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CANADIANS IN CONVERSATION ABOUT THE FUTURE

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Office of the Science Advisor

Report No. 12

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A working document for the Conserver Society theme of advanced Concepts Centre

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CANADIANS IN CONVERSATION ABOUT THE FUTURE

I. INTRODUCTION

> What do you understand to be going on today--in your community, your province, Canada, the world? Pick the starting point that most appeals to you.
>
> What are your images of a most likely and/or most desirable future?
>
> What do you consider the most critical issues which will determine whether or not we achieve a viable future?

These were the three broad opening questions which were posed in conversations with about 120 Canadians in the course of a project undertaken for the Advanced Concepts Centre of Environment Canada over the period from July 1974 to early May 1975. This paper is a report on those conversations, where they have led and what seem to be the implications emerging from them.

The paper is addressed to all interested and concerned Canadians who may, as seems so frequently the case today, be asking themselves, in the words of an old hymn, "whither goest thou and whither tending?", or in more popularized language: "why does everything seem to be breaking down? Is the party over? What is happening? What will the future bring? Where are we going?"

Readers of this paper will not find a blueprint purporting to lay out the course or courses along which the winds of the future will carry us. What appears here is more of a collage of impressions drawn from conversations with only a few of the people in this country to whom it was suggested I turn in the course of this project. As the next section will explain in more detail, the project was an attempt to assist the newly-formed Advanced Concepts Centre in determining the questions which its work might most usefully address. But, apart from being of interest to the Centre, it was hoped that a public report might emerge as a stimulus to broader public debate about the present Canadian environment, and about the possibilities and the critical choices that appear to be facing us.

This project has for me been an unforgettable experience. The opportunity to travel across the country, to meet with so many interesting people, to get a sense of the rich diversity of this country which, as a fifth generation Canadian, I had taken on faith but had never before sampled so extensively, were among the personal satisfactions I gained from this exercise. The opportunity to make new friends and to meet again with old ones, to become acquainted with some very interesting men and women whose paths I might otherwise never have crossed, all helped to overcome the drain on physical and psychic energies, the inevitable frustration at the imposition of the clock which brought many conversations to an end with a jumble of threads still dangling, and the frequent fear that the wealth and the diversity of the material I was collecting would prove impossible to bring together in any coherent way.

I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to each and every person who participated in this project. Many gave of their time and talents in incredibly generous ways. To those who contributed yet a second time by responding with their comments and criticisms to an earlier version of this paper, a special thank you.

Special thanks too to the group at the Centre. Bob Durie, its director, was always willing to offer his advice and support when I needed it most. Two friends and colleagues on contract with the Centre also contributed their advice, suggestions and support throughout the project; Ruben "Butch" Nelson of Square One Management acted as a valuable sounding board in relating what I was hearing with his work on Cultural Paradigms, and Louise Beaulieu volunteered to undertake some of the conversations in Québec so that French speaking Canadians could converse in their own language (a facility in which I am still sadly deficient). In preparing this report, Alma Norman helped to keep me from falling into the jargon of specialized disciplines, and Barbara Moore contributed her editorial skills in the last minute rush to attempt to improve its flow. Outside the Centre, Janet Somerville and Grant Maxwell on more than one occasion took time to share with me progress reports on the survey work they were undertaking for two religious groups, surveys which promise to provide further impressions about the current and unfolding Canadian context. And others will perhaps recognize, from a word here and a phrase there, contributions they have made to my own learning in earlier days. To all, my grateful thanks.

II. A WORD ABOUT THIS PAPER

How to "put it all together?" After undertaking a series of conversations around such broad questions, how does one begin to distill what was said, to analyse and weigh the issues that were identified, and then to draw up a report which does not run to epic proportions? The task seemed impossible, perhaps not for artists or novelists, but certainly for me.

I had collected a wealth of material; but much of it, at least at first glance, appeared very disparate, each conversation taking its own unique direction. Some of these conversations lasted little more than an hour; others were much longer, permitting a broader range of opinion to emerge and opportunity to engage in exploration in greater depth; a few were more specialized, as I took advantage of the opportunity presented to seek out expert advice about some of the scenarios others had presented (the possibility of international monetary collapse, new concepts apparently emerging from some government programs). Immediately after most conversations, I had made extensive notes about the major topics which had been touched upon. Other notes reflected on discussions which took place in small groups who invited me to join them as they wrestled with issues of concern to them which appeared relevant to this project. Others recorded the highlights of more formal conferences I attended (Ethics and Public Policy in Halifax in August, 1974, a New College Symposium on the Future in mid-winter); and finally there was another set of notes made during seminars sponsored by the Advanced Concepts Centre over the last year at which guest speakers spoke informally of their work and shared their concerns. I had also taped some of the conversations I had, though not many.[1] Certainly there was no lack of material to draw upon, but initial attempts to organize it and write about it defeated me.

Turning to friends and colleagues for advice, I received conflicting suggestions. "You must be scrupulously and self-consciously honest - keep yourself and your biases and concerns

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[1] *Some of those with whom I spoke did not wish the conversation to be recorded -- too impersonal, too distracting; other conversations were held in places where the use of a tape recorder was not feasible.*

out of it." But how? I did not play the role of an objective answer-seeker in these conversations, merely checking off the votes for this scenario or that, this issue or the other. Instead, I entered into the conversations, at times suggesting another way of looking at an issue, at times presenting alternative views others had talked about, and at times raising questions about the relationships among separate strands in the discussion.

Another suggestion was to "look over your notes, think about their contents, then throw them away and write what you think." But then such a report would be a manipulation of the project and might well bias from the outset any public discussion to which it was expected to contribute, to say nothing of the fact that I had been asked to report on what others were saying.

Fortunately chance, born of desperation, intervened to resolve this conundrum, at least to my satisfaction (and apparently largely to the satisfaction of the readers of an earlier version of this report). Starting once again from the beginning with a review of each conversation, I noted the main points on separate scraps of paper. These I arranged on the dining room table and then began to play with them, organizing them in columns around common topics. What then emerged was a patterning to the flow of the arguments - and a way of organizing them into the broad issue themes found in Section VII. But what also became visible was the possibility of making an ecological game out of the many scraps of paper - everything <u>is</u> connected to everything else. By moving some of these quotes from one column to another, one could see connections and linkages among the separate strands in the arguments emerging from individual conversations. Another game - a conversational game - came to mind: by switching yet again the scraps of paper one could easily imagine very interesting conversations among a number of small groups of two or three, conversations in which some of the discussion might be extended and perhaps some apparent disagreement dispelled through a process of clarifying assumptions, language, definitions, and so on.

Out of this process of "deep play", the style of the interim report and of this paper emerged. I decided to try to reflect the conversational style of the process in the report itself and to use the quotes both to speak to the common themes and, to a much more limited extent, to link the issues to one another. I would try to write as simply as I could and to address those countless thoughtful Canadians I did not have an opportunity to speak with during this project. This report, then, would not be the kind that is so often addressed to governments or published by them,

full of the jargon of specialized expertise, laden with footnotes citing a myriad of external authorities as a way of covering all risks. I also faced the fact that neither total objectivity nor total subjectivity was possible or appropriate; the former course would deny my own involvement in the process, the latter would mask diverging views.

The right hand pages which follow (except for Sections IX and X where the type used clearly indicates the use of the words of others) show my attempt to weave these conversations together. It is in essence an essay, an attempt at conceptual synthesis rather than description or even analysis, although there is analysis in it. Throughout this essay, I have used words or phrases which some might describe as "meaningless clichés" or as "requiring definition and precision", but frequently this has been done deliberately so that each reader could "image" a picture appropriate to her understanding of the context. It is therefore something of an amalgam, a synthesis of what I brought to the project and what I heard from others, an attempt to elucidate and explain, to evoke thoughtful reflection rather than hardnosed challenge, and especially it is designed as a working document, intended to invite its readers to enter the process and engage in their own work of exploring, extending, deepening and amending the discussion.

The left hand pages present some of the quotes extracted from notes and tapes. They serve both to highlight similar views and possible conflicts, and to a limited extent as reminders of arguments or points of view presented elsewhere in the paper. These pages also provide space for the reader's comments.

The sources of these quotes have not been identified by name for a number of reasons. First, as mentioned above, most of them were abstracted from my notes rather than from direct transcription of individual conversations. I have not had an opportunity to vet each of these quotes with its source. I did ask those readers of the interim report whose conversations I had used in this way to correct any distortions that might inevitably have crept in, but I have not heard from all of them; nor did time permit making a similar request of those interviewed in the last stages of this project. Secondly, many persons spoke freely and frankly in personal conversation with me and therefore I was anxious to afford their views anonymity. And finally, I also thought it desirable that all views be accorded equal treatment without regard to rank, position, age or sex.

There may be some who, as some readers of the interim version warned, might find this technique distracting. If this proves to be the case, let me suggest that the paper does not require a reading of the left hand pages to be understood; it stands complete on its own. A reader new to the themes presented here might therefore read only the right hand pages the first round, then come back again with an eye to the quotes (After all, this is a working document).

And so, with this word of explanation, on to what follows. Section III elaborates on the project, its aims and its method. The next two sections set out the collage of images about Canada today and in the future, and Section VI looks briefly at the adequacy of the "Conserver Society" as a symbol of the future. Section VII is the critical part of the discussion; it deals at length with the half-dozen broad themes under which I grouped the issues raised in the interviews, issues which those with whom I spoke identified as facilitating or impeding our ability to achieve a desirable future. Section VIII contains a resumé of the major implications emerging from this enquiry, while Section IX suggests the need for a national dialogue involving all interested Canadians; it speculates, with the assistance of some of the readers of the earlier report, on some of the possible perspectives around which to mount such a dialogue, and as well raises some of the caveats that must be considered if it is not to be emasculated. At the risk of adding to the indigestion of its readers, this working document concludes with Section X, "Food for Further Thought", a set of extracts from many of the comments on the draft paper which reflect on the themes presented here and, at times, go beyond them to extend the discussion.

III. THE PROJECT – WHAT IT TRIED TO DO, WHY AND HOW

This Conserver Society Project was designed in the summer of 1974 in response to a request from the Advanced Concepts Centre, a newly formed group within the Department of the Environment. The Centre first made its appearance on paper in 1970 when the Department was created from the former Department of Fisheries and Forestry and from parts of the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. At that time, there was perceived to be a need for a place within the Department where "environment" could be examined in all its dimensions, in broader context than those aspects of the physical environment which fell under the mandate of Environment Canada's predecessor departments.

The Centre itself did not come into being until 1973 when its first Director, Dr. R.W. Durie, was appointed. In that interval, the new field of "futures studies" had emerged in a variety of governmental and private institutions around the world. Under the rubric of futures studies, efforts were being made to look ahead into the future in new ways and in a time frame inclusive of, but longer than, that ordinarily within the focus of long-range policy planning units. The need for such a perspective was given impetus by a number of events, perhaps most particularly by the publication in 1972 of "The Limits to Growth", a report for the Club of Rome. From the beginning, the Centre adopted as a central thrust for its responsibilities a "futures" perspective. It did so in recognition of the need to examine a range of alternative future possibilities affecting the Canadian physical and social environment, and to see whether it was possible to conceive of viable alternatives. Such a perspective, it was hoped, might help to avert premature foreclosing, through unquestioned policy premises and actions, of paths toward a number of alternative futures facing Canadians. In its work, the Centre is attempting to elucidate and raise awareness of those choices and to delineate the context within which policy alternatives are formulated.

"The Conserver Society" is one of a growing number of images around which discussions of alternative futures are now taking place. This particular label has come to connote a shift towards a society whose predominant thrust is much less characterized by high consumption lifestyles--by unrestrained economic growth --

"I'm not terribly concerned with the 'limits to growth' debate. Certain resources may be limited, but one must, in the first instance, know how resources are now being used."

"Over the past 30 years, there has been a tremendous deterioration in the quality of our national diet. I am convinced that, as a result, there has been an increase of criminal behavior, antisocial behavior, mental illness and a large number of physical illnesses. It seems to me that, in any proper examination of future trends, these factors ought to be taken into account."

than is our society today. Thus, much of the work undertaken under this label has leapt quickly to address the issues of "zero growth" and "the stable state", and to focus on problems of reducing resource waste. Such approaches have inherent in them the assumption, frequently an implicit one, that the central issue shaping pathways to a future is one of more rational resource allocation. The persuasiveness of this assumption stems from the increasingly visible and dire warnings that life on this planet, as we now have it, cannot for much longer be sustained if we continue to waste our natural resources, contaminate the air we breathe and damage the ozone layer surrounding the earth.

However, not all are convinced of the validity of this assumption. Many persons point to the richness of Canada's natural resource base. While they advocate the need for conservation and for better stewardship of our resources, they would argue that Canada's wealth of mineral and water resources is more than adequate, and that science and technology will resolve such problems as resource shortages, the development of alternative energy sources, and ways and means of containing environmental damage. Instead, many of them profess much greater concern for problems emerging in the social environment. They point with alarm, for example, to the persistent and deepening problems of poverty, inflation, crime, and to the symptoms of alienation exhibited by an increasing number of groups within our society -- by the poor, senior citizens, women, native peoples, youth. These are problems which arise not so much from the issue of limits and amounts, but from the issue of how what we have is shared. They allege that these problems constitute threats to our social fabric of a more immediate and far more serious nature than do the "gloom and doom" forecasts of those concerned with resource shortages and environmental deterioration. And there are even some who allege that the enduring and deepening social problems afflicting all industrialized countries, coupled with the warning signs about the damage we are inflicting on the physical environment, are signaling the decline, and the ultimate death, of Western civilization.

In the light of these conflicting views about what the present situation is signaling, the Advanced Concepts Centre decided to initiate, as part of its Conserver Society theme, this particular project -- a set of unstructured conversations with some Canadians across the country. It did so in recognition of the dangers of moving too rapidly to accept any one of the prevailing hypotheses about the nature of the critical choices which appear to lie immediately ahead of us. To make such pre-judgment without

"It's so unusual for a 'fed' to come here to listen and not to tell, to spend as much time as we've just shared ... is this an indication of the new Ottawa mode of enquiry? If so, I'm all for it."

"Had you come with a questionnaire or even a set list of questions to check out with me, we wouldn't have been able to raise the issues we've just been discussing, and in my opinion they are the crucial ones."

sounding the views of Canadians outside the Centre and the Department might well lead to irrelevant research, to ill-conceived and misguided policy suggestions, and even to a diminishing of the possibilities of achieving a viable future if ill-founded suggestions were to become embedded in policy. Sensitive to the frequency with which policies emerge from misguided research and aware of the even more numerous research efforts whose only outcome is to add to the mountain of yellowing and dusty reports which shelter much of the Ottawa bureaucracy from the reality perceived by most Canadians, the Centre was anxious that its work encompass an appreciation of the context in which all of us in this country find ourselves.

