

Robert Fox *

Outgoing President of the ESHS,
Chairman of the Programme Committee of the 2nd ICESHS

Opening address of the 2nd ICESHS

Mr Vice-President of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences, Official Representatives of the Authorities of the Jagiellonian University and the Institute for the History of Science of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour and a pleasure to welcome you to this second major conference of the European Society for the History of Science and to do so in Cracow, a city that has always been culturally and politically at the very heart of Europe. In the days to come, we shall have a rare opportunity of transcending the national boundaries within which we normally work. Our debates will strengthen the bonds between scholars and students in our discipline from North and South, East and West, and the Centre of our diverse continent. And in doing so they will affirm the common interests of historians who, in engaging with the past of science, are perforce studying ideas and practices that are the patrimony of all humanity, whatever their geographical roots.

This is a crucial time for our fledgling society. After a highly successful first conference in Maastricht in 2004 and a first workshop in Oxford earlier this year, we can regard the ESHS as firmly launched. But with new ventures on the horizon, this is not a time for standing still. One venture that gives me special satisfaction is the planned association between the society and the distinguished journal *Centaurus*. For this we owe a special debt to our Danish colleagues Professor Helge Kragh and Professor Hanne Andersen. A number of questions have still to be resolved. But, with the warm backing of the publisher, Blackwell, we seem set on a path that will make *Centaurus*, under Professor Andersen's editorship, the journal of the ESHS, beginning in January 2007.

In speaking of *Centaurus*, I mention debts. And our society's debts have been numerous. One that I wish particularly to acknowledge is to Claude Debru, who conceived the idea of a European Society for the History of Science and then skilfully and tirelessly led the process from conception to reality. In that process, our secretary Stéphanie Dupouy too has played a crucial role, as have our vice-president and president-elect Eberhard Knobloch, our treasurer Erwin Neuenschwander, our newsletter editor Simon Werrett, and our webmaster Christelle Rabier, and I express my thanks to them all. Finally, in the two years since Maastricht, it has been the pleasure of the society's officers to work closely with Michal Kokowski. The planning of this conference owes more to him than to anyone else, and I extend the thanks of all of us here in Cracow to a colleague and friend who has set the highest possible standards and expended boundless energy in every aspect of what has been an immense task.

Now, though, our thoughts must turn to the present and the rich programme that awaits us in this conference. With about 250 of us, from 31 countries, gathered in Cracow, the opportunities for the enrichment both of our individual scholarly lives and of our various national communities are exciting. Our Polish hosts have provided us with a magnificent setting and a warmth of welcome that has touched us all. I thank them for their generosity in our common aim of promoting the ideal of a truly European ideal of a republic of scholars stretching across the continent. And I wish you, as participants in this conference, every success in the exchanges that lie ahead.

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