

ECOLOGY ACTION CENTRE

ANNUAL REPORT -- 1987/88

Presented at the Annual General Meeting

NS Museum

April 30, 1988

Introduction

1987/88 was the year that the environment really hit the headlines -- not because of new stories of environmental skullduggery and abuse, but because politicians finally realised, in the wake of the Brundtland Report, that their constituents really care about the state of the environment that their children and grandchildren will be inheriting. The phrase "sustainable development" is now heard not only on the lips of environmental "subversives", but from industrialists and cabinet ministers.

A number of encouraging new initiatives have resulted at both the federal and provincial levels. The challenge of 1988/89 will clearly be to turn this new-found enthusiasm into real change, and to develop conservation strategies which really affect economic and social decision making.

The Ecology Action Centre has also had an eventful year, with various upheavals, and the usual funding crises. But overall, the general change in the political climate has been most encouraging. We certainly do not want to lose our critical edge, but it is also nice to know that we are being viewed with more respect and interest these days, and not just as "the enemy".

Relations with the Provincial Government

1987/88 brought us three Ministers of the Environment. The second, the Honourable Roland Thornhill, instigated an exciting flurry of activity at the Department of the Environment, introducing amendments to the Pest Control Products Act, the Dangerous Goods and Hazardous Wastes Management Act, the Environmental Protection Act and the Water Act. He also introduced new bills for Environmental Assessment, the Clean Nova Scotia Foundation and Derelict Vehicles, and established a Task Force on Non-Returnable Containers. EAC opened discussions with Mr Thornhill on a number of issues, including recycling, hazardous waste management, and the idea of provincial core funding for environmental organizations.

At EAC's last AGM the annual Tarred Duck Award was awarded to the provincial government for failing to sign the acid rain agreement. No doubt severely chagrined by this dubious distinction, the Province has finally signed up. (The Sunshine Award was given to Charlie Restino for his work on behalf of sustainable forestry).

EAC, through its Parks and Conservation Committee, made a submission to the Parks and Outdoor Recreation Policy Review Task Force, which was very well received. A general presentation on EAC's work was also made to the All Party Standing Committee on Resources.

Work at the National Level

EAC continued to consult with Environment Canada and other federal departments, and to network with environmental groups through the Atlantic Environmental Network and the Canadian Environmental Network.

Susan Holtz served as a member of the Canadian Council of Resource and Environment Ministers' National Task Force on Economy and Environment, representing Canadian environmental groups. She also played a key role in the federal Energy Options Review, and in national consultation on the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, and the Environmental Assessment Review Process Review.

At the Centre

At the end of 1987, we regretfully had to say goodbye to our Co-ordinator, Liz Archibald Calder, who had served EAC faithfully and inspired us all with her enthusiasm, good humour and tenacity for five years. Liz has moved to Chatham in New Brunswick, and is already in the thick of environmental affairs there.

The Centre continued to operate without permanent staff for much of the year, thanks to the wonderful efforts of our committed volunteers. In the new year we hired two co-ordinators, who like to think of themselves as the Executive-Director-with-Two-Heads: Cris Pekarik, who was already well known to members of EAC as the editor of Between the Issues, and Lois Corbett from New Brunswick.

EAC also said goodbye to a number of board members. It was with particular regret that we saw Murray Davidson depart to Toronto. Murray had been EAC's Treasurer and financial advisor for a long time, and we have yet to find a replacement.

Communications

EAC continued to publish Between the Issues regularly, and received many compliments on contents and design. The radio show, Earth Calling, was also broadcast on Mondays on CKDU throughout the year, featuring a wide variety of issues and interviews.

The Resource Centre

Catherine Pross, Director of the Resource Centre, continued her work on the computerized bibliography, which is now finished and is awaiting publication by the Dalhousie School of Information Sciences.

Fund-Raising

The main fund-raising events of the year were an appeal letter to our members who responded very generously; the annual auction, once again starring the inimitable John Dunsworth as auctioneer; and a new venture - a door-to-door household canvass, co-ordinated by Frank Sloane, who had done similar work for Pollution Probe. The canvass, which took place in Bedford and Dartmouth, was reasonably successful, and gave EAC's membership a substantial boost. Unfortunately it had to end because Halifax has a very restrictive by-law, which would only allow us to canvass in the city for a few weeks in the summer.

A fund-raising raffle is now underway. The main prize, generously provided by Air Canada, is two tickets to the island of St Lucia to take an environmental tour of the rainforests, turtle-nesting beaches, and other special places.

Committees

Two new committees during the year: the International Development Committee, which sponsored a number of public events; and the new Recycling Committee (EAC has had a number of Recycling Committees over the years). The Committees will be giving their own separate reports.

Projects

In 1987/88 EAC found itself getting heavily into garbage. Our Environment Week project was a public information program on household hazardous waste, funded jointly by Environment Canada and the NS Department of Environment. An information pamphlet was widely distributed, and recipients were encouraged to send in for a copy of the Household Waste Information Kit, which also contained pamphlets on recycling, managing hazardous wastes, composting, and other issues.

The second part of the project was to start organizing for a special Household Hazardous Waste Day in 1988, by setting up an intergovernmental and community support committee. This project received tremendous support, particularly from the municipalities, and also a considerable boost when the provincial Hazardous Waste Task Force specifically recommended that such a community-based project should go ahead. The Province did not immediately offer financial backing, but has now given its blessing and substantial funds, so the project is back on track -- with a projected target date in October. EAC is hoping to be able to run drop-off depots in both Halifax and Dartmouth.

The other aspect of our preoccupation with garbage is the promotion of recycling, and this year's Environment Week project is to produce a special edition of Between the Issues on recycling in Nova Scotia, with a much increased print run.

A third project concerned the atmosphere. A special balloon launch was organized on the Dartmouth waterfront in March by Mary Rigby to alert people to the dangers of depleting the ozone layer. This event was co-ordinated with the Friends of the Earth's national Campaign.

Conclusion

For all the difficulties of losing Liz, and operating for so long on purely voluntary basis, the Centre accomplished a great deal last year. With our new staff people, new faces