It was therefore decided to design this project as a vehicle through which to elicit a range of views that Canadians have of the future and of the factors facilitating or impeding the achievement of future alternatives, and to do so without making *a priori* assumptions about the fit of those views with the conservation theme implicit in "The Conserver Society" label. In other words, the project would not take a deterministic stance and attempt to test an already developed theory. Instead it would adopt a more open-ended approach and deliberately try to elicit a full range of features describing future states that Canadians conceive to be most desirable and/or most likely and the issues foreseen in the present as affecting our future. It was felt that this approach would help to provide a context within which further work on this theme might be developed.[1]

Once this was decided, then the issue became how to go about the process of eliciting such views. In considering this question, it was clear that the usual social science survey techniques would be inadequate. They would likely solicit only superficial views bounded by pre-selected questions demanding little more than "yes or no" answers. Nor did a Delphi technique appear to offer much greater potential. That technique rests not only on confidence that a small panel of "experts" can be identified and convened, confidence which has frequently been undermined by actual experience, but on the attainment of consensus. Since the very question of who are "experts" is at issue in an exercise of this sort, and since in the nascent phase of this enquiry the seeking of consensus seemed far too premature, the Delphi was seen to be inappropriate.

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[1]Other projects under this theme include a survey of *Environmentally Appropriate Technology*, a working paper by Bruce McCallum of the Centre; the Centre is also a lead agency in a Federal Core Group evaluating a Conserver Society project being undertaken by the GAMMA/INCEP foundation in Montréal.

"What do you think will happen when you submit your report? I can't believe the bureaucracy or the politicians will understand or believe it. They'll feel too threatened by it."

"I'm not at all optimistic that your report will make any impression on Ottawa. In fact, the one useful thing that may come from your project is that you are helping to put people who take these concerns seriously in touch with one another."

Instead, what appeared to offer greater opportunity for wide-ranging exploration was face-to-face dialogue with a number of Canadians in which the concerns of each person interviewed could be explored around a few broad opening questions. In such discussions, those involved would be encouraged to speak personally, rather than as representatives of any institution or specific role, and to give rein to a fuller expression of their views than could be captured by any questionnaire.

The three questions noted in the introduction were then selected as providing broad opening avenues into the discussions. Responses to the first two questions would hopefully provide some impressions about where we as Canadians stand in 1974/75, the most likely future directions that seem to be opening before us, and a broadbrush sketching in of some of the elements of a most desirable future. From these impressions then would emerge opinions on the more significant question -- those themes, issues or concepts which, depending on our capacity to deal with them, are the critical factors determining the kind of future society we will create for ourselves and the kind of people we will become.

Clearly, this sort of project would succeed or fail depending upon the selection of those who might usefully contribute their views, as well as on the capacity of the interviewer both to encourage open and free-wheeling discussion and to hear what was being said.

Potentially, all Canadians have something useful to contribute to any discussion about the sort of society they would like to live in. Sheer numbers, of course, precluded conversations with all Canadians. Instead, suggestions as to whom to approach were drawn from three channels:

a) a small group (twenty or so) of persons from across Canada involved in what could be described as the first "futures" exercise legitimated by the federal government -- an enquiry into the conceptual foundations underpinning social policy undertaken in 1970-71;

b) suggestions which came from federal officials whom the Director of the Centre approached for their comments on the project and for their advice as to who might be contacted; and

c) suggestions elicited from each of the persons interviewed with respect to others whose views might add useful insights to the project.

"Something is happening in our society today. A malaise has set in. We're beginning to see the extent to which we have built cities in cold, machine-like, inhuman forms and have treated people as machines as well."

"I wouldn't call myself an extreme pessimist, but I'm more convinced that we're headed for serious stress and strife."

"I've never been so pessimistic. I see our problem worsening rapidly, yet our government leaders exhibit either inertia or unwillingness to do anything other than maintain the status quo. Or perhaps stupidity and hypocrisy are more accurate descriptors of their mentality."

One of the hypotheses made in designing the project had quickly to be discarded as erroneous--the hypothesis that the list of names of those suggested as critical to involve in the project would fairly rapidly begin to close and the same names begin to be repeated, thus throwing up indicators as to where (in what cities and towns) time might most usefully be spent and with whom. In fact this did not happen. Far more persons were suggested as potentially important contributors to the project than could possibly be contacted, even in the course of two or three visits to the same locale. Finding in many cases little convergence among the various channels from which names were suggested, there were many times when more of a "pot luck" approach was resorted to--making appointments with those who were free when I was in their area, seeking persons potentially capable, on the basis of the information given me, of bringing a particular perspective to bear and, on a few occasions, seeking specialized advice on specific topics.

The time required to pursue the concerns raised in the course of each conversation was also much longer than had been anticipated. At the end of many three-hour discussions, the persons with whom I talked expressed frustration that we were only just beginning to get into the depths of their concerns, an assessment with which I agreed. Most of those with whom I spoke entered fully into the conversation--rather than standing outside it, they gave of themselves and shared their impressions and their concerns in ways that would undoubtedly not have been offered in a more structured interview or questionnaire format. Their interest in the project and in continuing the discussion was one of the reasons prompting the preparation of an interim report, essentially an initial version of this paper. It was hoped that the interim report would serve as a vehicle through which those conversations could be continued and the issues touched upon pursued in a more sustained and systematic fashion than is possible in one-to-one conversations. As indicated in the last two sections of this paper, this hope was well-founded.

Another factor which had not been sufficiently foreseen was the drain on the physical and psychic energies of the investigator. As many travellers well know, three or four weeks "on the road" are extremely taxing physically. But this enquiry served to point to the need to be alert to psychic energy drain as well. Intellectual energies were stretched to the fullest on many occasions, in a struggle to find common language through which to understand what was being said by persons speaking from their particular specialized perspectives. In addition, many of my

"The thesis that economic growth is coming to be questioned in certain parts of Anglophone Canada but not in Québec is false. The myth that Québec is different on the growth issue is really our fault. We have convinced les Anglais - and worse, we have convinced ourselves - that we are different. It used to go: 'we are more emotional, more jovial, less interested in the grubbiness of commerce ...' Now it has become: 'we are more growth-oriented, more technocratic, ...' Actually, in many fundamental ways, Québecois are North Americans and aspire to the same kinds of things that Anglo-Saxons do."

"Given the broad context of issues which must be resolved, I find the problems of Québec or even of Canada to be rather irrelevant. I am very alarmed at the scope of our planetary problems, and even more alarmed at the inability of governments to really talk to these issues in a non-chauvinistic way, let alone to do anything about them. There doesn't seem to be anyone capable of coming to grips with these issues and that frightens me."

"I would characterize Québec as a society which is ending its industrial revolution, with some elements of a post-industrial society present."

"I found out what affluence means a few weeks ago. I went from Halifax to a conference in Vancouver and there was a large high rise public building almost ready to be opened. I couldn't believe it when I saw a huge Douglas Fir being transplanted in the grounds in front of the building. That's affluence -- when you can afford that kind of money on landscaping."

conversations were permeated with emotion--deep feeling, troubling conviction and even black despair tinged many conversations about the dilemmas facing us and about our ability to work ourselves out of them. To some extent, this was relieved by laughter about the absurdity of the human condition and by the excitement and challenge of the possibilities and opportunities that appear to be opening before us. But only the most hardened "objectivists"--and I am not one of them--could have walked away from many of the conversations I had with little or no drain on their psychic energies.

For these reasons, the number of persons approached was fewer than had been anticipated, although the time spent in the course of the project was longer. Also eating into time spent "on the road" was the mounting interest in the project expressed by federal officials, both within the Department of the Environment and in other federal departments and agencies, interest which was both critical and supportive. Many officials did respond to the invitation of the Director of the Centre to contribute to the project, requesting the opportunity to discuss its perceived merits and faults and its potential relevance to specific departmental concerns. The nature of their responses fell into two categories. Some were very supportive and even highly enthusiastic about the potentials of the proposed approach. Suggestions about avenues of enquiry relevant to their institutional interests were many and varied and some exceeded what could realistically be expected from this enquiry. e.g.:

> *"I would like to know how Canadians form and shift their values--what those values are now and what they might be in the future."*
>
> *"I hope you will be able to get some assessment about what the role of science might be in a Conserver Society."*

I hope they will not be entirely disappointed with the broadbrush impressions I have attempted to sketch in response to these questions in later sections of this report.

Other officials were skeptical, if not dismayed, by the proposed method. Criticisms about the lack of a tight, scientifically designed structure were frequent focal points for such discussions. A few comments contained an implicit view that what might be a more appropriate approach would be to define the parameters of a "Conserver Society" and then collect evidence to support or refute it. Some of these tensions evaporated in the course of

"People should not have to undergo change at the speed it's taking place today -- it's just not human."

"By putting distance between the actors and those affected by the act, we condition ourselves to inflict savagery on others."

"The public is now distrustful of corporations. It is no longer possible to buy a quality product; everyone is getting shafted regardless of where they stand on the income ladder. Corporate ends and objectives, once regarded as serving the needs of the public, are now regarded as immoral. So too are government ends, though Canadians haven't really absorbed the lessons of Watergate - that politicians generally are no longer wise and moral persons, that power indeed corrupts."

"Our society is a society of prostitutes. We have all prostituted ourselves to money-making."

"The argument that Western societies face a crisis is a form of racism. The Arabs wake up and demand a bit of money for their oil and everyone screams crisis."

"People are beginning to downplay technological values and to let aesthetic values emerge. Man the problem solver is beginning to give way to persons who see life not as a series of problems to be solved, but in part as a mystery to be marvelled at."

"I see little evidence, apart from the native peoples, that Canadians are discontented with their lifestyles. I think some of the talk in the literature and elsewhere about the need for cultural transformation is sheer nonsense. The evidence is to the contrary - Western culture is aspired to all over the world. We do however need to conserve our resources - we're much too wasteful."

"I'm becoming increasingly impatient with bureaucrats, academics and others who portray growing pessimism about where we're headed. The way to get rid of the pessimism is to get out and do things with people. Then you discover that there is all sorts of room to solve small problems and in the process to raise consciousness about the larger issues."

"Change is happening faster than we might realize -- in dress, in public consciousness about the pollution issue -- the degree to which public attitudes have changed in the last few years is really astonishing."

ensuing discussions when reasons for the approach chosen were more fully explained and when the potential relationship of this project to other work undertaken at the Centre or supported by it were outlined. But on balance, firm reservations were lodged about the usefulness of undertaking such an open-ended project design, and those federal officials who constrained their views to a bureaucratic perspective expressed a clear preference for a more tightly structured approach and a more broadly representative sample. (Note: Appendix A contains preliminary and tentative assessments from project directors undertaking somewhat similar surveys of different sections of the Canadian populace; these two projects adopted different techniques and raised different, though broadly related questions; they seem of interest in cautious juxtaposition to the impressions reported in this document.)

This response was in marked contrast to the reception accorded the project by those outside the federal bureaucracy. Overall, the welcome I received was heartening in its warmth. Having said that, it must also be noted that that warmth was often accompanied by skepticism that anything would come of the results of this enquiry in terms of prompting an adequate federal response to it. The warmth with respect to the project has continued and even intensified as comments on the interim report gradually find their way to me.

As mentioned above, the interest expressed by many of those with whom I spoke in pursuing the discussion was one reason prompting the interruption of the conversational process to undertake an interim report. There were others. These included the request by the Director of the Centre to do so in order to begin the process of generating internal discussion about the initial findings (in part because of the interest he indicated in what I had been reporting verbally, and in part to save my time since the "Conserver Society" theme had, in the fall and winter months, gained considerable currency in Ottawa). In the course of trying to determine the appropriate response to the Director's request, a review of notes and tapes forced me to take account of the extent of synthesizing which appeared necessary to make sense of the material collected. The danger in such a course was that in the process of synthesizing, my own prejudices and biases would intervene to such an extent that those with whom I talked would not wish to associate themselves with the final paper. I therefore thought it not only useful to me but fair to all participants in these conversations to attempt an interim report for them to read.

"I'm not convinced that the current energy shortage is real, nor that resources shortages in any form pose a deep problem for this country, nor am I ready to accept what the environmentalists would evoke - the need for a fundamental shift in values. I am saying that there is a lot of discontent around, that we have created dehumanizing jobs, work places and communities, and I believe the time is ripe now to move to address those human needs. I believe that we in Canada are at the point where we face a critical decision -- will we buy deeper into the industrial era or will we move into a post-industrial society? I believe that the pill and the resulting decline in the rate of population increase mean that we can now divert our attention from the perceived need to provide quantities of jobs to the need to improve the quality of jobs."

"I'm optimistic about the future because of what I see happening now. Our current patterns of societal relations are visibly eroding and we're becoming aware of our own inadequacies. People are refusing to take meaningless jobs and to be pushed around by economic forces. They're making a stand and saying to those in power: 'Stop! No more!'

"The counter-culture, the racism problem, and now the no-growth movement are all cultural imports from the US. The transmission of such intellectual fashions tends to take longer in Québec because it has to go through the filtering process of language. The issue of no-growth has not yet been posed in Québec."

"In 30 or 40 years, I think we're going to be able to look back on the 1970's as years which marked the beginning of major cultural changes. One of the things I expect we'll be able to see then is that we began to move away from aggressive competition for income."

This task occupied all of February and March. Early April was spent in organizing the mailing to all those with whom I had talked at that stage (end of January--some 85 persons, mainly located in Ontario and Western Canada) and as well to a selection from the still growing list of persons in those same parts of the country with whom I had been unable to meet earlier, or whose names had emerged from more than one source since I had left their locale, or who seemed likely to read the document from an unusual perspective. The interim report was also used more selectively in the course of the ongoing interviews in Québec and the Atlantic region--selectively in the sense that it was mailed to those who, when contacted from Ottawa, expressed interest in the project but who were unable to meet with me; it was left behind following interviews with those who indicated not only interest in hearing further about the project but had time to comment before the deadline; and it was used as the only means, following the intervention of fog, of securing comments from Newfoundland in time to prepare this document. In all, some 175 copies were made available for comment to persons from a still-growing list (fifty copies were also distributed by the Director to federal public servants in Ottawa.)

Given the short turn-around time necessitated by the approaching deadline for this project (which converged with end-of-term tasks faced by those on university faculties), the responses to the interim report were heartening. Sixty responses were received at the time of writing (end-May) and another dozen have been promised--through letters or by telephone the latter group indicated broad overall approval of the interim report and, as well, expressed their willingness to comment at length even after the deadline had passed. What was perhaps most striking was the general tenor of the replies. Many, if not most, retained the conversational, reflective flavour of the interviewing process; some responded in detail to the invitation to share in fleshing-out what seemed to be the major implications of the project findings at that stage--the need to set in motion a national dialogue on the issues raised; and others went beyond the contents of the interim report to provide food for further thought on the issues identified.

