Editorial

I am writing here as the new editor of *For the Learning of Mathematics*, although the process of transfer of editorship has been going on for most of 1997. Transitions often bring turbulence, revealing both unperceived boundaries and unexpected stabilities and instabilities. And some mournings for what might have been.

One of the passings of recent months has been that of Paulo Freire. Although he did virtually no work explicitly in mathematics education, his influence on many who do and did has been considerable. The late Stieg Mellin-Olsen wrote:

> If knowledge is related to culture by the processes which constitute knowledge - as Freire expresses it - this must have some implication for how we treat knowledge in the didactic processes of (mathematical) education [1]

When putting together a journal issue, sometimes a number of the available pieces, though written and conceived separately and individually, seem to speak strongly to one another and to a particular theme. In the case of this issue, such a partial, emergent commonality is the notion of ideology and how we 'treat' mathematical knowledge.

What of the ideology of FLM and is it too in transition? Ideologies sound global, coherent, monolithic, inflexible, something someone else has perhaps, but not me. As Marcelo Borba and Ole Skovsmose spell out in their piece in this issue, one of the functions of an ideology is to 'hide, or disguise, or filter a range of questions connected to a problematic situation for social groups' (p. 17) What is being hidden or filtered in FLM?

This journal has been dramatically shaped by the strengths and characteristics of the founding editor, David Wheeler, particularly his disciplined eclecticism. 'For the Learning of Mathematics' signals the journal's strong interest in learning mathematics, without necessarily delimiting this as its sole or even primary focus. A wide range of things can be offered 'for the learning of mathematics'. Published articles reflect a diversity of intersections with disciplines other than the conventional ones of mathematics and (cognitive) psychology

In particular regard to mathematics, Wheeler has written:

> Dewey said somewhere that subject matter is a prime source of pedagogical insights. Almost no educators really believe this, I think, except in the trivial sense of hoping that teachers, textbook writers, and curriculum designers "know their mathematics". Even many mathematicians, who ought to know better, have no interest in looking below the instrumental or formal surface of mathematics in order to get clues about how to present it more effectively. [2]

Many accepted articles have been and will continue to be strongly orientated toward the mathematical, including its history and philosophy, in order to offer illumination of issues at work within mathematics classrooms themselves. FLM takes mathematics seriously. This has little to do with the age of pupils or complexity of mathematical content. It is possible, indeed necessary, to study mathematics in infant schools, as various authors have emphasised – for instance, illuminating

the referential and symbolic complexity of early arithmetic.

FLM has published, indeed championed, some pioneering work in the use of history of mathematics in classrooms, as well as an exploration of the notion of 'ethnomathematics'; and it will continue to do so, as some of the pieces in this issue attest. The journal has proved itself to be open to some unfamiliar writing: for instance, the special issue 13(1) on psychodynamic influences brought together a number of such pieces, and such openness to the unexpected will continue.

The strong request from CMESG/GCEDM (the Canadian mathematics education grouping which has taken over responsibility for the journal) is to 'continue the journal in the same spirit', and one of the tasks given to applicants for the position of editor was to try to specify that (acknowledgedly distinctive) spirit. Subsequent issues of FLM will reflect my sense of this.

I wish publicly to express my gratitude to the members of the new Advisory Board, for their willingness to take on a variety of tasks in the furtherance of FLM: I extend welcomes both to its new and continuing members, a variant on the theme of change *and* constancy. Thanks are also due to the members of CMESG/GCEDM, for agreeing to take on this venture, and to the new Board of Directors, who will oversee the management of the journal

My final thanks go to David Wheeler, without whom there would be no journal to edit. David specifically forbade any eulogising of his editorship or his other mathematics education work in FLM, though a number of tributes to his time, effort, writing, presence and singularly perceptive judgement have appeared in the pages of the ICMI Newsletter (June, 1997, issue 42) [3] Admirers of his work should search them out.

As editor, I take the liberty of sneaking in my appreciation of David by offering this extract from Bertolt Brecht's poem 'Song about the Good People'.

> One knows the good people by the fact
> That they get better
> When one knows them. The good people
> Invite one to improve them, for
> How does anyone get wiser? By listening
> And by being told something. [ ]
>
> The good people keep us busy
> They don't seem to be able to finish anything by themselves
> All their solutions still contain problems
> At dangerous moments on sinking ships
> Suddenly we see their eyes full on us.
> Though they do not entirely approve of us as we are
> They are in agreement with us none the less.

[1] Mellin-Olsen, S. (1986) 'Culture as a key theme for mathematics education: post-seminar reflections', in *Mathematics and Culture: a Seminar Report*, Caspar Forlag, Radal, pp. 99-121 (p. 103)
[2] Wheeler, D (1989) 'Contexts for research on the teaching and learning of algebra', in Wagner, S and Kieran C (eds), *Research Issues in the Learning and Teaching of Algebra*, Reston, VA, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates/NCTM, pp 278-287 (pp. 282-3)
[3] http://elib.zib-berlin.de/imu.imci.bull.42