

**Canadian Mennonite Encyclopedia Online  
Editorial Committee  
Mennonite Heritage Centre  
Winnipeg, MB  
5 December 2003 – 9:15 a.m.**

Present: Bert Friesen (chair), Alf Redekopp, Richard Thiessen, Victor Wiebe, Abe Dueck, Peter Penner, Linda Huebert Hecht, Sam Steiner, David Giesbrecht

**1. Welcome**

Bert Friesen welcomed committee members to the meeting and led in prayer.

**2. Minutes of 5 December 2002**

We reviewed the minutes of 5 December 2002.

**CONSENSUS 1 – To approve the minutes of 5 December 2002 as circulated.**

**3. Agenda Review**

Bert Friesen said business arising from the last minutes forms today's agenda.

**4. Rotation of secretary**

We reviewed and affirmed the schedule of recording secretaries for our meetings:

Sam Steiner: 2003  
David Giesbrecht: 2004  
Alf Redekopp: 2005  
Victor Wiebe: 2006  
Linda Huebert Hecht: 2007  
Abe Dueck: 2008  
Peter Penner: 2009  
Richard Thiessen: 2010

**5. Managing Editor's Report**

Sam Steiner reviewed his written report and noted several landmarks – 500,000 unique visitors since April 2000 and 1000 visitors per day. He had not asked PeaceWorks about XML possibilities for the site this year. He has been making an annual backup copy of the Encyclopedia on CD. He will add "Size of CMEO in bytes" next year to the table.

We discussed a variety of issues related to generating more publicity for the CMEO, both within the Mennonite constituency and in the public educational system. Our discussion led to the following agreements:

**CONSENSUS 2 –**

**1) The Manitoba subgroup will arrange for the design and production of an 11 x 17 CMEO poster as well as a brochure. We will mail these to congregations through denominational mailings such as MC Canada's *Equipping* and the Mennonite Brethren Christian education mailing. Perhaps the poster/brochure design can be done through denominational design staff. We believe the design, production and mailing costs for this project may be \$2000.**

2) Saskatchewan (Victor Wiebe) will try to get the CMEO site reviewed by a Canadian Library Association assessment group. If the review is positive it can be quoted in our publicity.

3) Linda Huebert Hecht circulated copies of a brief review she did for the *Mennonitische Geschichtsblätter*; she will also provide it (with updated numbers) to Bert Friesen to circulation to the Mennonite German papers in North America.

4) The British Columbia subgroup will prepare a news release about the CMEO for circulation to the Mennonite press in North America.

5) We each agreed to ask our provincial Mennonite historical society to include a small block advertisement for the CMEO in each issue, as a way of reminding folks of the services and information we offer. Peter Penner will ask Judith Rempel if she might have a design idea for this; we should have a uniform “look” in the ads.

6. **“Who are the Mennonites?” section**

We reviewed previous discussion on this section. It was written in 1998 by Derek Suderman and is due for an update/revision. Several committee members have taken stabs at revisions in the past several years, but none have come to fruition. Possibly the encyclopedia itself should contain an introductory 1000-word article on “Mennonites” with a briefer “Who are the Mennonites” section. The “Who are the Mennonites” section is aimed at persons who know nothing about Mennonites. Perhaps *Through Fire & Water* by Steven Nolt and Harry Loewen would provide some material for this.

**CONSENSUS 3 – We asked Abe Dueck, Victor Wiebe and David Giesbrecht to draft a revision by June 2004; Abe Dueck will coordinate the effort. The presentation should remain descriptive, and not become prescriptive.**

When we looked at the site after lunch, it became less clear that a major revision was required, and that it might be more of an update. The review group will decide after a more careful review of the present site.

7. **Other web issues**

a. **XML (Extended Markup Language)**

Our discussion noted that more XML tools have become available, resulting in greater use of XML by websites. Some of our congregational format would especially lend itself to XML – bibliography, directory information, lists of pastors, etc.