Returning from a two-week series of conversations in the Atlantic provinces, and finding so many thoughtful and supportive replies already in, it was clear that a decision had to be made about the preparation of the final project report: whether to attempt to do full justice to the comments and suggestions received and therefore to request an extension of the delivery date of this report, or

"I'm giving a course on the future at the university. I find my students come into the course assuming the future will be like the present, but when we get into it, they get very depressed -- they seem to feel personally threatened."

"There are two characteristics becoming widespread which will preclude <u>any</u> future: psychological impotence and moral pessimism."

"The period ahead will confront Canadians with the issue of how to respond to the severe famine in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The real issue is that of deciding where our exports will go -- we can't possibly supply all the world's food needs."

to attempt within the short time remaining to accommodate as many of the suggestions as possible and to retain the flavour of a working document. Further reflection indicated the latter course appeared more appropriate. What seemed to be emerging through the responses was an indication that, in a small way, the national dialogue was beginning--such, at least, might be the implication to be drawn from the frequent expressions of surprise by individual respondents at the extent to which their opinions appeared to be more widely shared than they had perceived from the more isolated confines of their own communities. While many have quarrelled with some of the specific views expressed, the comments suggest that there exists a sufficient sharing of concerns among those who involved themselves in this project for further broadening and deepening of the dialoguing process, and growing interest if not excitement in doing so. This impression was strengthened by comments from Maritime participants who expressed little overall disagreement with the contents of the interim (I have yet to receive comments from French-speaking Québécois -- understandably since the pressure of the short turn-around time for comments in time for preparation of this report was aggravated by the fact that the document was in English).

In the light of the responses to date, it was decided to forego expending such time as would be necessary to take full account of so many useful suggestions in reworking the paper, hardening it and polishing it to whatever degree of perfection further effort on my part might bring forth. Instead what appeared to warrant greater concern was to attempt to keep open the participatory, evolving process of furthering the growing community of interest in these issues. The major part of this working document therefore has not been substantively altered from the interim report. The discussion of the critical issues identified (Section VII) goes only a small distance beyond the earlier version, weaving in the views gathered in the course of the last two months of the project in a paragraph here, a sentence or two there, as well as through the addition of numerous quotes Section VIII has been added in response to suggestions for the inclusion of a resumé. Section IX on emerging implications (entitled Epilogue in the interim) has been significantly expanded with direct assistance from several persons who offered varied and intriguing suggestions on the notion of a national dialogue. And the final section is also new; it contains comments from those who read the interim report which reflect upon and go beyond the major themes found in the earlier sections.

"We're likely to suffer through 20 years of adjustment in the relative prices of essential commodities, even at the cost of seeing millions of people die of starvation."

"I think our future will be settled around the issue of our exploitive relationships with the Third World. There has been a historic relationship between us and them, a mother-land-colony, metropole-hinterland relationship.....This exploitation is ... at the heart of our economy and our culture; it is part of our definition of ourselves -- unspoken and unthought of though that definition might be, it sure is operational. Facing that issue will decide our future, quant à moi."

"Even though I've been fighting for years for the rights of Acadians and consider environmental issues to be concerns of the middle class, I recognize that Acadians have far more than the Third World could dream of .... The only reason that we in the industrial world haven't been pushed off the face of the earth by the Third World is that they aren't powerful enough -- yet."

Thus, the clockwork rhythms of project deadlines merely bring to an end Phase I of this project. It is my hope that Phase II can now begin its own march to the tune of more human rhythms played by a growing number of drummers.

"If there is any kind of moral order, we deserve to have a future in which our society collapses...The Dark Ages were preliminary birth pangs to something better. Are we not into a similar situation today?"

"Our political leaders are taking the attitude that there is no crisis -- that problems either don't exist or can be fairly easily worked out. Will the depth of the crisis that is now upon us only penetrate their understandings after hundreds of thousands in the Third World starve to death? Or will it not happen until after our streets run with blood?"

"In Canada, the 'limits to growth' argument takes on a particular form because we are sitting on such vast resource wealth. The political claims we face from our industrial trading partners, particularly the US, the UK and Japan, and the moral claims of the Third World are two very powerful claims facing Canada when the crunch comes. Some sections of our population will resist each and that, divided as we now are, could increase societal breakup. We need to match our inner and our outer needs. I'm not clear how we will react - Canadians are capable of being chauvinistic and bloody-minded."

IV. CANADA 1974/75

From mid-1974 to the end of May 1975, the paradoxes inherent in the Canadian social fabric and in the political-socio-economic structure of industrialized countries generally came increasingly into public view. The continued disruptions in the internal and external markets for oil, the controversy over the proposed developments of the Athabasca Tar Sands, Churchill-Nelson and James Bay, the debates prompted by the population conference in Bucharest and the food conference in Rome, the slaughter of livestock by Canadian farmers, the Palestinian issue, the political corruption revealed in the Watergate trials in the United States, the egg marketing scandal in Canada, double digit inflation, growing unemployment, labour strikes and other indicators of spreading economic woes, all preoccupied the mass media. The impact of these events, compressed into a relatively short space of time, was accompanied by public concern about an apparent increase in violence in many Canadian communities, leading to the formation of at least one citizens' vigilante committee and to demands for the active use of the death penalty by proponents of law and order.

Nor were these events seen as temporary aberrations, annoying detours in the evolutionary unfolding of Canadian society along pathways to a future which would be much like the present, only better. Rather, they were in the main interpreted as an escalation in the rate at which symptoms of fundamental disease have been appearing not only on the Canadian landscape but around the world.

In this context, it was not surprising to find that the prevailing mood of most of those who contributed their views to this project can be captured in the bleak assessment that "things are going from not so good to incredibly worse." This mood of bleakness appeared to vary in intensity in the course of travelling from West to East. In Western Canada and in Ontario, those with whom I spoke used, on the whole, much blacker paint to portray impressions about our present society and our likely future than did those who live in Québec and the Atlantic regions.

Although "disaster scenarios" were part of almost every conversation, the sense of urgency and even of despair appeared to subside noticeably on crossing the Ontario border into Québec

and from there into the Maritimes. East of Ontario, there was a more marked tendency to regard the issues of environmental degradation and resource depletion as the concerns of the industrialized parts of North America and as their responsibility to deal with. The problems of culture, language and the nature and character of the relationships with the rest of Canada continue to preoccupy the intellectual energies of French-speaking Québécois. The cry for independence *per se* was said to be shifting to a different concept of *souveraineté-association,* but many remain convinced that the issue of development and control of its own resources must continue to be Québec's priority concern, and that environmental and resource depletion issues cannot be strongly addressed until such time as "Québec catches up with Ontario."

In the Maritimes, apart from Halifax where problems of urban growth were appearing, new concepts of development appear to be in the making -- concepts which attempt to build on indigenous human and natural resources. Many of those with whom I talked pointed with approval to the Cape Breton Development Corporation's efforts to support small industries appropriate to the traditional way of life of Cape Bretoners, and to the proposed Institute for Man and Resources about to be established in Prince Edward Island with the support of Premier Campbell and his government. This institute is to be concerned with, among other things, research and development of alternate (solar, wind, etc.) energy sources.

In Ontario and Western Canada, there was greater concern about the continued pace of industrialism, about the consequences that face mankind if we continue on this path, and about a felt deterioration in the quality of living. One panelist, summing up the first day's events at a Toronto symposium on the future, stated:

> *"We have seen the future and it doesn't work. One thing we cannot do is go on the way we are."*

And another asked:

> *"Do you hear what the students are saying? The reason they're interested in the future is that the present is so unbearable.*

In all but a few instances, those with whom I talked spoke of our situation today in language that was critical and often harsh. Canadian society was variously described as:

- *a society in which our former "definitions of social solidarity" are breaking down;*

- *confused and drifting, without a sense of purpose, a commitment to a common cause;*

- *savage and brutalizing;*

- *dehumanizing and alienating;*

- *a people who are like a bunch of money junkies, each prepared to kill for the next fix;*

- *a "throw-away" society with "throw-away" people;*

- *a factory more concerned with its outputs than with its people;*

- *a civilization of means rather than ends;*

- *a society of social workers in which every deviance is labelled a problem calling for a social service delivery system;*

- *composed of institutions -- governmental and corporate -- whose ends are clearly revealed as corrupt, bankrupt and immoral;*

- *tending to solve its problems through violence and thus to breed violence;*

- *a society whose peoples do not trust their own capacity for humane, sensitive and responsible action -- who are content to wait for others to lead;*

- *a nation which still behaves as if it were a colony, and whose disparate regions are colonies of a colony...*

A majority of those approached in the course of this project believe that, as Willis Harman has put it, we are choking on our successes. Something is seriously amiss in our society and we are rapidly approaching a crucial decision point, one much more demanding of fundamental change not only in values, attitudes and lifestyles but in some of the fundamental constructs upon which we have built our society and in some of the long-held myths and symbols around which we have organized ourselves and our

"I don't think change will come about either through government imposition, or through voluntary action. We don't have enough time to effect the creation of a new image. We're probably going to need a disaster or a bloody revolution -- and I'm not an advocate of that as any kind of solution. But I really believe the only thing to do is to minimize the casualties."

"Given the fact that we seem to have lost our sense of direction and that there is much talk of significant social change, there is a danger that what might happen is a "believer society" and even more fragmentation. What I fear might happen is the appearance of small groups, thinking they've got their own realities together, rushing out and proclaiming 'the word'. Since there is a growing yearning for something to fill the vacuum we're now in, there is the frightening prospect that they will quickly be seen to possess solutions. And when those solutions are in turn revealed to be bankrupt, then we're in real trouble."

"The warnings about the dangers we are inflicting on the physical environment make me very pessimistic. The most fundamental problem, if we're going to survive, is the need to abandon our present concepts of nation state and national sovereignty and to move toward a recognition of interdependence and some form of world government. I can't see that happening, or at least not soon enough. Yet I don't like the position that leaves me with -- that a major disaster of some sort is needed before we can recognize the need for this fundamental change."

"The psychological casualties of a significant social and cultural change are being ignored, and psychologists are little help in addressing this question."

"We are experiencing a failure of nerve and when that's what is happening, the danger is that the irrational takes over."

institutions. Clearly, these views reflect that what is at issue involves much more than mere tinkering with existing systems and recourse to better planning.

Not all interpretations of "what's happening today" were so critical of the current environment. Citing the change in attitudes which is already underway, some thought that what was at issue was the failure of public policies to respond to these changes and to facilitate and support current attitudinal shifts. Even some of the severest critics of today's society took note of what they saw to be desirable shifts in consciousness and awareness on the part of many individuals and small groups. Attempts to mesh changing understandings with personal lifestyles are underway; some mentioned various ways in which they themselves had changed their own living patterns, or commented on the shift away from high oriented-consumption lifestyles which they had observed in their personal contacts with friends, neighbours or students. There was virtually unanimous criticism of institutional failure to facilitate such shifts in the changed consciousness of a significant segment of the Canadian population. The view was frequently expressed that the small and diverse steps now underway as experiments in less materialistic and more humane lifestyles were bumping up against stone walls of institutional regulations which made further stages in such experiments difficult, if not futile.

But it is clear that significant distinctions emerged among those involved in this project. Among those interviewed, there appeared to be little disagreement that present trends cannot continue for long. But there was substantial disagreement over the issue of whether our present social structures could adjust to the changing trends emerging in both the physical and social environments, or whether these structures themselves require fundamental alteration. Each facet of this argument had its supporters and its opponents. However, once the conversation shifted from the present to the future, the pendulum shifted somewhat more in the direction of suggesting that what is at issue is fundamental transformation of our social structures. At the very least, it is my impression that even those who shied away from aligning themselves firmly with such a view would not summarily reject such a possibility.

"A PQ victory in Québec on the basis of a moderate platform would result in federal intervention - the 'crise d'octobre' allowed us to have a preview of what federal plans are. The English will seek confrontation. Given this situation, what will the multi-nationals do? My own opinion is that they will encourage the federal government to clean house in Québec. After all, Québec represents for them a valuable source of natural resources and cheap labour. They want order above all. Ultimately, I suspect the PQ may give up independence altogether - it may be completely bought off. The overall situation would remain the same. Canada would have bought herself another 25 years of "peace". ... The phenomenon of buying out the opposition is very common in colonized countries."

"The immigration issue is turning people ugly. Many French-Canadians are frightened because they see their birth rates falling. This is made worse by an influx of immigrants who refuse to be assimilated into the Francophone community. The potential for racism is there."

"Violence and aggression are not innate in human beings - they are culturally conditioned."

V. CANADA FUTURE

Initial attempts to probe views about the future led quickly to the realization that this question needed to be broken into two parts -- images about a most likely future and images of a most desirable future. When views on a most desirable future were not specifically requested, discussions tended to focus exclusively on a variety of "disaster scenarios" seen as likely to confront us in the years immediately ahead. Even the responses to the query about a most desirable future were sketchy. Most of the participants appeared to believe that the inexorable march of events and a vacuum of leadership are pushing us more quickly than we realize -- or had already done so -- to the point where reasoned contemplation and discussion about alternative futures would be forced to give way to *ad hoc* responses to a series of impending crises. While some might characterize these views as "gloom and doom", others see in them only a realistic appreciation of the range of alternative futures visible from our present perspective. Much like the "limits to growth" argument, they suggest that these crises are likely to happen if we do not change direction.

a) images of a most likely future

Two crises or disasters were consistently referred to as probable events which would have significant impact on Canadians:

- an international monetary collapse, possibly by 1980, on a scale similar to or greater than the events of the 1930's; and

- the food crisis affecting countries of the Third World.

The first of these events, were it to materialize, would force Canada, and other industrial countries, to cut back consumption, at least temporarily. The food crisis is of a different sort. What is seen to be at issue here is not that Canadians will starve or be affected except in marginal ways by food shortages. Rather what is at issue is the nature of our response to the starvation affecting the Third World, and the impact that response will have

"The last national event we had in this country was the federal election of 1974. Despite the fact that there were a host of fundamental issues that needed to be addressed, what happened during the campaign? -- it became the great national yawn."

"One of the things I notice today is the number of people who are buying their piece of land in rural areas as psychic fall-out shelters. That's a symptom of the mood of increasing desperation, of people seeing our problems magnifying and worsening but feeling unable to cope with them. It wouldn't surprise me to find the future one of an emerging garrison state - authoritarian and vulnerable."

"I live in Québec now because the alternative survival system is stronger here than anywhere else in the world. That's why there will never be a revolution here -- people have learned to survive in their heads."

on us as people.

