

Centre for Business History to study development of industrial gases industry

Issued: Fri, 31 Aug 2007 12:19:00 BST

The Centre for Business History at the University of Glasgow has been commissioned to carry out a four year study on the historical development of the unsung but vitally important international industrial gases industry.

The economic and technological impact of the industry cannot be overestimated and the study - funded by German-based gas and engineering company, the Linde Group - aims to give the industry its due recognition.

Professor Ray Stokes, Director of Centre for Business History will examine sources and materials from around the world, as well as interviewing representatives of the most influential corporations in the industry.

Professor Stokes said: "For me, the most fascinating aspect of this research project is that there hasn't ever been a study this comprehensive before of this industry. We have the chance to shed light on an entire industrial branch and its most important players, who have hitherto been largely ignored, despite the fact that they make many innovations possible."

Professor Dr. Wolfgang Reitzle, Chief Executive Officer of Linde AG said: "Over time, industrial gases have changed entire lines of industry and ways of life. A modern food supply would be inconceivable without the use of nitrogen, or a medical treatment in a hospital unimaginable without oxygen. We're asking objective, independent scholars to extensively study the importance of the industry, and are demonstrating the contribution that industrial gases have made to the development of modern national economies up until now, and the contribution they will be making in the future."

The Society for Business History in Frankfurt, one of the most influential scholarly associations for the study of business development in Europe, will be closely involved in the project's progress in various ways, including acting as organisational host for a postdoctoral research fellow, also funded by Linde AG, and co-ordinating the project board monitoring progress on the project.

Professor Dr. Werner Plumpe, Chairman of the Scientific Council of the Society said: "This project will open up a whole new dimension of research in business history. Until now, businesses have mainly allowed scholars to study their own corporate history, which leads to a somewhat limited viewpoint. Linde is taking a new path and is letting independent scholars investigate the entire industry. I think that that shows that this company is aware of its social responsibility, and that it can think outside its own box. I would be very pleased to see other corporations follow this example."

Ray Stokes and his team will publish the results of the four-year research project in both German and English. The research team will share its interim results and findings at symposiums throughout the project.

Linde is funding a Ph.D. studentship to the University of Glasgow as part of its support for the project.

About the Linde Group

The Linde Group is a world-leading industrial gases, medical gases and engineering company with around 49,000 employees working in more than 70 countries worldwide. Following the acquisition of The BOC Group plc, the company has gases and engineering sales of around 12 billion euro per annum. The strategy of The Linde Group is geared towards earnings-based growth and focuses on the expansion of its international business with forward-looking products and services.

Website: <http://www.linde.com>

Klaus Schoenfeld
Linde AG
Telephone: +49 89 35757 1352

Professor Ray Stokes
The Centre for Business History,
University of Glasgow
Telephone: +44 141 330 5186

Dr. Andrea H. Schneider
Gesellschaft für Unternehmensgeschichte (GUG, Society for Business History),
Telephone: +49 69 9720 3315