

A Brief History of The Philanthropist

The following brief history of The Philanthropist was produced at the request of several subscribers and contributors who were interested in the background of the journal. It is published in the hope that it will be of interest to all readers and supporters.

In the late 1960s a small group of lawyers established themselves as a Charities Committee of the Wills and Trusts Section of the Canadian Bar Association. This Committee was successful in introducing speakers, initiating discussions, and stimulating research programs directed to various aspects of philanthropy, as part of the programs of the Section.

In succeeding years the Committee came to the realization that there were no reference sources in Canada dealing with charities and charities law and in 1972 undertook to remedy this lack. The result was a journal which was named *The Philanthropist* by its first editor, Bertha Wilson, who felt this was the only title which was apt in both French and English.

During the early years *The Philanthropist* was an entirely volunteer effort which appeared annually, if somewhat unpredictably, depending upon its editor's ability to free up otherwise billable time; the success of the editorial committee in obtaining suitable material; and its manager's success in obtaining, and of his secretary's success in nurturing, subscriptions and donations. The publishing schedule was officially described as "spasmodic".

In 1980 the chairman of the journal, John Hodgson, was one of the prime movers behind an organization for the advancement and support of charitable work which was established as The Canadian Centre for Philanthropy. The chairman, who was also the Centre's first president, felt that a marriage between the Centre and a journal devoted to philanthropy was preordained and was instrumental in having the Centre assume the role of "publisher" of *The Philanthropist* from Agora Foundation which had previously filled that need.

During the next six years the Centre provided assistance to the journal in the form of a modest amount of staff support and access to conference and other Centre papers, and by offering a subscription to the journal as one of the benefits of its Associates Program. This expanded subscriber base made it possible to increase the frequency of publication and expand the

subject matter to include management and accounting issues as well as matters pertaining to the law.

Throughout this period *The Philanthropist* continued to be controlled by a volunteer board of representatives from the legal and accounting professions, the Centre, and academe. The volunteer editor was, as always, a member of the bar. One paid staff person was responsible for production.

In 1987, issues arising from a financial crisis at the Centre and the Editorial Board's determination to retain editorial independence, caused the Centre to withdraw as publisher. The editor and volunteer board were convinced of the value of the publication and, under the leadership of John Hodgson, undertook a successful reorganization and redeployment of resources which made continuing publication possible.

The result of this successful reorganization has been the resumption of publishing responsibility by Agora Foundation; establishment of a Management Committee to supplement the efforts of the Editorial Board; the addition of an Accounting Advisory Panel comparable to the Legal Advisory Panel; an expanding number of paid subscribers; achievement of full quarterly status; and further increases in the quality and reputation of the publication.

Another positive development has been the establishment of The Philanthropist Award. The Award, made possible by generous private donations, is intended to encourage Canadian students to address the legal and other issues affecting philanthropy in Canada. The competition produces submissions of a very high quality.

Much of the credit for *The Philanthropist's* respected status must go to its volunteer editors. The founding editor, Bertha Wilson, served until her appointment to the Ontario Court of Appeal. Her successor, Mary Louise Dickson, carried on almost single-handedly until the transfer to the Centre. After 1981, Lynn Bevan, energetically aided by associate editor Joyce Forster, saw the journal through its succeeding critical moments, developed its base of correspondents and authors, stimulated circulation, took it to its quarterly status, and increased both its reputation and its quality. Her retirement following production of Volume VII, No. 3 left the journal in excellent health for her successor, John Gregory, the former editor of the "Bookshelf" section.