Despite the many attempts which have taken place over the last ten years or more to shore up international liquidity, the international monetary system is now facing rapidly mounting pressure due to rampant inflation throughout the industrialized world. This has been further exacerbated by the sharp financial dislocations brought about by the massive shift in funds flowing to oil-producing countries. That the actions of the OPEC nations with respect to oil will be followed by a series of cartels organized around other commodities important to the industrial world is not an unlikely eventuality. Given the persistent unwillingness of the industrial world to take effective action to deal with domestic inflation and to redress world disparities, many of those with whom I spoke saw little likelihood of escaping international monetary collapse. The view that the repercussions of such an event would be worse than the 30's stemmed from the feeling that the sense of security vested in social assistance programs would crumble under pressure, and that individuals and nation states would react angrily to the sudden realization that continuous and sustained increases in economic well-being, which many have held to be their sacred right, are no longer tenable. There was also concern expressed that an economic depression would be perceived and remedied within a conventional economic framework, with little or no attention directed to ways to turning such catastrophe into opportunities upon which to build a more human and less materialistic society.

The food crisis was seen to have different connotations. Here, the concern is with our response to the moral imperative inherent in the claims of the peoples of the Third World for a human existence. We could respond to this issue by dramatic but token food aid programs ("single-scale vision"), accompanied by moralizing admonitions about the need for the countries affected to implement population policies. Or we could move to assist countries experiencing famine not only through food relief but through more lasting and significant forms of assistance, by providing not only fertilizer and other technologies designed to assist those countries to help themselves (the technological solutions), but by significantly restructuring the industrial philosophy which has bred starvation in the Third World. Canada's official position at the World Food Conference in Rome suggests that the former will be our response. If this is the case, then we will bear a measure of responsibility for the ultimate starvation of millions of people. Furthermore we will participate in their misery through the medium of television. As one person wondered: "What will a purely token response do to us as persons and to our

"I find it impossible to think of the future in any but the most abstract terms, since it's impossible to imagine the sorts of technologies that will come into being and that will have impacts as significant as the automobile has been in this generation. But it is clear that what will determine whether or not we have a future at all is a more stable society, or at least a less destabilizing one. I see three prerequisites for stability: 1) the reduction of the risk of strife (from atomic and conventional warfare between nation states to strict controls on the use of guns); 2) population policy formulation; and 3) a shift to a Conserver Society through enhancing public understanding and education, and through leadership by governments."

"Thinking about environmental issues and even about a different future seems a very hard thing for many of us in the Maritimes to do, perhaps because we've felt so deprived for so long. However, I notice that some people are beginning to talk of happiness and to ask whether progress in the conventional sense is really worth the price."

"A society that rules by majority is an intolerant one. Minorities must be treated with dignity and respect, and allowed their way of life."

children? What will we become if we are content to let people die while we continue to consume excessive amounts of the earth's resources?"

Other possible events on the list of "disaster scenarios", somewhat further down the road than the monetary and food crises, included:

- the continued emergence of severe shortages of many vital resources on which Western economies and the fulfillment of producer needs and consumer wants now depend, and to which many lesser-developed countries look for their continued progress;

- the threat that the food crisis and resource shortages, if and when they materialize, will lead to aggression - by some Third World countries against industrialized nations (including the possibility of nuclear attack), by groups within the industrial world venting their anger at the failure of those nations to effectively meet the needs of the Third World, or by individuals perceiving their self-interest to be threatened were we to effect such a shift;

- the possibility that Canadian attempts to cut back exports and to enhance self-sufficiency will be seen to thwart the vital interests of the United States and lead to severe economic retaliation, if not to the crossing of "the longest undefended border" in the world (c/f Richard Rohmer's recent novels).

- deepening alienation, if not civil strife, in Canada, perhaps resulting in the overthrow of governments and/or the imposition of totalitarian measures; and ultimately

- ecologic collapse as industrialization spreads pollutants into the atmosphere to the point where life cannot be sustained.

In many conversations, there emerged implicitly or explicitly still another perceived disaster:

- that it would be a disaster if one of the above disasters did not materialize.

Underlying this viewpoint was the belief that only crisis triggers action and that therefore only a major catastrophe would jolt the Canadian consciousness into realizing the fundamental and deeply

"Citizens who have for years been involved in fighting for human decisions in connection with development plans for neighbourhoods, for example, have experienced such a tremendous drain on their energies - and they're mostly working full-time at something else - that they get worn down and eventually give up."

"Looking at the effects that the introduction of UIC and Workman's Compensation have had on corporate responsibility, I'm not so certain such programs bring about desirable effects. UIC and compensatory programs have removed pressures of social responsibility from corporations; they lessen their sense of responsibility for the human consequences of closing down industries and of maintaining working conditions which damage human health and safety."

"We in Québec are less Victorian. We don't have that sense of limits beyond which one should not go. This can lead to problems such as over-planning and over-bureaucratization. The educational reforms in the '60's for example were so well planned and executed that they went too far. People are now trying to get a little diversity back into the system, to make it a bit messier, and more livable. We're too open to grand Cartesian schemes."

entrenched nature of the dilemmas we face, thus providing impetus for effective action. Without such a jolt, those who held this view believed that serious efforts to understand and to act would be set aside in favour of the easy way out, the superficial treatment, the band-aid solution, the technological fix, all within the context of present planning models. And such responses, which ultimately will be seen to be ineffective and wrongheaded, will serve to markedly shorten the time frame within which actions can be taken to ensure the survival of the human species in human and humane environments.

A few quarreled with this view that a disaster of some sort would provide opportunities for effecting the sort of change that is required. They argued that human history has not produced many instances where catastrophe has resulted in facilitating a deeper understanding of the human situation and in providing a foundation for effective action. Instead history is replete with examples of the reverse - where catastrophe has occasioned violent and repressive responses, setting back for many years attempts to enhance human well-being.

Some charged those who believe that only catastrophe would save us with using fear to garner support for their own programs for change; others speculated that many of the dire scenarios warning of the imminence of disaster might reflect the clouded vision of those who were disturbed by, or even opposed to, changes in the *status quo* that they now see. But the point remains that many persons anticipate a future that will be crises-laden unless the process of change accelerates quickly enough to postpone disaster and is well-founded enough to avoid it. As one person said: "it matters little what form visions of disaster take - what we are talking about are various ways of committing suicide."

Many persons, reflecting on the likely possibility of a crises-laden future, spoke of the human pain and anguish which inevitably accompany fundamental change. This was particularly true on the part of those who believed that the time frame within which public understanding of the need for fundamental change can coalesce and the will to act upon that understanding can be marshalled is much longer than the time in which responses to one or more major disasters will be required. In their view, attention should be paid to the psychological casualties left in the wake of change -- those for whom a forced societal shift away from the highly materialistic lifestyles of the present and away from familiar systems and secure places within them will be threatening to their own self-image. There is much personal capital vested in the "here and now"

"Our society is a terribly dependent society. The question we face is how do we learn to nurture independence and diversity?... One characteristic that is important to think about, in terms of shifting to a Conserver Society, is how do we move from dependence to inter-dependence? Take, for example, the small grocery store owner or the small farmer. Their choice of occupation is for a way of life, as opposed to 'making it' in a business. They choose not to be a business, to be much more independent than the rest of us who hold jobs. They are willing, as part of the price for this sort of choice, to voluntarily reduce their consumer demands in order to live a way of life that they find more satisfying and fulfilling than going for 'a standard of living'. In other words, they want to live a life that means more hard work, voluntarily, to gain satisfaction and fulfillment, even though they get less in an economic sense."

"A conserver society has to be a rich society. The fact that you can be selective about the nature of your consumption pre-supposes that you can consume to begin with."

"The Third World is the real epitome of a Conserver Society. They've been living it for centuries."

"The planning hypotheses on which a Conserver Society are based are fundamentally different from the hypotheses of a consumer society. Viable Conserver Society hypotheses would include planning to preserve community, new notions of efficiency, strengthening of provincial governments ...This would be anathema to federal politicians and to the federal bureaucracy."

"In the present context of the food crisis in the Third World, waste is ethically untenable."

and when that capital is revealed as bereft of security, when it is discovered that "the emperor has no clothes", pain and anguish will inevitably follow.

So too will instances of violence. The view was frequently expressed that the democratic system might well be one of the casualties left along the wayside to the future, unless this danger is guarded against by exercising responsibility now. Clearly, the democratic process was seen to be worth building upon. But the apparent and persistent refusal of democratically-elected leaders to risk discussions of the dilemmas that face us, "assuming they're even aware of them", is itself placing democracy in jeopardy. So too is the all-too-frequent response of the public to "leave it to the government". Violent and totalitarian reactions, both on the part of governments and on the part of groups within our society, and vengeance from nature, are perceived to be all the more likely the longer leaders from all quarters of this country postpone action designed both to enhance understanding of the dilemmas we face and to begin the search for possibilities of personal and institutional transformation. Unprepared for crisis, the danger is that our response will be to designate a scapegoat -- to blame other individuals, groups or institutions for the ills which affect us. The rush to identify and to punish "the enemy" will impede attempts to find and deal with what many believe to be the root causes of the troubles we face -- the systems we have created whose rules of governance and conduct are so deeply entrenched that they have become second nature to us, and hence are difficult to attend to.

The tendency to designate a scapegoat is already in evidence, witness the treatment accorded East Indians in British Columbia, the references to corporate rip-off, and the deepening distrust of governments. The violence to which the Prime Minister has recently referred as beginning to surface in the country is likely to spread as increasing numbers of persons give vent to the sense of impotence and powerlessness which is infecting us. Trapped in a mechanistic world dominated by large institutions whose impact is reaching into virtually all aspects of daily life, more and more Canadians are beginning to perceive their existence as meaningless and their lives bereft of human purpose. There is a growing feeling that things are somehow out of control and that we are all trapped in a game which is no longer worth playing, a never-ending treadmill whose only outcome is the debilitation and ultimately the exhaustion of human energies. People in increasing numbers are beginning to ask: is it worth it -- the next step up the career ladder, the fight for a larger share of national income

"If a Conserver Society means a stable growth society in economic terms, then I really worry about what will serve to light the sparks of innovation that are essential to societal evolution and development."

"Conserver Society? Conserving for what? Should individuals move to conserve resources and thereby leave more for industry and those in power to consume? I say NO. Sometimes I think the best way to facilitate a shift to the Conserver Society is to consume more - burn all the oil and gas now."

"The current emphasis on energy conservation may turn out to be only consumer harassment -- a focus on conserving energy in the home while industry and government pursue large-scale energy development projects and engage in activities which consume vast amounts of energy."

"The Conserver Society will come about not directly nor by coercion, but as an outcome of the fact that capital investment in new energy sources will reduce the amount available for investment in the production of consumption goods."

"The campaign to get people to turn off their light bulbs is a lot of nonsense, except for its perception-raising value. What has so far failed to accompany such admonitions is serious action by industry and government to address the big issues of resource and energy depletion and the production of so many unnecessary, throw-away products."

"I sense growing pessimism. If that continues to spread more widely among the population, and particularly among the decision-makers in this country, then it just might be that we will drop the rhetoric and the tokenism and the ill-founded optimism that these problems will somehow go away. We might be ready now to take seriously the need to shift direction and begin to address ourselves to understanding what this means and to search for genuine alternatives in our public policies."

only to have it eaten away by inflation, the protest about decisions seen to be damaging when those same decisions are made anyway -- what is worth doing? Is it possible to live a healthy life in an increasingly mad world?

At the same time, there is little evidence that government leaders are sensitive to such sentiments or that they feel a responsibility to exercise leadership in responding to them. "Business as usual" appears to be the central message they transmit to the people and more fundamental concerns are expressed only in the course of after-dinner speeches, appearances at American universities, or fireside talks but not in serious action.

Were leadership to be exercised in this country and a search for ways out of our dilemmas to be legitimated, many of those with whom I spoke expressed the view that pessimism and impotence would be readily transformed into optimism and that many Canadians would respond to the challenge. Without such leadership, there is a sense that the energies some persons are now putting into raising awareness of these issues, probing their implications and experimenting with alternative solutions, will be channelled instead into ensuring, as best one can, personal survival. History shows us that societies respond to crises in one of two ways: responding selflessly or selfishly. The latter response seems to be already in play today, witness the several reported instances of people buying rural land in order to retreat to a situation of greater self-sufficiency and self-preservation "when the crunch comes."

b) images of a most desirable future

As noted earlier, preoccupations with various crises situations which are seen to lie ahead of us put barriers in the way of eliciting any but the sketchiest of impressions about the elements of a most desirable future. Looking beyond the precipice and contemplating what might lie on the other side, the images of the sort of world those Canadians I spoke with would want to live in included:

- a truly global confederation of nations sharing the resources of the planet Earth according to evolving, mutually-arrived-at concepts of justice for all peoples;

"Ecologists are now talking of organisms and organic models of society. While this model can be overextended, it does tell us that diversity is a function of stability and that this may provide a clue for the sort of society we want. But there still remains the problem of common ground - diversity must be founded on a set of common agreements."

- a world in which the present focus on the production of "things" and a mechanical concept of growth as economic growth gives way to concepts of personal growth and development and to humane relationships among all people;

- a world imbued with a sense of interdependence rather than dependence;

- a society which is concerned with nurturing the human spirit and with facilitating human communities, rather than as now with the preservation of systems and institutions;

- a society in which persons are respected for their personhood and for the rich diversity of the contributions they make to their society;

- a society in which specialization does not result in fragmentation but in a holistic appreciation of what it means to be human;

- a society whose institutions are responsive to dynamic human needs; which nurtures institutional flexibility rather than institutional rigidity;

- a society in which people are in control of their institutions and their technology, rather than controlled and dominated by them.

All this sounds "utopian", reflecting a "desire to return to some mythical time". The very softness of the images might suggest that we have lost our capacity for imagining, for image-ing in terms other than what might be seen as a search for utopia. Or could it be that these images add further support to the statement noted earlier -- that "we cannot go on the way we are" -- because we don't want to?

What these impressions seem to be leading towards is an image of society as shifting its direction from a concern for the quantity of its outputs to the quality of relationships - with self, with nature and with others. It would also be a society much more apt to nurture human community, much more capable of accepting diversity and much less inclined to rush in with prescriptions for appropriate behaviour in a range of areas. It would be founded on a different and more adequate image of persons. The present societal tendency to see persons as needing to be controlled would shift to one of trust. In such a society there would be less

"People who live in cities become blind to their environments after a while - it's a defense mechanism."

