

The Man and Resources Program

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Article abstract

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Modern society is questioning many of our values. Other "disciplines" like ecologists, sociologists and grass roots politicians have demonstrated that they can and will delay or veto important developments.

The program which probably cost in excess of one million dollars, raised more hopes than solutions.

The academic and professional societies from the "hard disciplines" should recognize the problem and provide leadership to the "soft disciplines" and the politicians and the concerned citizens.

The Man and Resources Program

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Summary

The *Man and Resources* program, and in particular the experience of the Task Force on Energy, was an interesting example of the criticism which faces scientific and professional people today.

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The Man and Resources Program

The *Man and Resources* program is an outgrowth of the Canadian Council of Resource Ministers established in 1962 and broadened to become the Canadian Council of Resource and Environment Ministers in 1971. The principal objective of this program was to provide a national forum for debate concerning the formulation and recommendation of guidelines to achieve and sustain an optimum balance of social and economic benefits derived from the natural resource base. The process by which this objective was to be achieved was that of public participation by Canadians from all walks of life.

After a series of local meetings during 1972, a *Man and Resources National Workshop* was held at Montebello, October 29 to November 4, 1972. The focal point of the two year

conference program was the *Man and Resources Conference* held in Toronto, November 18 to November 22, 1973.

The Montebello Conference

This was a "citizen oriented", "unstructured" conference. I regret using these phrases which cannot be defined exactly, but there is no other way to describe it. Perhaps, it would be more clear to say that it was not the type of conference to which scientists and professionals are accustomed. Dr. Roger A. Blais, Chairman of the Canadian Geoscience Council attended on behalf of the Mining Group of National Non-Governmental organizations. Some quotes from his report will illuminate the scene.

"Participation was extremely varied, with many colourful individuals. In several ways the attendance resembled that of political rallies, especially from the standpoint of strong grassroot representation and the presence of many so-called 'ordinary people'."

"Attendance ranged widely from distinguished and genuinely alarmed scientists and engineers, through technocrats, civil servants, housewives, teachers, union workers, farmers, miners, to high school students, including a few anarchists and some mixed-up kids and old ladies. There were medical doctors, lawyers and economists, but there were also several Indians and Eskimos, all fraternizing and dialoguing."

"Because of the natural difficulties in getting people of extremely diverse backgrounds to agree on participation mechanisms and to reach a workable consensus on major issues, many participants became utterly frustrated by the middle of the week. It is doubtful, however, that social animations and personal psychological involvement could have been reached otherwise."

"Because of the complexity of the issues raised at the Workshop and the conflicts in many resource uses, it remains to be seen whether this tremendous social animation will yield beneficial results. Will all these hopes and anticipations be satisfied early enough?"

And finally a personal quote from Dr. Blais, half humorous half serious, "It was an amazing experience. I doubt whether I will ever be able to teach engineering in the future in the way I have taught in the past."

Out of Montebello by a somewhat rough democratic procedure came twelve issues. The list is given below and immediately demonstrates that there was a problem for the scientists and professionals.

The Montebello issues were:

1. Citizen participation
2. Population
3. Growth ethic and social values
4. Qualitative and Quantitative data
5. Education
6. Long term planning
7. Environmental protection
8. Northern development
9. Integral planning
10. Foreign ownerships
11. Ownership
12. Energy

The Task Force

The next stage was to collect "highly qualified national specialists" to examine the twelve issues. Their reports would be referred to the sixty or more Regional Working Groups and the more than three hundred and fifty Community Interest Groups. In all, tens of thousands of people would have an opportunity to influence the discussion at the November, 1973 conference.

The choice of these "highly qualified national specialists" was, I guess, made by the Secretariat and approved by the Steering Committee. The choice can, of course, be criticized.

I was originally the Chairman of the Mining Group, some twenty-three associations vaguely associated with mining and energy. I was asked to be on the Energy Task Force and my colleagues were interesting. Dr. Biswas from Ottawa of the Department of the Environment, Dr. Efford from Vancouver, the University of British Columbia, Dr. Newbury from Winnipeg and the University of Manitoba and Mr. Troue from the Department of Energy, Quebec. I started off as a sort of post office and coordinator and finished up as Chairman, perhaps rather reluctantly

on the part of my colleagues. We had three meetings. We were unable to achieve agreement on our preliminary report, but did achieve rough agreement on our final report.

The Report of the Task Force on Energy

The Task Force was not competent to make a responsible overview of the problems facing Canada in so far as the Energy sector was concerned. We did not have the time or the manpower. However, we were in our different ways well acquainted with the Energy scene and our eventual report was, I believe, a useful document.

We were plagued by differences of opinion on what should be done. For instance, we had considerable difficulty in defining the fundamental issue which we finally resolved as follows:

"The crux of the energy problem as regards the *Man and Resources* programme would appear to be to establish a reasonable balance between the advantages of continued development of energy supply and use versus the costs so that the total true benefits may be maximized and the total true costs to the nation can be minimized."

