

Prof studies Canada's 'move for autonomy'

Canadians see their country as a mosaic of cultures. Americans see theirs as a melting pot. The distinction can help explain why two neighbors can have so much in common and still be so different in political, labor and cultural goals, said Oakland University sociologist Jacqueline Scherer.

Professor Scherer has completed two studies on Canadian autoworkers and their move for autonomy from the United Auto Workers. Both studies were supported by faculty research grants from the Canadian government.

She has also completed a third professional paper on "Canadian

Culture: Building the Barriers" and teaches Canadian studies at OU.

CANADIAN STUDIES are of growing interest at OU and other state institutions, and she said they should be. "Canada is already far and away America's largest trading partner," Scherer said, and the Free Trade Bill will dramatically increase that interaction.

Scherer's studies of the CAW began in 1985 and continued in 1988. Her first project was to examine the causes of the separation from the UAW. The second was to look at the CAW and how it had progressed relative to the UAW over four years. The

professor notes that the parties call it "a move for autonomy," not a break from the UAW.

Scherer said she will continue to follow the evolution of the CAW. "By studying the organization of the CAW as it evolves, one can see the cultural differences between Canada and the U.S. It is a microcosm of American-Canadian relations."

QUESTIONING TOP UAW and CAW officials, including Canadian labor leader Bob White, Scherer found basic reasons for the move for autonomy.

Those reasons were "different economic conditions, including higher Canadian inflation and variable home mortgage payments, resistance to concessions, and Canadian nationalism," she said.

Scherer said CAW president Bob White "has been probably the most articulate anti-free trade spokesperson in Canada." One of his major fears, Scherer said, is that the percentage of Canadian jobs protected under the U.S.-Canadian auto pact would be in danger under the trade bill, although the Mulroney govern-

ment says the auto pact would not be subject to renegotiation.

The professor said the recent Canadian election represented a serious defeat for the CAW and the Canadian labor party (the National Democratic Party).

SCHERER SAID that "what I would like to stress from the studies are what we Americans can learn from the examination of Canadian-American differences."

Scherer cited "the Canadian fear of being next to this big giant, America; there is also the very different structure in labor law and in Canadian political arrangements."

Right across the river in Windsor, "there is a little museum where they have details of hanging the American traitors who invaded Windsor in the War of 1812," she said.

"We fought a revolution to be free

of England. They never had a revolution, and they never wanted to be free of England." It was an English choice to create a Canada, as the English tired of keeping troops here, worried about an American invasion, and so forth.

"The Canadians wanted the mother country to be there with troops and to maintain law and order," Scherer said.

CANADIANS ARE very pleased to be a multicultural society. "They take great pride in pointing out the differences and in preserving the differences," Scherer said.

She credited Canadians with doing an expert job in using culture and diversity to promote Canada and a Canadian image, admitting that "I believe the Canadians are ahead of us in understanding culture, partly because they had to work it out with the French, partly because they are always trying to figure out who they are other than not being American."

Scherer said free trade and the tremendous linkages between Michigan and Canada argue for OU and other institutions to increase their Canadian studies programs and to establish student and faculty exchanges to increase cooperation and understanding.

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Edgar L. Doss, general manager for the gas utility's Metro Region, said employees making service calls are finding an increasing number of

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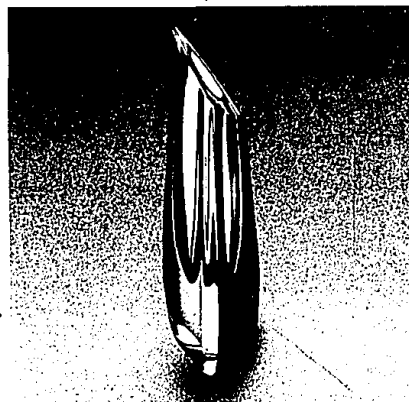


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