"We are coming to realize, at least slightly, that there are several different ways of planning which are mutually contradictory, though they may be going on at the same time. For example, planning for maximum income per capita leads to a stress on economic efficiency and to a concentration of population to achieve that - to the destruction of communities. But planning based on preserving, protecting and saving community would opt for a different sense of efficiency - it would see economic efficiency as irrational. It is impossible for a society to hold together when its planning hypotheses are mutually contradictory. Therefore, the current breakdown of our society is more dramatic than in the past because of our capacity to plan. ...We need a new sense of limits to those hypotheses which can be chosen and a new consensus generally of what are those limits."

"As a person recently separated, I'm becoming suddenly very conscious of the isolation that society imposes on persons outside the nuclear family. For the unattached - teenager, widow(er), divorced, separated and elderly - there is no social space outside the nuclear family."

temptation to "reify" -- to make things or objects of persons - to deal only with observed behaviour as the totality of human experience and the sole indicator of human needs. Other more fundamental forms of human expression would be legitimated and a concern for spiritual and psychological well-being would come to supplement material well-being as an equally appropriate focus for the liberation of human energies.

One of the interesting convergences illuminated by this project is that at the time that we are approaching the limits to the continuation of current use patterns related to non-human forms of energy, we are also awakening to the recognition that, consciously or unconsciously, limits have been placed on the use of human energy, making of it a created scarcity. We need to free our stunted imaginations and to open shuttered institutional windows to once again recognize human energies as among the most important real resources of any society (perhaps the most important), and then to rethink what constitutes human well-being and how it can be achieved.[1]

Before going on to discuss in some detail the major issues which have been identified by those involved in this project as impeding or facilitating a shift to a desirable future, it seems worth digressing briefly to consider the adequacy of "The Conserver Society" as an appropriate symbol for the sort of society which these images of a desirable future appear to be suggesting.

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[1] *One of the many questions which remain to be addressed is whether history is any guide in understanding our present dilemmas. Some have suggested that in one sense the present is unique, since we are now more aware than in any other time in human history of the inter-relationships among the major problems we face, that we have made scarce what is in abundant supply (human energy) as well as what we took previously to be "free" goods, and that we now have the capacity to terminate all life on this planet. Others suggest that in another sense history does have something to tell us; other civilizations have waned and given birth to new societies and new understandings. As one person expressed it; "what has gone wrong in Western industrial societies is that flaws in the liberal-scientific dream are being revealed; the crisis of the modern West is an instance in the long history of religion."*

"Separatism has rapidly mounted in the West recently. It's been around for a long time but its advocates have, until recently, been what might be called the lunatic fringe. Now everyone -- cab drivers, doctors, lawyers -- is talking separatism."

"My concern is that the so-called energy crisis has had the effect of hooking Albertans more firmly than ever to the benefits of economic growth. After all we've got the wheat, we've got the oil. We're all right. The public has yet to perceive the dangers of the Tar Sands development, and the severe dislocations it will cause to Edmonton and Calgary. Only a few individual voices are raised to question it. And those persons can only deal in general terms since they don't have access to the information in the hands of governments and cooperations. Many now feel it's futile to mount an opposition. Rather than waste our energies, why not sit back and enjoy all the great things the Tar Sands are going to bring to us?"

"Talking with federal officials is a waste of time. They don't know anything about the West, and don't even try to learn. They think they know it all."

"Canadians are in need of reinforcing or establishing east-west ties. We must reexamine transportation and communications policies. Any Canadian should be able to call across Canada for one dollar or for free. Education should also be looked at as a means by which students from Newfoundland could go to school in British Columbia and so get to know one another."

VI. THE CONSERVER SOCIETY – AN INADEQUATE SYMBOL

In some conversations, the label of "The Conserver Society" itself became a topic of discussion. "Too negative", "too much rooted in concepts of scarcity", "lacking the magic needed to attract and retain wholehearted commitment to its message" were among the criticisms frequently proffered. In addition, the likelihood of confusion between this label and conservative politics (with either a large or a small "c") was seen to be another reason for deeming the label unattractive. So too was the observation mentioned at the beginning of this report - that the label has already been corrupted by current usage which emphasizes the need to conserve "things" (resources, the physical environment, sources of non-human energy), and to engage in such conservation activities as recycling. As such, it takes only superficial account of the extent to which waste arises from corporate imperatives and, as well, it fails to escape the focus on objects which has characterized our society to date. It is therefore an inappropriate vehicle to capture the full flavour of the human energies which growing numbers of Canadians are struggling to liberate for themselves and others.

Some of those with whom I talked raised objections to the implicit assumption that all that is required to build a life-sustaining future is a simple shift from an ideology of consumption to an ideology of conservation. They point to the proposition that what is at stake lies beyond mere ideology - that at the most fundamental level, our ability to shift directions and to find more adequate ways of facilitating human well-being will depend upon a restructuring of our patterns of knowledge and on our ability to discover more adequate images of ourselves as full persons than those images by which our activities, values, attitudes and perceptions have been patterned. What they are saying is that the task ahead is of far deeper substance than is indicated by a focus on conservation.

If any consensus about what might be a more adequate image has emerged, it lies in the call for an image which places persons rather than things at the central focus. Some suggested that "The Conserver Society" might be an appropriate starting point for raising consciousness about some of the issues we face. But, before it becomes enshrined and preserved as a goal, some more appropriate symbolic image might be devised, one which carries

"One of the central realities we have to face is the cynicism and apathy with which citizens are now treating their institutions, governmental and corporate. Corporations are seen as "rip-off", governments as unresponsive.

"Social change usually begins in two places: at the core of new institutions and at the fringes of old institutions."

"Our current institutions are brutalizing. The only persons who can get along within them are those willing to let themselves be defined by society, rather than be self-defined."

"We'll have to face up to the fact that ecological remedies will hurt business and find the necessary courage to apply those remedies anyway. The laws of nature are immutable, the laws of economics man-made. We could let business push us to the brink - it's powerful enough to do that - but there's no question which laws win in the end."

"We're living now in a world of fantastic perceptual diversity. And that's a world that's really only habitable by artists."

with it implications of wholeness, opportunity and celebration.

These criticisms are not meant to suggest that the theme of resource conservation and the need for a shift away from highly materialistic lifestyles are being rejected. Far from it. In fact, one of the implicit assumptions threading through all these conversations was that a shift in these directions is already underway and would probably accelerate, regardless of whether some Canadians were reluctant to accept it. What was being implied here was that the ethic of conservation would be forced upon Canadians by pressures external to Canada, and by the inescapable need for Canadians to respond to those pressures and to share our resource wealth with others, particularly those in the under-developed world. Some Canadians are already sensitive to a moral obligation with respect to the food crisis in Third World countries. And others foresee further critical shortages of key resources in the years immediately ahead. Whether such shortages would be genuine or whether they result from institutional and nation state gamesmanship is immaterial. The point is that some of the "have not" countries would be particularly seriously affected and that Canada would be called upon to share her resource wealth and to balance the claims of Third World Countries with those of the industrial world. Our ability to respond to those demands might well be given impetus by threats of armed aggression, and even nuclear attack - "now that almost anyone can build his own bomb..." In the course of this, we will likely be called upon to account for the squandering of our resources, and demands will be put upon us to husband those resources for the benefit of all mankind.

But from another set of perceptions, the decline of the short-lived industrial era is a cause for rejoicing. It is seen as providing opportunities to move to resolve the contradictions and dilemmas confronting us and thus it opens up exciting challenges for innovative effort in the search for new social designs.

The choice between taking up the opportunities that are opening to us now or alternatively of waiting until we are involuntarily forced to shift directions is one which must be made now. Either nature and societal turmoil will force us, in a context of genuine crises, to deal with our problems, or we can choose to move now in incremental but enabling steps, deepening our understanding and our capacity for critical consciousness as we go.

"The belief that Québec is more materialistic or Americanized than the rest of Canada is an accusation often levelled at us. The so-called excesses in consumption, the gaudiness you sometimes see, are nothing more than the behaviour of the poor, behaviour that is in evidence in all exploited nations."

"People are making fundamental choices. Some scientists for instance are becoming sensitive to the moral questions inherent in what they do and are choosing to stop."

"The political history of Canada has been the story of governments serving the interests of the business community ... To speak of life as a non-zero sum game while the multinationals exercise the kind of power they do is perhaps to blur the edges."

VII. THE CRITICAL ISSUES

The avoidance of what has been described as the characteristics of a "most likely" future and the attainment of a more fully human world is the challenge of our times, a challenge compelling in its magnitude and full of promise and opportunity in its potential. But where lie the critical issues which must be wrestled with if we are to avoid the one and aspire to the other? What are the greatest blocks that we must hurdle if Canadians are to live together in harmony with one another, with other nations and with the natural environment?

Many issues have emerged from this enquiry and, in an attempt to touch on all of them, they have, for purposes of this document, been grouped under six major theme headings:

a) the bonds between us

bonds with the present: national, regional, community, institutional and family bonds
bonds with self and with nature
bonds with the past and the future

b) images of ourselves and our society

scientific and technological images; economic images; environmental images; emerging or ecological images.

c) beyond values... to valuing, perceiving and attending

d) institutionalization

characteristics of present institutions
three specific institutions: political, religious and educational
institutionalized activities: social justice
economics
science

e) decision-making, communications and information

f) the facilitation of community and the centralization/ decentralization argument.

"Our present society has been built around the goal of freedom -- the concept that people have maximum power, as agents, to dispose over the conditions of their lives. This leads to the hypothesis that things can be controlled, planned for, solved. Such a society -- one dedicated to control -- is very negative towards its history. The past has nothing to say - it can be negated."

"It seems to me that when a movement or a people need a 'history', they will invent one. At the moment, this is being done by Canadians, in part by Indians, and notably by the women's movement, now busy documenting their past, rediscovering, making a tradition conscious, sustaining, a source of strength in time."

"There is still a very strong 'catch up with Ontario' mentality in Québec yet I think people are increasingly careful not to let what is valuable from the past be destroyed in the process. We find here a bit of the European wisdom that conserves what is beautiful and re-usable from the past."

"One of Canada's problems is that we have had no significant historical struggles. History is a choice among those struggles seen to be important in determining the present."

On first glance, a strange list, one that many would perceive to range far outside what might have emerged from a more deterministic "Conserver Society" enquiry. Clearly, they go beyond the issue of conserving resources, although that is included in them. Clearly, too, they run beyond the capacities of governments to deal with them, although governments, along with other institutions, cannot avoid attending to them.

a) the bonds between us

One of the issues consistently identified in the course of this enquiry as indicative of, and contributing to, the incoherent, confused and confusing state in which Canadians find themselves today is the fragile nature of the bonds that have existed among us. These bonds are the bonds of common ground, common understanding and common sense of purpose of who we are and where we stand. They are the essential characteristics of any genuine society, for apart from sharing geographic space, a society also shares other common spaces - purpose, agreement on some fundamental social contracts and particularly agreement on those elements of societally secured well-being seen necessary to ensure the basic health of its members. Yet these common bonds appear to be in a state of rapid breakdown in Canada today.

The bonds which contribute to societal well-being take many forms. They range across both space and time, and encompass the relationships with self, with others and with nature. They include the relationships within the family context, community and institutional relationships, and the relationships among Canadians in the various regions of the country. They involve as well the ties with past history, and their strength or fragility tells us something about our capacity to build life-sustaining bonds with the future, with those still to come.

i) bonds with the present: national, regional, community, institutional, and family bonds.

For years, observers of urban living have called attention to the loss of community which attends urban growth. Others have pointed to the impact our way of living has on the family - "the backbone of a nation" - and have warned of the stresses and strains being experienced by small nuclear families in an increasingly sophisticated and industrialized society. National ties seem to be growing even more fragile. And our institutional bonds also

"I'm attracted to Hegel's argument about man's need to leave his imprint on the world - to extend himself through his work, his crafts, his inventions, his machines."

"One of the things that's happening today is a surprising convergence among persons arguing from the left and from the right. Heilbroner for example is reluctantly forcing himself to defy his leftist leanings and to confront nationalism, always anathema to the left. He has pointed out that man needs a bond with the future, one strong enough to command the sacrifice of short-term, present-day interests for long-term interests. And the only mechanism he could see capable of providing this link between the short and the long term is the nation state."

appear to be rapidly eroding; not only are there widening gaps between institutions and those they purport to serve but within institutions rifts are becoming increasingly prevalent as institutional objectives come under question from inside. In short, our social fabric appears to be unravelling.

The erosion of community ties has been a phenomenon long associated with the growth of cities and the accompanying emptying of rural communities. The growth of large cities has given rise to expressions of alienation and isolation, of difficulties experienced in attempting to establish and maintain human relationships and human communities in large metropolitan areas. The variety of community groups which have sprung up in recent years is an attempt to defend human relationships from further erosion due to the onslaughts of impersonal, mechanical modes of service delivery. To take but one example, community planning groups have formed in large numbers in response to the perceived need for neighbours to band together in an attempt to contain urban growth, or at least to introduce into urban planning a more broadly-based rationality than the rationality of planners and developers. Many of these groups have functioned in ways that facilitate the creation of common bonds among their members. But frequently, citizen groups have failed to escape the we/they adversarial game in their relationships with other groups in the community. The tendency to view the public housing project, the freeway, the factory and the highrise as more properly belonging in someone else's backyard has enabled planners and developers to divide and conquer while the real issues of urban growth and human settlements go unattended.

Another factor contributing to the loss of community is the mobility of Canadian families. An average of one out of four families moves each year, mainly due to the pull of employment opportunities and career advancement, as well as to changes in family size. Uprooted from familiar communities, the nuclear family is forced to fall back on its own resources which, particularly in times of rapid social change, are thinly spread. With smaller and smaller numbers to draw upon, it is little wonder, in an increasingly frenzied world, that instances of marriage breakdown and battered children are climbing sharply. Nor is it surprising to find experiments in alternate living patterns underway outside the nuclear family as persons try to find ways of engaging in primary relationships less constrained by conventional stereotyping.

"The nation state is a Victorian concept. So too is national unity. National unity is the last thing we want, but we don't seem to know how to encourage diversity and how to thrive on the richness diversity brings. The only appropriate context now is a global one. The question is how can Canadians learn to be global citizens?"

"There are three stages in personal and societal development - dependence, independence and inter-dependence. We seem to be stuck in the first two. The question is how to facilitate inter-dependence."

"I think those who argue that Canadians won't change their lifestyles to a more conserving one are probably wrong. People have yet to be given a chance to be educated to the need for change. I have faith in people. I believe that, were the information and the reasons for conservation presented to the Canadian people, they would quickly respond. They only need to be given the chance."

