

Editor's Page

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Volume 13, Number 3, December 1977

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/ageo13_3ed01

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Publisher(s)

Maritime Sediments Editorial Board

ISSN

0843-5561 (print)

1718-7885 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this document

Pelletier, B. R. (1977). Editor's Page. *Atlantic Geology*, 13(3), iii–iii.

Editor's Page

In this closing number of Volume 13, we have devoted our entire Report section to several aspects of the geology of New Brunswick. Indeed, this is virtually a University of New Brunswick number as all reports emanate from either the St. John or Fredericton campus. For some time we have stressed the wider range in geological subjects that have been solicited from, or submitted by our area scientists and in the New Brunswick selection of papers, we have achieved that aim. Paleontology, sedimentology and stratigraphy are covered by R.K. Pickerill, structural geology by B.H. O'Brien, geophysical modelling by V.K. Gupta and K.B.S. Burke, and photo-interpretation of geological structures by W. Naing and E.Z. Lajtai. To these contributors and their excellent institution, MARITIME SEDIMENTS sends its congratulations and its thanks.

Now we would like to reflect on the business of science policy in government and one of its most important implications, and that is the authority to proceed on a scientific mission or research project providing funding is there. One may think that it is only a matter of money and that any project will move. But that is not the case in government. As in many social cases such as national health, education or personal security, legislation must exist before any aid can be rendered officially. And so it is with science; the legislation must be there as well as the policy with which to implement it. During the hard times of economic recession when cash flows seem to trickle, if not vanish altogether, cut-backs in funding are inevitable and, like education, science programs are amongst the earliest victims.

This unfortunate circumstance is true for many academic institutions as it is for the government laboratories and most certainly for a good deal of industry. Professionals should consider this as part of their dedication, that is, to work with each other towards a common goal of policy-setting for science. It should be given a high priority and should be carried in the By-Laws of professional organizations. This is not only for the good of the profession and the training of its ranks, but it is also for the well being of the public. Executive officers of such organizations have access to political offices which can help serve this cause. This is not to advocate the practice of influence peddling but rather to give notice that firm guidelines on the functioning of science nationally are required, and that their implementation can result in direct social benefit. Although we are addressing science broadly, there is no reason why independent private societies comprising geologists can not apply the pressure. A few years ago, this matter of the course of national science was raised by a Royal Commission in Canada, and it was discovered that no science policy existed for the country. This year, the government has indicated some relief for private research and development, and this is most welcome even though it could be ephemeral. However it lacks the substance required for the long-term planning that only a reasonably framed national science policy can offer those portions of the private and public sector engaged in science, as well as the workers who must establish their livelihoods in it and the students who must follow in the footsteps of their predecessors.

The government though, should not have to provide all the financing or the leadership, as this will erode the participation by industry and the long-standing liaison that industrial sponsorship and university research have enjoyed. It is still a fine sight to see laboratory equipment donated by mining companies, and special awards given by the petroleum industry; government grants may not exude this same professional bonding, but the material aid is by no means overlooked. It is a question of the personal identity of the donor, and the fact that government offices can be somewhat "faceless". However, generosity notwithstanding, all of us must continue to press for the political recognition that science rightly deserves.

B. R. PELLETIER, Editor