

CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS

FIRST GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE, HELD IN THE ROYAL YORK HOTEL AND HARBOUR HILTON, TORONTO, CANADA, DURING 20–24 JULY 1980

Far beyond the organizers' expectations, this widely-advertised event attracted some 5,000 registrants. Although most of them came from North America, several hundreds travelled from Europe (including the USSR), and a fair number arrived from the Third World (including China).

Whether directly or indirectly, many of the sessions focused on issues of environment, natural resources, and conservation. The Opening Plenary ranged a group of neo-Malthusians—notably Lester Brown, of the Worldwatch Institute, Aurelio Peccei, of the Club of Rome, and economist Hazel Henderson—against a group of cornucopian optimists led by Herman Kahn. The first group anticipates that growing human numbers and growing human aspirations will impose ever-greater pressures on our natural resource-base, until ecological backlash and the laws of thermodynamics require an adjustment of human communities to the Biosphere's carrying capacity; by contrast, the optimists assert that we have hardly started to exploit the most abundant and renewable resource of all, namely human ingenuity as expressed through technological know-how. On balance the Conference produced a concensus of opinion in favour of the first view as opposed to the second.

Following this opening session, the Conference split into three concurrent 'tracks'. The first one dealt with *Human Concerns*, including world food, habitats/settlements, and health and medicine. The second one dealt with *Global Concerns*, including population, resources, energy, science and technology, and environmental quality. The third dealt with *Management Concerns*, including 'new economics', social and institutional change, and the politics of global governance. Under these various thematic headings were discussed such subjects of interest to readers of this Journal as broad-scale climatic change, tropical deforestation, desertification, pollution, undue depletion of resource stocks, elimination of wildlife species and germ-plasm, and new life-styles. A common thread running through the many diverse discussions was the need to define a fresh approach to age-old questions, e.g. how shall people live to achieve the greatest satisfaction, wherein lies 'development', and how far does quantity of livelihood diverge from quality of life? Many substantive deliberations ensued, with welcome cross-fertilization of ideas from disparate cultures and politico-economic systems.

An underlying theme of the Conference was 'Think globally but act locally!' More than one participant pointed out that political leaders have often been inclined to think locally while acting globally. As a corollary we need to give much urgent thought to our individual responsibilities as citizens of the global village.

A final wrap-up session was appropriately chaired by Maurice Strong, first Executive Director of UNEP. Although little was produced from this session by way of a 'shopping list' of practical initiatives for decision-makers around the world, one conclusion stood out clearly: the future will not be a simple extension of the past, i.e. 'the same as before only more so'. Rather will it be a funda-

mentally different scene, with new needs and opportunities—especially in terms of accommodating our limitless aspirations to the limited life-support systems of our one-Earth home.

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MEETING OF THE IUCN COMMISSION ON ECOLOGY, HELD AT IUCN HEADQUARTERS, AVENUE DU MONT-BLANC, 1196 GLAND, SWITZERLAND, DURING 3–5 SEPTEMBER 1980

This was the first meeting of an IUCN Commission ever to be held in Gland, where the 33 participants represented more than one-third of the Commission on Ecology's membership. Presided over by the Commission's Vice-Chairman, Professor Wolfgang Engelhardt, the meeting dealt with a wide variety of ongoing or planned activities. Thus concern was expressed that the World Conservation Strategy should not be forgotten after its successful launch, and it was seen as the Commission's task to bring the Strategy to the attention of the scientific world wherever possible. It was also resolved to relate appropriate activities to the relevant sections of the Strategy.

The full array of the Commission's activities came to light through the reports and plans of the working groups. On the marine side, no less than four groups (concerned with Coral Reefs, Mangrove Ecosystems, Coastal Ecology, and Ecology of the Oceans) are now in operation, and recommendations were made to establish a fifth one on 'continental or shelf seas'. The activities of these groups should result in marine and coastal volumes of the Sourcebook of the World Conservation Strategy, a report on the Global Status of Mangrove Ecosystems, and publications on major competitive and destructive activities on coral reefs.

On the terrestrial side, an assessment of future hazards to species and ecosystems from the use of pesticides in crop production, vector control, exploitation of aquatic resources, and other land-use developments, in West Africa and Southeast Asia, is being carried out by the Working Group on Environmental Pollutants, while the Working Group on Oil Pollution will prepare a review report on the impact of oil pollution on the living resources of aquatic environments.

The main theme of the meeting was 'Conservation and Rural Development', and was introduced by Dr J. Omo-Fadaka and Professor W. Engelhardt. The Commission on Ecology is emphasizing rural development and at present has two working groups in this field, namely the Working Group on Conservation and Rural Development, chaired by Dr Omo-Fadaka, which concentrates on introducing conservation and ecology into rural development, and the Working Group on Traditional Life-styles, chaired by Dr. T. Schultze-Westrum, which will consider how conservation can be achieved through

the integration of local peoples and their traditional life-styles.