The erosion of national ties became visible in the sixties with the emergence of French-Canadian separatism as a focal point for national interest, alarm and debate. Now in the seventies, there appears to be some growing, though still limited, interest in and discussion of separatism in other parts of the country, related in large part to long histories of discontent with federal policies and with the economic dominance of Ontario. But this discontent appears now to be spilling over; beyond disaffection with the federal and Ontario governments (described by one Westerner as "remnants of a colonial administration with a colonial administration's arrogance and mentality"), it may also be affecting kinship between residents of various parts of the country. This sense of disintegration seems to have been given impetus by the current controversy over energy. Public reaction to the so-called energy crisis of the summer of '74 was mentioned in several of my conversations, not only in Alberta but also in the Maritimes. In particular, reference was made to the appearance, for a brief time that summer, of bumper signs on Albertan cars proclaiming: "let the Eastern bastards freeze in the dark" (signs that I was later told were distributed by an American). That the signs vanished from sight almost as quickly as they appeared did not dispel the feelings their appearance engendered. A few Western Canadians told me of the surprise they experienced on realizing the extent to which they found themselves, with some sense of dismay, concurring with the underlying messages of those signs -- that their own sense of affinity with Eastern Canadians had diminished more than they had previously realized. Press reports about the appearance of those signs gave rise, I was told, to considerable ill-feeling among Maritimers -- with their low average income levels and already high energy costs, some of them, not unnaturally, expressed anger at Albertans.

Erosion of institutional bonds is also increasing in visibility. For some years now, there has been an obvious erosion in the relationships between institutions and those they serve, witness the demands for public participation in institutional decision-making processes. But what is less obvious is the breakdown of bonds which is underway within institutions. The sense of common commitment and shared objectives between and among employers and employees, between various strata of the bureaucracy in governments and universities, is rapidly evaporating under the pressure of social change. Where previously such dissension as might have occurred centered around questions of "how" (given our objectives, how do we accomplish them), they now seem to be centering around questions of "what" (what ought our objectives to be). The process of examining institutional aims and objectives and of hunting out

"Why do we persist in thinking of human beings as a higher species? That way of thinking is nothing but human chauvinism. It will prevent us from facing our own limitations."

"In our economic system, the hierarchy of constraint between cooperation and competition is reversed and as a result use values and exchange values also undergo a reversal. Exchange value becomes the dominant type of economic and social relations in the system and use value is subordinated to it."

"We must shift from the pursuit of individual goals to the pursuit of collective goals."

hidden assumptions to test their relevance in the modern world is a painful one, and for many the easier path is to maintain the *status quo*. As this reaction sets in, capable and innovative younger people leave, while their elder counterparts sit out pre-retirement years until eligible for pension benefits. For many in our institutions today, the work place has become a place to put in time, to conserve energies for the more personally fulfilling and frequently more socially productive work that is undertaken after hours. Such at least is one of the significant findings of this project. Many of those who contributed their insights to this enquiry spoke of their pleasure in having such a discussion, mentioning that they were on the whole unable to engage in similar pursuits with their colleagues - that discussions of institutional assumptions and of the ends which institutions are designed to serve would be ruled out of order as not relevant to institutional agendas. Time spent on relating institutional purposes to, and undertaking work on, the major dilemmas of our times and on exploring alternatives is relegated to the periphery of long established traditional activities. This is not to imply that institutions should be faddish, responding to every ripple of the wind. But it does question the continuing resistance of many institutions to explore alternative hypotheses and to be open to the dangers of foreclosing myopically on what might well be life-sustaining alternatives. This is all the more questionable in the light of the growing flood of literature which is arguing that we cannot cure our problems within our current paradigms.

Many factors can be said to contribute to the erosion of common ground among Canadians today. But what appears to be one of the fundamental causes is that of increasingly disparate perceptions of reality and of what it means to live well. What in the sixties was called "the generation gap" is now in the seventies being seen as much less a factor of age and role differences between generations and much more one of perceptual differences. Where in the past such differences in understandings, values and attitudes as existed among us could be explained in terms of educational, income, age and role differences, what appears to be happening with increasing frequency today is that within and between these parameters, there are emerging significant shifts in perception about what is at the root of our "meta-problems" and about what is possible in terms of responding to them. Some persons take our social structures as given and are therefore concerned to adjust the behaviour of others to those structures. But others perceive our social structures as socially constructed, man-made inventions and therefore as capable of being changed when required. These perceptual shifts seem to be associated more with life experience than with education, income, age or role differences,

"In a situation where there is no leadership, people are going to have to decide about their lives individually, and not hope for collective fantasies."

"There's so much dissonance in the system, so many paradox situations, that the only thing we can do is to move to a different level of organization -- a level at which the paradoxes disappear, allowing us to become the kind of people we could be."

"Agriculture is no longer a culture - it has become agri-business. Food companies moved into Cape Breton, thanks in part to subsidies from Ottawa, and drove small viable farms and food processors out of business. The sharp rise in energy costs and the famine in the Third World are now confronting society with the costs of allowing this to happen. Small farmers don't require energy-intensive machinery and the fertilizing techniques of agribusiness. But to look at the possibility of restoring the small farmer now means to look at land use and land ownership."

and they are rapidly creating new social alignments. Between members of these new alignments and the more-conventionally-minded, communications, in the sense of sharing understanding, is extremely difficult. While the language used to describe events, to depict reality and to point to problems may be identical across these poles, significantly different concepts and meaning are being conveyed, akin to a figure/ground shift. As a result, attempts to form what might be termed perceptual peer groups -- groups of persons sharing common understandings of reality, of what is possible, and engaging in a universal discourse on the basis of these understandings -- are underway, albeit with great difficulty.

ii) bonds with self and with nature.

The erosion of bonds that unite us as a people is being accompanied by a growing sense of inner fragmentation and by an erosion of ties with nature. Many persons spoke of a deeply felt need to get in touch once again with their innermost being, and of a desire to attend to the nurturing of the human spirit. Many expressed the view that the impersonal, fragmented world we have built for ourselves and the variety of narrow, specialized and often conflicting roles we are called upon to play is creating within persons a condition not unlike schizophrenia. Awareness of the personal malfunctioning created by this condition is leading many to search for wholeness and to attempt to become "whole persons". This was seen to be one of the basic reasons for the marked interest in Zen, Yoga, mysticism and the occult, as well as for a revival of interest in communing with nature. The environmentalists have for years been telling us of the damage we do to ourselves and to others as a consequence of our rapacious intrusions into the natural environment. The inroads of urban and industrial growth have prompted concerns for wildlife conservation. Recently these concerns have been accompanied by heightened sensitivity about our dependency on remote large scale technology for even our most basic needs. Awareness of this dependency is leading many to participate in survival training courses, learning the almost lost arts of living in the wilderness and of survival in a cold climate, and to some extent it also underlies the "back to the land" movement.

iii) bonds with the past and the future.

As this erosion of bonds among Canadians today is going on, we seem rapidly to be losing what few ties we as a people shared together with the past. In fact, some would question whether Canadians have a history. We have few national heroes and heroines and few widely shared national symbols or myths, not only because as a country we

"I look on Québec as someone who has been deaf-mute for a long time. We don't know how to speak or listen. We don't know how to dialogue with Anglo-Saxons. We want to scream that we are here and we throw bombs. The separatists want to keep us mute and incapable of dialoguing with the rest of the world. They are the new parish priests come to replace the old. The language problem is symptomatic. What is really happening is that we are losing our roots, we no longer know who we are. Attacking Anglo-Saxons is not going to do anything about our real problem."

"We're in a period where many people are trying to understand who controls the strings and are just starting to understand that the multinationals hold them and how they use them."

are relatively young, but because the Canadian mentality seems to be such that we tend to import our heroes, myths and symbols from abroad and particularly from the United States. Further, a large proportion of our population is made up of recent immigrants who have come to Canada to find material security and who have yet to establish roots in this country.

Other factors also operate to diminish an appreciation of our past. In the name of progress, bulldozers are busy tearing down what few physical antiquities remain as reminders of life at the beginning of Confederation, so that we have "fewer and fewer places for remembering." Our tendency to identify the personal worth and merit of persons in our culture with their place in the production machine has also had the effect of relegating to virtual oblivion the tradition and the lifecraft inherent in the personal experiences and the acquired wisdom of the elderly. And we are only beginning to appreciate what the native peoples could tell us about living in harmony with nature.

This lack of ties with the past may be a "good". Canadians may find it less difficult to conceive of alternative choices than those in countries encumbered by long-established historical mythologies, although our ability to exercise such choices may be constrained by resistance from other nation states and from multi-national corporations.

If the bonds with the present are rapidly eroding and bonds with the past virtually non-existent, what of bonds with the future? Implicit in many of the discussions I had was the assumption that people do indeed possess a sense of responsibility for future generations, and that this could become the basis for action, were information made more widely available about the extent to which our actions in the here and now are serving to reduce the possibility of continued human life on this planet. In trying to probe the basis for such an assumption, several linkages between the present and the future were suggested.

Many thought that the strongest link with the future lies in the bonds between parents and children. But for a variety of reasons, more and more couples are electing not to have children at all. This tendency appears to be the result of very different factors in family decision-making. On the one hand, it can stem from self-interest, as the rearing of children is rejected in favour of greater access to material well-being today. On the other hand, many are making such decisions on fundamentally different grounds. For them, present warnings of over-population and a vision of the

"Another problem is that we don't yet know how to translate the variety of social experiments and attempts to do things differently into the larger systems, even though some people in the larger systems perceive that such experiments hold promise. There is much from which those larger systems can learn to their benefit that is now going on -- there are so many cracks in the system -- but our state of knowledge is such that the possibilities of learning from this developing state of knowledge and applying those lessons to the larger systems are difficult in the extreme. We need to think seriously about networking - involving those trying new experiments who need supports in the way of personal contacts. They need help in making contact with others sharing similar interests -- that's a process that's now, for them, very time-consuming and so doesn't get done. It would help the rest of us to keep our heads straight."

"I feel apprehensive about the future of Québec, especially with respect to the separatism issue. It is not impossible for a people to separate to form their own state and to do so for the benefit of all concerned. But what frightens me about separatism in Québec is its religious character. No one is asking 'liberation for what? What sort of life do we want? What should be the role of women and children in our society?' The separatist issue seems to be fueled by a lot of negative energy, by contempt for others. Do these people believe in the future of Québec or do they just want power? They often sing the praises of collectivism, yet they remain isolated from the majority of the people - it seems that collectivism is for others."

future as fraught with peril deems irresponsible the bringing of children into such a world. Some are therefore prepared to sacrifice the joy of children in the present as a contribution to more viable human life in the future, while others fear that the socialization process which children will experience in years to come will be even more humanly damaging than is believed to be the case today. And others are turning to careers instead of children as a means of achieving personal growth and fulfillment.

Some expressed the view that the desire to see the work that consumes so much energy in the present completed and carried on in the future constituted, for them, a strong tie with the future. The desire of human beings to leave their imprint on the sands of time was held to be of sufficient strength to elicit concern for the continuation of life on the planet. However, the number of Canadians imbued with this view of their own work is probably small; for many, work does not elicit a sense of personal fulfillment and some are coming to see their work as being counter-productive of societal welfare. Unless work is seen to be meaningful and purposeful for more than just a small group of professionals, there is little hope that it will act to constrain undesirable activity and to promote concern for the sorts of actions that will ensure a more human and humane environment.

To those who regard as real the possibility of a life on this planet after death -- of reincarnation at some future time -- a concern for the viability of human existence far into the future is very much a present concern. But there do not seem to be many who hold this view.

Attention was also drawn to the argument set forth by Robert Heilbroner in his recent book *An Inquiry into The Human Prospect*. Heilbroner referred to the nation state as the only concept possessing sufficient strength to arouse, in the hearts and minds of those alive today, a concern for behaviour appropriate to ensure the continuation of national well-being for those yet to come. Yet Heilbroner himself presented this argument only reluctantly. The concept of the nation state, if it continues to be accompanied by traditional reluctance to surrender national sovereignty and national self-interest, is already perceived to be outmoded and inappropriate in the context of the global predicament. Unless present concepts of nation states change significantly to encompass a recognition of their interdependence, little confidence can be placed in the nation state as symbolic of a viable bond with the future.

"The thesis that man could be master of his destiny dates back to the 14th century when a large part of the civilized world was wiped out by plague. That thesis was right for the times. It was a necessary belief for human survival - it was a life-giving theology. Now, however, the notion that man has mastery over nature has been carried too far, to the point where it is now life-defeating and where once again survival is at stake. The time is ripe for a new life-sustaining theology to emerge. North America is in a position to become the incarnation of the new image. We have had the experience with technology that enables us to perceive its failures, and perhaps we have the wisdom to recognize and liberate a new image."

"One dominant aspect of present collective consciousness in modern man is what Ellul and others have referred to as 'la technique' - technique not solely as the sum total of the means but as a new collective consciousness that sees everything in terms of means ... We have become a civilization of means rather than a civilization of ends."

A stronger bond with the future lies perhaps in what many believe to be a much more widely shared, if seldom talked about, characteristic of human beings: the concern for the survival of the human species. Some of those with whom I spoke stated that, in their view, concern for the survival of the human race is so deeply entrenched within us that the perception that our present actions are operating in the direction of human extinction would be so repugnant and repelling as to prompt changes in behaviour. Were the consequences of continued environmental damage and wasteful resource use to be more widely and more comprehensively understood, then people would move as a matter of course to more appropriate behaviour. Implicit in this proposition is an understanding that shifts in behaviour patterns would not be repressed (such as by the multi-nationals, institutions, etc.). It also implies that scientists and others would be encouraged to resolve their own frequently conflicting information about the sources and consequences of environmental deterioration, so that the public is not subjected to the confusion which results from methodological and interpretive quarrels among competing schools of expertise. Particularly when survival is at issue, a more open and more honest stance with respect to the dissemination of such information to the public is needed -- making public best judgements on the basis of available, though incomplete, information is to be preferred over total silence until verified accuracy is secured. The belief that a concern for the survival of the species is a strong motivating factor is not without its opponents, however. Some who believe that narrow self-interest is innate in the human animal argue that other less damaging forms of life on the planet deserve higher priority than the survival of mankind.

Many believe that an even stronger bond with the future lies in the present. They point out that we all live in anticipation of the future and that those of us alive today will live in at least part of it. Furthermore, the consequences of complex decisions made in the present extend farther and farther into the future, so that future time is increasingly compressed into present time. The "Faustian bargain" with which we appear to be toying with respect to nuclear power is a case in point. The present nuclear fission technology is such that plutonium waste may well have to be specially contained and monitored for tens of thousands of years into the future. Yet scientists and decision-makers speak in public of their conviction that chances of nuclear leaks from such waste are slight. Even were the chances only one in a million, many are asking if we have the moral right to go ahead. And if that response is positive, what is the nature of the bond with the future that we are making? Are we not holding future generations hostage for

"The tendency to regard all relationships as subject/object relationships is something which came out of a particular deep structure of change in our society. It's not a natural or human way of viewing anything, but we don't know how to do it differently."

