by British history.

The importance of this scholarship to the future of British studies can be seen when we consider the broader developments that are reshaping history departments and academia more generally. The expansion in the areas acknowledged to be legitimate fields of historical inquiry has presented a much more competitive environment for claims to lines in history departments. The increasing diversity of the student population and the growing demands of the global economy have contributed their own pressures to expand the kinds of history we offer. British history increasingly must vie with African history and Latin American history and Chinese history and various other nationally or regionally-defined histories, not to mention thematically and ethnically-defined specialties such as women's history and Jewish history and military history. Whatever prospects exist for British history in this environment are less likely to be realized if its advocates insist on Britain's traditional place of privilege in the discipline than if they demonstrate that it remains a vital field of study that offers insights and connections that benefit students and colleagues in other areas. A British history that stresses its encounter with and significance to the rest of the world may be far better prepared to do this than one that accentuates its insularity.

The forces that have led to a proliferation in the number of fields harbored by history departments have produced a corresponding transformation in the integrative survey that they offer their students. World history is overtaking Western Civilization as the standard introduction to the study of history. This development presents its own problems for British history, which was much better positioned to argue the case for itself when the Western Civilization survey predominated. So long as British historians are viewed as specialists in the affairs of a small island off the coast of Europe, they will appear to be far less qualified to speak to the issues relevant to world history than Africanists, Asianists, and others. (Their comparative disadvantage is reinforced by the tendency in some departments to establish a non-Western counterpart to the Western Civilization survey, a transitional convenience of dubious merit that encourages the misguided impression that non-Western historians possess a special affinity for world history.) British historians who are prepared to present themselves as knowledgeable about the world system that arose in large measure around Britain and in response to its actions will be positioned to turn the transition to world history to their advantage. In fact, they will be able to argue that their training gives them a breadth of vision that sets them apart from most other historians and allows them to offer the sort of integrative approach to world history that it desperately needs.

Finally, we must recognize that most of the jobs in academia are at teaching institutions that require faculty who are able to try their hands at many different subjects. Those of us who are training graduate students in British history have an obligation to prepare them as best we can for the sorts of positions they are most likely to encounter, and this means that we must make their programs of study as broadly-based and integrative as our individual

abilities and departmental resources allow. This is especially important at the level of course work and fields of specialization. Dissertations must, of course, remain more narrowly focused, but even they may be designed around comparative or cross-cultural questions that allow their authors to claim the breadth of expertise that many institutions are seeking.

This report is not meant to make special claims for British imperial history; our response to the challenges that face our field of study is not reducible to the virtues of imperial history over its domestic counterpart. There is in fact plenty of so-called domestic British history that is appreciative of the need to connect it to the wider world; and, by the same token, there is some imperial history that, strangely, is not. But many of us are convinced that the ability of British history to speak to issues relevant to this wider world may determine how it fares in the American academy. One challenge is to demonstrate that British history can speak to the issues that preoccupy American society and push American education in new directions-- that it offers important insights into the construction of national and ethnic identities, the development of cultural diffusion and hybridity, the growth of economic and political inequalities on a global scale, and, indeed, the varied concerns that shape our sense of the world.

## **H. NACBS**

Because British Studies, defined in a broad interdisciplinary sense, rarely has an academic base in university departments or institutes, its promotion in North America has become in large measure the responsibility of professional societies, the most important of which are NACBS and its regional affiliates. The role that NACBS can play in this capacity is necessarily limited by the resources at its disposal. Unlike larger professional associations, such as the American Historical Association, NACBS does not have a paid staff or even a central office. The work of the society is undertaken by volunteers, including the members of the Executive Committee and the Council, the officers of the regional conferences, the editors of its journals, and the members of its prize and fellowship committees.

This arrangement has in large part succeeded in promoting British Studies in North America for the better part of four decades. The Conference and its regional affiliates organize seven meetings each year, publish two journals and a bulletin, administer two graduate fellowship programs, award three prizes to honor achievements in scholarship and sponsor two book series. The regional conferences perform some additional functions on their own. Despite these accomplishments, there is a significant body of sentiment, reflected in the responses to the questionnaires, that would like to see NACBS take a more proactive role in the promotion of British Studies. The membership would not favor a sharp increase in dues to support these initiatives, but it might be

possible for NACBS to do more with the financial resources already at its disposal. Some of the possibilities are as follows:

1. More active use of the NACBS website. This report proposes that NACBS use its website to establish a register of grants and a register of internet and microfilm resources. A further proposal is to use the NACBS website to list other websites that are relevant to scholars and teachers engaged in British studies. The website could also serve as a general information bulletin board and possibly be combined with *The British Studies Intelligencer*. A list of all scholars working in British Studies, with a brief indication of the direction of their research, would serve a number of useful purposes, including the promotion of interdisciplinary research. The management of the website would require the appointment of a webmaster. One of the members of the Council might be entrusted with this responsibility.

2. Membership. It is essential that NACBS make sustained efforts to increase its numbers, which have remained fairly constant over the past ten years. This effort should be directed at those scholars who are engaged in British studies in the broader global sense of the term; scholars who are in disciplines other than history, especially English literature and art history; and independent scholars. The latter might be designated affiliated scholars of the Conference and charged lower registration fees at meetings. Dynamic leadership by the Program Committee has resulted in recent years in splendid programs that reflect the diversity of British Studies. But the constituency of the conference is largely historians, and it tends to vote with its feet, so that literary sessions are frequently badly attended. Perhaps there might be new strategies, such as the intermingling of history and literature, devised to improve this situation.

3. Fellowships. This report has already recommended an increase in fellowship support for archival research. Any such initiative would require aggressive fund raising from private sources.

4. Publication. The report has already raised the possibility of NACBS co-operating with a North American press to establish a series of "first books" in British Studies. NACBS might also consider involvement in some sort of digital publishing program, which would require much less of a commitment in time and money than other publishing programs.

5. Employment of younger scholars. The Council could begin a discussion of the way in which its members might assist in the establishment of "holding patterns" for younger scholars who are seeking permanent employment. At the very least this might reveal how the institutions of Council members have or have not addressed this problem and introduce some common solutions that the Council could help to orchestrate. This should address the efforts on the part of younger scholars to secure a living-wage and continued health insurance coverage as well as funding for further research. In this regard the Council might wish to

consider the recent work of the Woodrow Wilson Foundation. Realizing the waste of talent among newly minted-Ph.D.s throughout the humanities and social sciences, the Foundation has helped to organize a series of excellent postdoctoral fellowships that allow individuals to continue research in the field.

6. Political involvement. NACBS should be urged to appoint one of its Washington members to identify, monitor and report on issues bearing on British Studies that might arise in the nation's capital. This person could also act as some sort of permanent liaison with the British Council.

7. Lectures. The Council of the NACBS might consider forming a group of dynamic lecturers who would be on offer to various universities and colleges for expenses to talk about the latest trends in British studies, much as the Phi Beta Kappa lecturers operate. The other model for this arrangement is the lecture program sponsored by the American Historical Association.

8. Outreach to the community. There are a number of indicators, such as the popularity of the English Speaking Union in many cities, that interest in British Studies remains strong within the educated public in the United States and Canada. There is also evidence of strong but more localized interest in Scottish Studies and Irish Studies. The sponsorship of conferences, colloquia and seminars that meet on a regular basis in various locations would present an opportunity for NACBS not only to cultivate broader interest in British Studies but to increase funding from private sources.

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