Indonesia's Minister for Development Supervision and Environment, H. E. Professor Emil Salim, joined the meeting to discuss the preparation of a brochure entitled 'Why Conservation', based on his letter written earlier to H.R.H. The Prince of the Netherlands. He said that Indonesia is earnestly trying to conserve its fauna and flora, but is faced with enormous problems in that its population is expected to increase from 140 millions to 230 millions by the year 2000. Consequently he needed urgently the advice and cooperation of the Commission, in order to achieve conservation in Indonesia in the face of the present land-hunger of its population.

Reports of studies that are being carried out by Commission members included a basic paper on the 'Conservation of Ecological Processes' by Professor R. E. Ricklefs, another on 'Natural Disasters and Ecological Mismanagement' by Professor L. D. Pryor, and the IUCN/IIED/WWF project on 'Renewable Resources Management', addressing problems of harvesting living resources, by Dr J. Beddington.

The Commission visited the southern shore of Lake Neuchâtel, which constitutes Switzerland's most important wetland, where it was received by the Swiss League for the Protection of Nature, represented by its Board member, Dr Maurice Rollier. At the League's recently-established Nature Reserve and Education Centre, Château Champittet, Dr Rollier explained the many environmental and other planning problems that complicate the conservation of the area—including plans for a motorway to run the entire length (40 km) of its reed zone. At its session on 5 September 1980, the Commission consequently adopted a resolution in which it urged that appropriate measures be taken at all administrative levels to ensure the ecological integrity of the entire area.

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ELEVENTH COMMONWEALTH FORESTRY CONFERENCE,
 HELD IN PORT-OF-SPAIN, TRINIDAD, DURING 8–26 SEP-
 TEMBER 1980

The Commonwealth Forestry Conference was one of the earliest international events of its kind. The first was held, as the British Empire Forestry Conference, in 1920 in London, and similar Conferences have taken place approximately every six years ever since—timed, more recently, to fall between the World Forestry Congresses and the General Congresses of the IUFRO (International Union of Forest Research Organizations).

The theme of this Conference was 'the Contribution of Forestry to Social and Economic Development'. It was attended by participants from nearly 30 Commonwealth countries, including Vanuatu and Zimbabwe. There were also representatives from the Commonwealth Forestry Bureau, the Commonwealth Forestry Institute, and the Commonwealth Institute of Biological Control,

as well as from FAO, the World Bank, and the Caribbean Development Bank.

The Conference first heard concise and valuable reports from different countries on their progress made during the last six years. However, the main part of the Conference was devoted to reviewing the present state of forestry in the Commonwealth countries. This was done in five technical committees, devoted respectively to: forestry policy; forest management; services to management; harvesting and market planning; and utilization of forest products. The deliberations of each technical committee were based upon a theme paper and invited papers, numbering about 80 in all. In addition there were a number of voluntary papers. A selection will be published in the *Commonwealth Forestry Review*.

The Proceedings and Recommendations of the Conference emphasized the increased contribution to social and economic welfare that forestry is capable of making in all countries, and especially for the rural poor in developing countries. The critical importance of increased fuel-wood production and of cooperative efforts to use agro-forestry techniques, were recognized as essential tasks for forestry in developing countries. The environmental benefits of forests—especially for conservation of soil and of wildlife—were duly stressed, as were the effects on existing forests of the rising pressures of demand for land and timber. Action was needed to meet these demands and to maintain and increase benefits.

There was thought to be considerable scope for using forests more effectively than at present—by reducing waste, expanding the utilization and marketing of the less-used tree species, and developing road accesses jointly with other users. Also it was thought that a more commercial management philosophy in harvesting and marketing roundwood was needed in some regions, in order to improve financial results and the attention given to reforestation. Amongst other important factors noted were the need for improved training of supervisors and forest workers in appropriate technologies, and for an increased R&D programme—particularly on fast-growing species and on potential pests and diseases of man-made forests.

The important services provided by the Commonwealth Forestry Institute were recognized, and it was felt that ways of increasing support for all this work should be explored. Even if these positive steps were taken, however, it was realized that a substantial increase in the level of reforestation during the next decade would be necessary in order to contribute adequately to the future world needs of wood (including fuel-wood). This would only be possible if increased financing were available, especially for developing countries. All discussions reflected the concern felt over the current high rate of depletion of forests, especially in tropical regions, and the Conference accepted that the forestry profession has a major role to play in ensuring a continuous flow of goods and services from the land.

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