"There's an organizational imperative for the kind of economic system we have, which is growth. There's a certain set of rules which governs the behaviour of everyone in the system, corporations included. Nobody controls the rules - you can't have a simplistic theory about a ruling class - a bunch of people conspiring to rack up everyone else. Corporations are as much part of the systemic behaviour of the system as anybody else; they have more power, but nevertheless they operate in terms of the system's rules. It's quite silly to get annoyed at people for behaving in a completely rational way according to the rationality of the system....There is a rationality when you're in that box, but introduce a number of environments to it and it becomes irrational. That's our problem -- the irrationality of the system."

"Anyone who thinks that Canada can strike out alone along a path of social change with the degree of foreign ownership we're living with is incredibly naïve."

the sake of fulfilling our seemingly insatiable needs of today?

This discussion of the bonds among Canadians thus comes full circle and the importance of animating community bonds amongst us today takes on a more crucial cast. It is our present actions which will determine the kind of future we will have, and indeed whether we have one at all. But unless we move now to find common understandings and to build common agreements as a basis for planned integrating change, most of those involved in this project would agree that there is little hope of avoiding major disasters and the violent and totalitarian responses they may bring with them.

Were we to secure for ourselves common ground based on shared understandings and human purpose, those newly-discovered societal bonds would likely act to constrain significantly the aggressive, competitive behaviour patterns on which we have modelled our socio-economic institutional relations and which govern our relationships with others. Much of the current discussion about the need to conserve resources and to constrain our demands upon resources and the natural environment takes little cognizance of the fact that, as one person expressed it, "society is constraint, and where there is no society, there is no constraint on the pursuit of selfish individual interest". Another Canadian, in a recent CBC program on the loneliness of persons in contemporary industrial society, noted that human beings require human groupings and the sense of belonging to human communities in order to do well the things that man does best in solitude -- thinking, creativity, reflection, communion with self. We appear to be in dire need of re-creating our social bonds if together we are to set about the task of reflecting on where we are and what we would like to become.

The recognition of the lack of strong common bonds among Canadians gave rise to frequent references to China, especially to the apparently strong feeling of a shared sense of national purpose among the Chinese peoples today. A major reservation was invariably attached to such references to the effect that, were Canadians to discover a sense of national purpose and to find again some common ground, some shared understandings and goals, it was to be hoped that this would be accomplished without recourse to the severe oppression which has marked Chinese history.

Many persons expressed the view that we in Canada need to move away from the disintegrating forces which are now at work in our society and set about the task of animating the bonds between us, of discovering common ground and life-sustaining purpose. They also felt that there was not only a need but an opportunity as well for a

"Clearly, the evidence is in that we need to move to a higher level of satisfying human needs. Our present lifestyles, with their focus on the consumption of material goods, are inherently incapable of satisfying human needs."

"One should not think of halting economic growth but rather of orienting it."

"One thing about environmentalists is that they think too much in terms of a space/time environment where the latter is defined in terms of certain aspects of the material world and not enough in terms of human presence. For instance, our thought -- how we think in certain ways in terms of certain emphases - changes the space/time configuration, changes the quality of that environment. Ecologists are still caught very much within a Newtonian space not an Einsteinian one. They are working not with multi-dimensional space but with uni-dimensional space, with the contributions of human nature receiving very little attention."

dialogue to take place in this country. This dialogue would address the deeply-rooted and inter-related nature of the problems that concern Canadians, engaging all who are interested in thinking seriously about the sort of society we wish to create for ourselves and the sort of persons we wish to become.

The expression of this need for a dialogue among Canadians and a sense of their readiness to engage in it is best illustrated by two comments:

> *"It's about time we started asking Canadian questions".*
>
> *"The human spirit has been struggling to emerge in this country for some time now; we've been moving from a negative sense of what it means to be Canadian -- not American, not British, not French -- to trying tentatively to find more positive expressions".*

The response to the Northern Vision of ten or more years ago, the willingness and pride of Canadians in the peace-keeping roles assumed by the Armed Forces on the international scene, and the marked liberation of human energies which took place across Canada during the celebrations of Centennial year were described as possibly the subconscious beginnings of an attempt to get at "the Canadian soul". In 1975, Canadians generally have become aware of the "limits to growth" argument, inflation and even the possibility of depression -- of the sense that "the party's over". Yet there have been few attempts to involve Canadians in extending their understandings of these issues or of talking about the deeper implications of what they may signal, both in personal terms and in terms of Canada's role in a global context.

Were such a dialogue to go on, it would not only offer the possibility of extending and deepening understandings of "what's happening" but it would go some way toward relieving the tensions of those who feel that their concerns and their understandings of some of these issues are shared by few others. (Certainly this enquiry has turned up many instances where individuals expressed surprise on learning that the concerns they raised were shared by others across the country, and even by government officials.) It would further give legitimacy to a discussion of future options. This is not to suggest that such a dialogue would be harmonious. Nor is it likely that it would quickly give rise to consensus around the nature of our problems and around viable pathways likely to resolve our predicaments. Such a national dialogue would be "messy", "all over the map" and "time-consuming", for such is the

"There seems to be some surprise that people in Québec are not preoccupied with pollution. Why should they be? The English have built themselves garden cities in our midst, but they put their factories in French ghettoes. They later get a whiff of something and scream pollution, mostly to be in tune with the Americans."

"The different images of man that people hold and believe in are conditioned by personal experience. Because of the breakdown in families and in communities, the work place is, for many people, the only place where they see and understand people. It's not surprising therefore that environmentalists, who see only the results of man's exploitation, are conditioned to see man as innately greedy; the same holds true for policemen."

"Society has reinforced an acquisitive image of man which leads people to take their self-measure in terms of things, not only tangible possessions but also through property in ideas and other intangible emanations of self."

"Québec should adopt an industrial strategy to strengthen its secondary sector but it should not do this stupidly, by adopting an American model of growth. It should develop products that are durable, more in line with the new ecological consciousness. Our economic backwardness may yet be to our advantage; we don't have to tear everything down first."

nature of human discourse. But at the very least, it would help to make clear that our problems run deep, and would serve to warn of the inadequacy of band-aid remedies complacently applied. Unless such a dialogue goes on, it was suggested that we in Canada will not find the elements of a more viable and humane social contract which will enable us to move to new levels of understanding and to invent new forms of relationships among ourselves and between Canadians and other members of Spaceship Earth, except through coercive and possibly violent means. Furthermore, it is not unlikely that many groups in our society who now perceive themselves to share little or no common ground with other groups would find their interests converging and would work together to discover a common cause and perhaps a new and better-founded sense of national kinship and purpose in an interdependent world.

b) images of ourselves and our society

Underlying much of the critical commentary on present day society was expressed dissatisfaction with the images of persons, individual and collective, which shape the ways in which we in Canada have been living. These images are reflected in the dominant ethos of our society and are embedded in our social institutions and our social agreements. What appears to be part and parcel of the crisis we face is the need to devise new and more health-sustaining images than those we now live by. Those who pointed to this issue were not unaware of what a painful process this would be, since such images have become so much a part of us that we see and recognize them only with difficulty, and will give them up only after arduous struggle.

A number of these societal images were raised for questioning in the course of the project conversations. The image of ourselves reflected in science and technology and in scientific and technological institutions is one example. Underlying science and technology is an image of persons as problem-solvers, as makers and users of tools. This image has over time come to encompass a god-like concept of ourselves. We have accepted, until recently almost without question, a belief that human beings have the capacity to uncover all mysteries of life and to become masters of their destiny. Specialization, measurement and attention to those phenomena observable through the senses have become the predominant elements of approaches to scientific and, by extension, to societal problem-solving. It is now becoming apparent that this image of ourselves, and particularly the ways in which we have given reality to it, is

"One of the dimensions which many present-day analyses of our society fail to examine is the extent to which we have become again a religious society. We have on the one hand destroyed the traditional sacred character but we have introduced a new sacred character.....Man is after all not only 'Homo Symbolicus' - man the symbol maker, the symbol user -- but man is also 'Homo Religiosus' - man the religious being with a need for meaning in his life .... But in the 18th century, we began to think that God was no longer a tenable hypothesis, that religion was the opiate of the people. We decided that we were becoming adults and that we could get rid of the religious in our lives. We destroyed our religious tradition but nonetheless we are just as religious as before. We are in the process of establishing a new priesthood and we're putting forth new dogmas in terms of how we treat ourselves and others... The very dogmatic attitude of scientists is an example of this new cultish development - they are part of the new priesthood .... Their image forces are so central - we are embodying them in our very beings so they will die only with great difficulty.... Usually when a religious endeavour takes on a certain character, it tends to end in a bloodbath because of the intolerance towards behaviour that falls outside the norms of the cult. Genetic engineering illustrates the extent to which we are essentially playing God. At the top of the hierarchy in the future will be those scientists in charge of genetic engineering and behavioural science."

grossly overextended and distorting.

In recent years, a number of writers (such as Jacques Ellul in France) have called attention to the damaging consequences which they allege result from the untrammelled application of "la technique" - the mindset which persons of Western culture bring to the way they view the world, to problem definition and to the processes of problem-solving. The reductionist approach inherent in specialization -- the breaking down of problems into manageable parts -- fails to take account of interrelationships among problems; it also frequently blinds us to the possibilities of holistic, integrated solutions. The stress given to measurement as virtually the only valid indicator of reality is increasingly perceived to focus attention on the trivial and then only on those trivia which can be replicated in controlled laboratory conditions. In such contexts, persons become objects - "things" - and observed behaviour, and other aspects of persons and other forms of knowing which escape the rational scientific net of linear rationality (sensing, feeling, intuiting) come to be regarded as unworthy of consideration, and increasingly to go unperceived.

Economics embodies still another image of persons -- man the producer and man the consumer. Economic man is perhaps the most predominant image around which we have organized our collective activities. This image of ourselves has been embodied not only in our modes of dealing with issues of the allocation of scarce resources, but increasingly it has wound its way beyond the market place and into bureaucracies and even into the family. It sanctifies the right of individuals to pursue self-interest with respect to the acquisition of goods and services necessary for material well-being. Under Adam Smith's invisible hand principle, individual pursuit of self-interest is equated with the public good. In the past, the win/lose zero-sum rules of the marketplace were thought to be the best means of directing resource allocation, of warning of approaching scarcities, of indicating new needs and therefore of channelling existing supplies and of bringing about discovery and innovation. Today, as Galbraith and others have pointed out, that theory is, as a general mechanism, proving to be ill-founded. As many Canadians well know, many important decisions affecting this country are made outside it by corporations whose power has extended beyond the competitive market, even beyond the ability of national governments to exert social control over them.

As individuals, we have all been infected with the false consciousness given us by this image of economic man. We have tended to equate needs with wants and to assume that more is always better.

"Ecologists are often very simple-minded - they want to conserve everything. They do not understand human realities or needs. Do they really want to save a park when people are huddled in sub-standard housing all around?"

"No one today in the electronic age can be satisfied with only one role, only one job. It's too constraining, too narrow."

"I feel I'm always having to live down to the stereotypes to which society says I must conform."

"The future will hopefully see our society restoring, revivifying and revitalizing man in the spiritual sense, - and I don't mean organized religion .... The human spirit has been struggling to emerge in this country for some time now. Just remember the explosion of human energies which were released across the country during Centennial Year."

"Services have become industrialized -- they have lost the concept of serving and have fallen into the trap of measuring what they do by using the industrial yardstick of efficiency. Perhaps those of us in service industries would better serve ourselves and others by using an organic model."

Measures of GNP have become indicators not only of the health of the economy but the health of our society and its members. And in the process we have made scarce goods which were once in plentiful supply - the free goods of clean air and clean water. Economic well-being has become an end in itself, rather than a means to more human ends. And the frequent references to "the need to keep the economy going" imply that we have got ourselves into a situation where we must consume, in a never-ending treadmill, the outputs of the vast production machine which we have made of our society. As producers, we have turned our world into a dehumanizing factory. We speak in inhuman terms of the need to "earn a living" and seem blithely unaware that in pursuit of living, many persons are condemned to death -- workers in asbestos plants for example. As consumers we have become gluttons. And increasingly the human energies expended in our roles as producers and consumers are seen to be without satisfaction and as stunting personal growth and development. Economic relationships have come to control society, rather than society controlling economic relationships.

Environmentalists are now quarrelling with both officially legitimated images - the image of persons as being masters of their destiny and, more fundamentally, with the image of economic man. The philosophic approach which many environmentalists bring to their analysis dwells essentially on the relationships between persons and nature. They emphasize the inter-dependence of the biospheric system and see the role of human beings in that system only as one small, though important, part. For years the environmental movement has served to draw attention to the damage we are doing to the physical environment and it is now warning of the possibility that we are endangering life on this planet. Many are pointing to the inherent dangers in acting as though we had dominion over nature, a credo which some attribute to the Judeo-Christian tradition. Theologians tend to dispute this claim, arguing that this is a misinterpretation of biblical meaning; instead they hold that the more accurate analogy is that of stewardship of nature.

But much of the thinking embedded in what has come to be known as "the environmental movement" is in its essence fundamentally distrustful of human nature. Environmental legislation is based upon the supposition that self-interest can only be restrained by such measures as fines, imprisonment or other forms of social sanction. Persons thus tend to be viewed by many environmentalists as by nature greedy, avaricious and selfish. The fact that there are other concepts of persons, albeit concepts on which philosophers have been incapable of agreeing, tends to be largely ignored by

"It was only about 125 years ago that we had enough sense to take the children out of the mines, because of what it did to their physical bodies. To have advanced from that awareness to the awareness of what we are doing to people's spirits may be pretty good in the space of 125 years. It seems as if what we are doing to people's spirits today is much worse than what we were doing to their bodies in those days."

"I expect that the move towards greater permissiveness in private behaviour will continue, but that we will demand a much higher moral standard than we have in the past from politicians, bureaucrats, corporate leaders, trade unions and the professionals -- in fact in all branches of public life."

"I see the Third World countries looking to Canada for leadership in articulating to other developed countries a concern for human bettering and for moral responses. And Canada can assume that role, for this country is less wedded to the rule by wealth philosophy of the United States and, because of her relatively short history, less firmly bound by tradition than the European countries."

environmentalists. This is perhaps not surprising, since their concerns take them face-to-face with the consequences of man's exploitative behaviour. But the point at issue here is the cause/effect relationship -- whether such consequences are attributable to the innate human condition and as such therefore amenable to control only through coercive remedies, or whether such behaviour is more the result of cultural conditioning, in which case the search for remedies would seem to lie in alterations to social and institutional structures.

