

Award for Excellence in Teaching

Dr Neil Field

Professor Field has had a long and distinguished career in geography having developed research on the Soviet Union and in the field of Population Analysis, having served on committees in the CAG and taken on demanding administrative duties in the Toronto department but above all having been an exceptional teacher.

Following graduate work at the University of Washington and a position with the Joint Intelligence Bureau in Ottawa he joined the Department of Geography at the University of Toronto in 1960 and from the outset developed a course on "The Geography of the USSR". Well researched, well organized and well delivered, it stood out as one of the best if not the best, regional courses in the department. Increasingly, he became interested in work on population studies and took over the teaching of "Principles of Population Analysis". Sought out by many students for its rigorous and analytical approach, enrolment always remained high. A third and outstanding contribution to the Departments' teaching program was his administration of the individual research project (BA Thesis). This was a very demanding and important assignment. Not only was Professor Field the course coordinator and supervisor on many projects but also the second reader on most.

Good university teaching must be based on solid research. Professor Field provides a splendid case in point. Although not a prolific writer, Neil Field has made very important contributions to an understanding of the Soviet Union in his well-researched and well written papers such as "*Environmental Quality and Land Productivity*", and "*Land Hunger and Rural Depopulation*".

Two very important aspects of his research on population should be recognized. Firstly he developed a very critical stance about sources and tabulation of data. That he was consulted frequently about Statistics Canada and other data is reflected in his appointment in the 1970's to the Statistics Committee of the Social Science Research Council. Secondly, as computer technology become more sophisticated, Neil Field focussed more and more on computer applications in geography in general and on population analysis in particular. Sharing results, propagating new techniques, and encouraging in a very major, but also critical way the integration of computers as tools in the modern geographical curriculum have been only some of Professor Field's achievements.

During his long career at University of Toronto he established a remarkable record as an outstanding teacher, especially in his exceptional work with students. He gave his students an extraordinary amount of time to discuss problems and examine written assignments. Copious notes comprising constructive criticisms, reflecting a very careful and intense reading were always returned with each essay, report, or thesis. Understandably such appraisals influenced the progress of many students profoundly.

Not content to just be a teacher, Neil energized his students, set standards that few of his colleagues would match, and easily accomplished what we expect to the ideal teacher but rarely witness. He is most deserving of "The CAG Award for Excellence in Teaching".