**CONSENSUS 4 – We agreed that prior to next year’s meeting Sam Steiner will check with PeaceWorks, Richard Thiessen would check with a Mennonite firm in Abbotsford, and Alf Redekopp will check with a Manitoba firm on whether there is now a case for moving our encyclopedia to include XML coding. Richard Thiessen will draft some common questions to ask these firms. We may also ask PeaceWorks (or another firm) to make a presentation on this subject to our meeting next year.**

b. **Layout problem**

We noted that encyclopedia articles still extend just beyond the frame for the article, necessitating centering the text. This is very frustrating.

**CONSENSUS 5 – Sam Steiner will pick up this issue with PeaceWorks.**

**c. Separate Domain Name**

Richard Thiessen asked if it was time for CMEO to have its own domain name. This would mean separate sites for MHSC and CMEO. It would also provide the occasion to change/broaden our name from Canadian Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (CMEO) to Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (MEO) or something similar. This would also free MHSC to further develop its own site.

**CONSENSUS 6 – We agreed to raise this issue at the MHSC annual meeting for feedback by indicating the CMEO editorial committee is considering such a change within the context of enlarging the scope of the encyclopedia.**

**d. Audio/Video clips**

We noted the encyclopedia has a minimal number of RealAudio sound clips and no video clips at this time. Our discussion agreed it would be good to add audio clips in multiple formats for individuals known for their oratorical ability (e.g. A.H. Unruh, J.B. Toews, Frank H. Epp, Frank Peters), as well as further sound clips reflecting Mennonite musicology.

We will also look for an example of an appropriate video clip. Victor Wiebe will try to locate a video clip of Mennonite immigrants arriving at Rosthern, Saskatchewan in the 1920s.

**e. Tables of Encyclopedia article assignments “in process”**

We reviewed the article assignment tables posted on the encyclopedia site, and confirmed their usefulness.

**CONSENSUS 7 – We will continue to update the tables; Sam Steiner will delete the assignment lines articles that have been uploaded after the articles have been posted more than a year. Provinces that have not submitted them yet should send them to Bert Friesen for compilation.**

**8. Provincial group reports**

**a. Ontario**

Linda Huebert Hecht said the Ontario Committee met in November and added names to its biography lists. The committee hopes to have a workshop with local congregational historians to promote the encyclopedia. She noted the issue of deciding which province should “claim” a well-known leader who has moved a lot.

**b. Manitoba**

Abe Dueck said the Manitoba subgroup met twice; they also work as a national editorial group. Currently the national editors are Abe Dueck, Bert Friesen and Ernie Braun. Jim Suderman and Alf Redekopp are also part of the Manitoba group. The flow of articles has not been as rapid as hoped.

We discussed whether there would be a place for “genealogical entries” for lesser leaders that are mentioned in articles but do not warrant a full article. These might include only dates of birth and death, place(s) of residence and place(s) of

employment. Another option would be to have popup windows with this information over names, though this would be labor-intensive. Our discussion focused on the practicality of providing extremely detailed information that would take the encyclopedia more in the direction of a database.

**CONSENSUS 8 – We agreed that minimally birth and death dates should be provided when at all possible for persons mentioned in articles or in the tables of pastoral leaders. Richard Thiessen will draft an additional paragraph on this for our guidelines.**

**c. Saskatchewan**

Victor Wiebe reported it had been difficult to obtain writers for Saskatchewan articles. There is not a functioning subcommittee working on the encyclopedia at this time. There will be a historical society workshop at the MC Saskatchewan meetings this year; perhaps more energy will be developed there on the congregational revisions.

We encouraged the Saskatchewan society to appoint an encyclopedia subgroup.

**d. Alberta**

Peter Penner reported that Ted Regehr has just submitted forty congregational and fifty biographical articles based on his research of the Northwest Mennonite conference. He passed these on to Bert Friesen in a CD. There is presently not a subgroup in Alberta.

We also encouraged the Alberta society to form such a group.

**e. British Columbia**

Richard Thiessen reported less activity than in earlier years. The subcommittee is now composed of David Giesbrecht, Helen Rose Pauls and himself. They have recently met, and will continue to focus on biographical articles. They had hoped to use some grant time for congregational articles, but this did not happen as other priorities intervened.

**9. Educational Institutions**

Bert Friesen reminded us a substantial backlog of educational institution articles remained to be completed.