However, this statement doesn't really help very much. In another part of the report we said: "In all energy areas, the knowledge and techniques available to balance the pros and cons are to a considerable extent still being developed. The social and other costs of environmental damage, the actual capital and operating costs of very large projects, the successful resolution of the rights of individuals, regions and governments are still very much a matter of opinion and judgement."

Predictably, I suppose, we were unable to come up with a ringing declaration as to what was best for Canada's future. Most people will find our conclusions weak.

"Satisfactory solutions to our energy future require a high degree of public participation and debate with a considerable effort by all levels of government and industry to ensure public hearings and to the greatest extent possible release of factual information to the interested public.

The complex jurisdictional and regional problems associated with energy development suggest that a Federal Provincial Conference on energy would be valuable."

However, the ink was barely dry on our draft before Ontario and Alberta were locking horns on the constitutional issue as regards gas supply. Alberta and the industry were reacting in dismay to Federal Government actions to control oil prices in Canada and to cream off the top of the oil export market. A unified approach to Canada's energy future seems further away every day.

Perhaps this frantic public debate is necessary and advisable if Canada is to achieve a consensus, about what best should be done. However, we will still have our regional problems and it does not seem likely that any clear cut general policies will emerge.

In the meantime, there are already many large projects which will face difficulty and delay from this public activity. I'd suggest as examples the future of nuclear power, the James Bay project, the development of oil and gas resources of the north and offshore maritimes, the development of deep water ports in Eastern Canada, etc.

I suggest, very strongly, that what we need is leadership from the academic and professional societies to help the concerned citizens understand the problem and to help the governments responsible to reach timely and useful decisions.

The wind up conference of *Man and Resources* in Toronto was predictably a tiring emotional experience, in many ways a travesty of democratic principles and in many ways an interesting and important experiment in attempts to deal with democratic processes by making use of closed circuit TV, etc.

There were two energy groups, both of which were quite good. The combined energy report was not one that I liked, but it did represent serious thinking by quite a cross-section of people in the country. The procedure for achieving consensus was, as Dr. Blais said earlier, much more reminiscent of a political convention than of a reasoned or scientific investigation. However, the time

pressures and the large number of people involved probably didn't allow any other way of bringing together so many divergent opinions, committed and uncommitted, knowledgeable or seeking knowledge.

The final plenary left no one any alternative. Accept the reports of the committees basically without change, mix in a few obviously minority resolutions by regional groups with a political axe to grind and wind up the conference as best we could.

The *Man and Resources* program is now basically finished. Its funding is cut off as of December 31st. Presumably, it will file and codify the reports, supply them to the various governments and then quit. It will be up to the various governments to implement or ignore the various recommendations.

I am afraid I am cynical. I believe that the various governments will pick the things they like and that suit their own drive. And I strongly suspect that this will be the best thing for Canada and the Provinces.

And that brings me to two things that were clear.

First, there is a quite influential group in Canada that is struggling to find a national government to the exclusion or intrusion of some areas obviously heretofore considered provincial government areas. This group is not uniform and not very clear but the message of overriding federalism seems to come through very clearly.

Second, there is another group, the concerned citizens who seem to feel again very strongly and sincerely that it is absolutely necessary that another level of government be created, which will act as minority appointed watchdogs, to provide criticism and veto of existing government plans and decisions. There are a lot of professionals in this last group—engineers, teachers, academics, union leaders, etc.

In effect, there were a large number of people in this group who believed that the fabric of Canadian government should be changed in a manner which they believed would give them, and people who thought like them, a bigger opportunity to participate in government at many

levels. They also seemed to believe that they would and should be funded by the existing elected levels. I find this naive, but I look at the history of many recent activities and wonder whether it is I who am naive

However, in many ways the atmosphere reminded me nostalgically of the idealistic society described by Omar Khayam and I quote:

"Ah love, could you and I with fate
conspire
To grasp the sorry scheme of things
entire,
Would we not shatter it to bits
and then
Remould it nearer to our Heart's
desire."

and irresponsible outside our
own fields.

MS received, December 18, 1973.

Conclusions

The conclusions are personal. I have not consulted with the other members of the Task Force, the Secretariat of the Mining Group.

1. The *Man and Resources* program which probably cost in excess of one million dollars of public money was not worthwhile. It created more problems than it solved, and raised more hopes than solutions.

It was a valuable educational experience for me and probably for everyone else who worked hard in the program, but I expect most of us would not be willing to do it again. The return was just not commensurate with the effort.

2. It does pinpoint a problem for engineers, scientists, economists and business and professional men.

Modern society is questioning many of our values. Other "disciplines" like ecologists, sociologists and grass roots politicians have demonstrated that they can and will delay or veto important developments. In many cases this will occur without serious evaluation of the consequences.

I suggest that the academic and professional societies from the "hard disciplines" recognize the problem and organize themselves to provide explanation and leadership to the "soft disciplines" and the politicians and concerned citizens. It will not be an easy task, since we are all prone to be somewhat reckless