

Editorial

I return in person to the pages of the journal after an absence of some issues to try and renew a hope that I had at the beginning of the venture and which I expressed incidentally in the first editorial, more explicitly in the second. This is that the journal should make possible an open form of communication between its readers, become a place of public discussion about some matters, develop the opportunity of joint work on some questions.

Well, we published a few letters and communications in the early days, but nothing recently. We have also published a few articles which refer to other articles in the journal, which is a sort of response. But there has been little progress towards the fulfilment of the hope. Nobody has sent any comments, other than brief, general remarks obviously not meant for publication, and nobody has sent a letter to the editor for quite a long time.

I know, and you know, all the circumstances that inhibit free and public exchanges in print. Private exchange by letter or telephone is often easier and sometimes more valuable. But my impression is that this, too, is rare. On a number of occasions I've spent time writing comments to someone on a lecture or a written paper which interested me enough to make me want to pursue some points further, only to be rewarded with silence. (And I've often kept silent myself, I must admit, when some comments might have been appreciated.) Conferences might seem appropriate places for dialogue, but not everyone can attend, and most of the talk is between those who know each other already.

Exhortations to communicate are not usually effective. I think that a solution to the problem—which I refuse to believe is insoluble—needs a facilitating structure and an amount of fairly selfless goodwill. I can't do much about the latter, but I am open to any suggestions about the first. Will you give some thought to how the journal might enable us to interact more openly? In the meantime, perhaps the five pieces about research problems at the end of this issue will provide some of you with the stimulus to contribute some remarks.

While I am here, I might mention another concern I have. The median length of articles is, I believe, too large, and seems to be getting larger. Most writers could say what they need to say in fewer words. I put no restrictions in practice on article length because I believe that authors should, in general, be given the space they think they need, and I rarely cut articles for the same reason. But I would remind writers that pages cost money. I don't think it is

frivolous to suggest that the journal would benefit from more ideas to the dollar. I would prefer each issue to contain several short pieces in with two or three long ones. More 2-, 3- and 4-page articles, please.

Members of the Advisory Board perform a substantial service for the journal in advising me on policy, in writing and reviewing articles and in recommending authors to me. I am considering revising the list and would like suggestions for new members. It is not improper to propose yourself if you would like to be involved! But I am open to suggestions from any readers at any time for ways to make the journal better and approach more nearly the achievement of its ambitions.

As most of you will be aware, our publication schedule has been adjusted so that each volume, starting with the present one, will be published in a single calendar year. This will match our subscription period to that of most other journals.

This year's issues of FLM are being produced under an arrangement with the Western Education Development Group (WEDGE) at the University of British Columbia. I am very pleased to acknowledge the Group's help in enabling production to continue. I also acknowledge with gratitude some financial assistance from the Québec Fonds F.C.A.C. (formation de chercheurs et d'action concertée).