**CONSENSUS 9 – We agreed each provincial subgroup needs to review the lists of educational institutions and move these articles forward. We noted someone in Manitoba should be appointed to write about Canadian Mennonite University.**

**10. Enlarging the Editorial Committee**

We discussed enlarging the committee, but agreed not to pursue this for the present.

**CONSENSUS 10 – We agreed that if CMEC meets in Ontario next December, it would be good for someone from Quebec to meet with us. This invitation should also be to the MHSC annual meeting, and should come from the MHSC board.**

## 11. Editorial Process.

Bert Friesen said the editorial process seems to be working effectively, especially since some of the work has shifted to the contact person working directly with writers. We noted there had been undue delay on several articles.

**CONSENSUS 11 – We agreed that if the national editors determine an article submission should be rewritten or extensively revised it should be returned to the contact person. That person can best determine if the author should be asked to do the revision, or whether it has to be done by someone else.**

## 12. Financial matters

### a. Budget

We noted this year's expenses will include the posters and brochures, a possible mid-year meeting, and travel costs for the present meeting.

**CONSENSUS 12 – We agreed to ask the MHSC annual meeting to approve a budget line of \$5000 as in previous years.**

We noted expenses that will need to be considered next year include travel to Ontario, possibly travel of someone from Quebec, a possible presentation on XML by PeaceWorks or another company, and costs related to revision of the site in 2005 if XML usage is approved.

### b. Fundraising

Victor Wiebe reported the MHSC executive's efforts at fundraising had been disappointing. Last year the board authorized CMEO to do its own fundraising.

Alf Redekopp described the option of having a donation button on the website that allows for charitable gifts through CanadaHelps.org. This is an organization used by Mennonite Church Canada that assists all charitable organizations in Canada. There would be a page describing MHSC programs, and there is a possibility of designating gifts to MHSC or CMEO or the Divergent Voices program, etc. It would have the effect of reminding visitors that websites such as ours cost money, and might encourage smaller donations.

**CONSENSUS 13 – We agreed to test this fundraising approach with the MHSC board. If affirmed, the committee chair and perhaps others from Manitoba will investigate the requirements to initiate such a venture.**

We also discussed the matter of corporate sponsorships. A corporate logo and a phrase about the company could be put on a "Sponsors Page" with the possibility of a click-through to the company. These would be advertising dollars as opposed to donation dollars. There would need to be further research to determine an appropriate amount to charge.

**CONSENSUS 14 – We agreed to report to the MHSC annual meeting our intent to pursue the possibility of corporate sponsorships. We will invite feedback. If affirmed the chair will need to establish a working group to develop this further.**

**c. Grants**

Our discussion encouraged provincial societies to pursue grants in support of encyclopedia-related projects. We did not decide to apply for a grant directly on behalf of CMEO.

**d. Other**

We discussed how Conrad Grebel University College might be thanked for hosting the CMEO on its server.

**CONSENSUS 15 – We agreed that Sam Steiner might ask CMEO to pay the cost of an appropriate piece of software or hardware in the next year.**

**13. Committee Structure and Elections**

Managing Editor Sam Steiner chaired the elections.

Bert Friesen was nominated for chair.

**Moved/Seconded/Carried (L. Huebert Hecht/A. Redekopp) – That nominations cease.**

Bert Friesen was elected by acclamation.

**14. Enlarging Scope of Encyclopedia**

We discussed for a time the manner of enlarging the scope of the Encyclopedia – both in terms of Anabaptist groups included (Hutterites, Brethren in Christ) and the geography / administrative oversight.

**CONSENSUS 16 – We agreed that Bert Friesen will contact the Hutterite community about possible inclusion in the Encyclopedia; we will also begin to include the Brethren in Christ.**

**CONSENSUS 17 – Sam Steiner will check with John Sharp of the Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee about their potential interest in collaborating on a world-wide English-language Mennonite Encyclopedia. Members of the Mennonite Brethren Historical Committee will also check on the interest of their U.S. counterparts.**

**15. Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Editorial Committee will be the day before the annual meeting of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada. The chair will call a midyear meeting if it is deemed to be necessary.

**CONSENSUS 18 – We agreed a digital projector or large screen monitor with network access should be provided for all CMEO editorial committee meetings.**

**16. Adjournment at 5:00 p.m.**

Minutes recorded by  
Sam Steiner