Environmentalists have recently been calling for a new environmental ethic which would serve as a guide to behaviour more in keeping with harmonious relations between persons and the natural world. The rationale for such an ethic would draw attention to organic models of the relationship between the human species and other forms of plant and animal life and would question the prevailing notion that the human species has natural primacy over other species. But again this proposition does not take into account the institutional barriers which may frustrate its adoption, nor the long-abiding myths and symbols which reflect conflicting images of ourselves. Hewing to the thesis of "survival at any cost", many environmentalists would have us create a world that is fit for life but that may not be fit for human and humane living.

Many would fundamentally disagree with the image of man as innately evil and with the notion that the human species has no primacy over other forms of life. They assert that the human species has primacy and that good and evil exist within each of us. They claim that there is no solid anthropological evidence supporting the proposition that persons are innately inclined to act in fundamental opposition to society and to the natural environment. They also point out that there have been many societies which have evolved a complex web of myth, religion, ritual, kinship and taboos which have served to instill and to maintain harmonious relationships among their members and between their members and the natural world. From this view follows the proposition that behaviour which results in disharmony and dysfunctioning does not stem from the innate human condition but rather is culturally conditioned.

Many of those with whom I spoke drew attention to the concept of the "self-actualizing" person, first developed by Abraham Maslow. (While recognizing his significant contributions, many were critical of Maslow's concepts, and particularly his apparent failure to encompass in his scale of human needs a recognition of the interrelationship between individual development and the social settings in which persons find themselves, settings which facilitate or

"Canada is adopting an attitude of moral superiority about the crisis and is failing to recognize her own moral bankruptcy. We're prepared to leave to the U.S. leadership in dealing with the food crisis and inflation. And our attitude about self-sufficiency in oil is nothing more than narrow self-interest."

"Our major problem is to call halt to the thoughtless pursuit of solutions to our problems and instead come to an understanding of what the problem is. We need to recognize that the problematique is deeply ingrained within us. Perhaps one of the underlying causes of the intellectual pessimism that is surrounding us today is that Western man is for the first time confronting the signs of his own failures. We have never been taught to accept failures, and we're finding it a painful experience."

"What scares me is that so many people searching for alternate approaches keep throwing up alternatives which are really not alternatives. Most of them are not trying to transcend the values of the system they're in. Instead, they're talking from within the relationships of the system, because the system is designed to make it that way. And the system is that extraordinary complex of relationships that constrains our activity and makes us the particular kind of people we are, as distinct from the people we could be."

"There is much talk of the need to change -- lifestyles, values, institutions, whatever. What worries me is that there is little understanding of what this really means. So much of the talk seriously misinterprets the profound nature of the change that is required."

impede the achievement of self-actualization.) But the interest in Maslow stemmed from a belief that something of self-actualization, of transcendence, is in play among members of our society today -- that many Canadians seem to be reaching for their own concepts of self-actualization. This may well be the implication to be drawn from the frequent expressions of a deep psychic need for wholeness or at least for an end to fragmentation, the feeling of being pulled apart by conflicting forces, and a belief that the time has come to move to a higher level of satisfying human needs.

This need is in large part attributed to the increasing perception of the narrowness of the images and the roles through which the lenses of our present society force us to view ourselves. Many persons in Canada today are increasingly restive under the burden of the stereotyped categories which society forces upon them. This is the essence of the women's movement, to cite only one example. The need to "live down" to the many mechanical roles and stereotypes we are called upon to play, with all their conflicting behaviour rules, denies the possibility of personal growth and development, of achieving self-actualization, of living human lives in human community with others. What is under question is the dehumanization inflicted by the competitive, aggressive behaviour models according to which we organize and judge our public behaviour (in the marketplace, at work, in our notions of social worth). Instead, there is a felt need for more cooperative, more fully human behaviour modes, modes which would take account of the whole gamut of factors affecting personal fulfillment. There is a need for new images to give legitimation and recognition to the concept of human beings not as isolated individuals constantly at war with others of the species, but rather as persons with a need for open, cooperative relationships with others. There is also a need for societal living patterns less overshadowed with material concerns and more supportive of the non-material needs of human beings.

The way in which this emerging need was most frequently expressed in this enquiry lay in the repeated use of the language of "human energies" and "the human spirit". What was being said or implied was that, just as we are beginning to recognize the limitations and constraints of our profligate use of non-human energy, so too awareness is growing of the limitations and constraints we have inadvertently placed on the liberation of human energy. The human spirit is in danger of being crushed under the impersonal, mechanistic set of societal rules and regulations by which we have governed ourselves in the past and by the materialistic lifestyles through which we have pursued our well-being. That this spirit is struggling to emerge is evidenced in the widespread interest in

"We are presently unwilling to accept any advice that we should look at the situation as it is, because our myths and symbols prevent us from doing so."

"I think it's a fundamental error to think of individuals as rigidly adhering to a fixed set of values. Human beings have an enormous capacity to adapt and to change."

"The most shocking thing I've noticed about Canadians since I moved to this country is the extent to which Canadians defer to authority. The Morgantaler decision, in which the Supreme Court overrode a decision of a jury of twelve good men and women, aroused no immediate public outcry!"

"Values provide the unity for the apparently conflicting visions of social equity and environmental sanity."

"There is a growing consciousness among us that, beyond a certain point, the pursuit of self-interest leads to self-damage."

"Have we built a culture which prevents us from attending to important things? I fear we may have."

"Attention in the sense of focusing one's total ethos - total makeup - is of the essence. It leads to a certain way of relating to things. Depending on that state of attention, one is going to come forward with certain percepts and certain concepts. Sometimes it is impossible to relate to others because their state of attentiveness or attention is fundamentally different."

Eastern religions, in new sects and new cults within Western religion, as well as in the growing numbers of Canadians experimenting with alternative lifestyles which may be less exploitative and more capable of engendering self-actualization.

This renaissance of the non-materialistic range of human needs also emerged in the revival of the language of ethics and morality. As noted earlier, the food crisis was frequently described not as a problem of economics or resource allocation but predominantly as a problem of morality. The fact that North Americans consume excessive amounts of protein in a world where millions are suffering from protein starvation was consistently described as unethical and immoral.

The right of North Americans to continue to consume more than an equitable share of the world's resources, particularly food and energy, is a question which is already being confronted, however uncomfortably, by an increasing number of Canadians. But at the same time, the perception is growing that were we to continue striving for higher material standards of living, we run the risk of doing so at the expense of the non-material aspects of our well-being. The crisis is upon us now, not 50 or 100 years from now. We need to begin now to search collectively for new and more life-sustaining images of ourselves and our society. In the process we need to abandon reliance on technological solutions designed to bring about greater control of both nature and human beings.

The societal images that we have created for ourselves are not totally of our own making. The images that other nation states have of Canadians also play a part. One interpretation of an emerging image that other countries hold of Canada was proffered by a recent immigrant. In his view, Canada was increasingly being asked by countries from the under-developed world to play the role of enunciating the moral tone vis-à-vis the rest of the industrialized world. He saw Canadians as imbued with a concern for human bettering and Canada as the articulator of the moral standards with respect to international actions in the world family of nations.

This view of Canada is not one that Canadian official delegations commonly perceive, nor does it even approach many of our official stances at international conferences, (e.g., Rome and Bucharest), though it may well reflect the expectations other nations have of this country. Nor is it without its dangers and pitfalls. What is deemed to be moral action and a coherent enunciation of a moral tone may be little more than self-seeking and self-serving deception. All too often moral stances are confused with pompous moralizing and what constitutes appropriate moral response is thought to be

"A society that could conserve energy and other natural resources could not merely be our kind of society with a strong service sector - it would have to be a radically different kind of society... a closed system.... a stable population.. products designed for durability.. virtually everything recycled... large corporations could not exist in such a society, and the question of income distribution would be very hard to evade."

"The alternative back-to-the-land movement can only provide alternatives if the dominant society continues; if that goes, then there is no alternative since there would be no way for the members of that movement to earn even the modest amount of capital they require."

"I'm concerned about the hypocrisy of many environmentalists today. They seem now to be retrenching. Many have given up alternate lifestyles and are back in the system; possibly seeing a crunch just around the corner, they're trying to make it while they can."

easily discernible rather than, as is the case, ambiguous and elusive. The difficulty of determining what is moral and what constitutes human bettering is all the greater, given the propensity of the industrial world to embrace science with cultish fervour and to make of it a new religion and, in consequence, to demand absolute conformity and to be intolerent of diversity. It is undoubtedly the case that more human destructiveness has been wrought in the name of morality than is commonly recognized.

But while the shape of a new and coherent image of ourselves and our society has yet to emerge clearly, Canadians are becoming increasingly aware that the images we have lived by in the past are no longer rich enough to encompass our diverse needs today and into the future. What is not so clear is the extent to which we will be able to support the unfolding of new human images which do not have the same rigidity and the same life-defeating consequences. Some would argue that we can move with certainty now to effect change. Others dissent, claiming that our problems are much more fundamentally rooted within us than such assertions would give us to understand. They argue that the first priority is to understand the problem, and caution that we are a long way from that objective and hence from being able to act with certainty on the basis of an adequate understanding of ourselves and our society. In their view, old myths and symbols and the dominant images we have lived by will, for some time to come, get in the way of truly effective action. This is not to say that no action is possible now, but rather that the search for new directions must constantly be subject to critical and conscious examination. We must in other words condition ourselves to search and experimentation. Rather than falling into the trap of inventing a new image and then focussing our attention on "producing" it in a rigid, mechanical way, we must begin a voyage of discovery in which we are constantly alert to unfolding human needs and human potential and to the dynamic evolution of integrative and life-enriching images.

c) beyond values . . . to valuing, perceiving and attending

One of the expectations that some federal officials held about this project was that it might provide some insights into the values currently held by Canadians and the degree of difficulty that might be encountered in shifting to more life-sustaining values. It was also suggested that regional differences in values might also show up as a significant variable.

"Like other developing countries, Québec is going through a crisis. At Stockholm, the developing nations said they wanted nothing better than a chance to pollute -- that is they wanted economic development. The same is true of Québec. When Québec has caught up with Ontario, then we can talk environment. For the moment, let them protest Pickering, we want Mirabel."

"Fundamental change always is revealed at the institutional level. Indeed the essential characteristic of any society is how the public relates itself to social institutions."

"One of the bizarre things that's happening now is that the universe of our institutions is unfolding to reveal its fundamental instability."

From the beginning, the validity of the question was at issue. Apart altogether from the issue of whether those persons on whom this enquiry drew are representative of the total population, the question itself was problematic. It appeared to assume that there does - or did - exist a discernible set of values common to all Canadians or to most Canadians in a particular geographic region, and that this set was inappropriate to the direction in which we appear to be headed. Also implicit in it was the notion that such change in values as would be required to sustain more appropriate lifestyles would have to overcome resistance - that values tended to be static and therefore amenable to change only over fairly lengthy periods of time. It further suggested that values were somehow "out there" and could be manipulated and changed through the application of technological means designed to subtly coerce people to shift to a defined value set.

Many of the persons with whom I talked pointed out that to speak of Canadians valuing present materialistic lifestyles or any of the components of such lifestyles is to risk confusing ends and means. "Values" as a noun is suggestive of some "thing" or set of "things" which can be discerned by observation and in some way measured and ranked. That this is an ill-founded and misleading notion can be illustrated simply. To select but one example, persons do not value cars *per se*, except perhaps for a small group of car buffs. Instead they place value upon what individual access to cars provides -- freedom of movement, the saving of time, status -- value which varies amongst individuals and the particular circumstances in which they find themselves. These are in other words the ends which are satisfied through the means of private transportation. But even these ends are not static, nor can they be deemed by outside observation necessarily to be preferred. A car owner may prefer not to own a car but may be forced to do so because of the environment in which s/he lives. The need for private transportation can disappear rapidly with a change in location of work or residence and with improved access to public transportation. Where status is a factor in car ownership, this too can change as the desire for status symbols is dissipated or is satisfied through other means.

End values or intrinsic values may be defined as those values which are inner-directed, which give purpose and meaning to life, and over which there is, at the conscious level, less tolerance for compromise. The fact that the secular materialism and objectivity which characterize industrial societies have pushed to the periphery intrinsic values and concerns for well-being of the human spirit does not mean that those values have disappeared completely

"A businessman now in the political arena, you won't be surprised to hear that I'm still a believer in free enterprise. But I'm beginning to think that, in the process of institutionalizing free enterprise, we have somehow lost its deeper meaning. By that I mean the right of individuals to pursue their own creative outlets, their own fulfillment, in the context of brotherhood. In the process of institutionalizing it, we've come to forget or ignore that context."

"What is lacking among those Canadians today whose attitudes and values are changing is knowledge about how institutions work, where their vulnerabilities are, and how to effect institutional change."

"We need to consider what is required to motivate institutions to probe problems more deeply than they now do. Decisions within and between institutions are now based on consensus around how things are and how activities can or should be carried on. The question I want to raise is how can we organize ourselves so that institutions are constantly off balance, constantly forced to enhance their awareness and to deepen their probing?"

"Are temporary societies to be our new institutional forms? Are temporary societies more likely than our present institutions to keep pace with social and personal change?"

"Institutional change is always impeded by the threat to the persons employed by those institutions. That's why change is always so slow and why institutions never die."

from the spectrum of human needs.

What appears to be surfacing, in a growing number of pockets here and there, is the realization not only that intrinsic values have become increasingly privatized but that the dominant thrust of societal concerns for the physical and the material has encroached upon the ability to realize end values to the point where there appears to be little room to nurture non-material aspects of well-being. The perception that there are ways of living differently, ways which allow for meaning and purpose, has yet to become even as widespread as the perception that the global predicament in which we find ourselves signals the need to live differently.

This suggests that what is at issue is the process of valuing rather than values *per se* or even the distinction between use values and end values. The process of valuing is a dynamic one and is rooted in the ability of persons to perceive and to realize options, and to exercise effective choice. This process is affected by perception -- what is recognized as true or possible -- and by attention -- what thoughts or objects the mind gives prominence to in discerning truth and in considering the possible.

The linkages between valuing, perception and attention are therefore culturally conditioned. Obviously, it is impossible to value what is not perceived or felt, and what is deemed not to be possible must by definition be rejected, even though it might be preferred. Perceiving in turn is affected by what is consciously attended to. But the cultural environment and the deep structures of any society tend to fall outside the range of consciousness, to be given which members of that society take for granted and rarely question. Thus we are all conditioned by the social structures which are the dominant embodiment of our culture. These structures teach us who we are and how we should act as responsible members of the society we live in.

One of the consequences of the danger signals emanating from the physical environment and the turbulence evident in our social environment today is that these structures are coming into conscious view. As the perception grows that traditional ways of doing things are exacerbating the very problems they attempt to solve, traditional cultural assumptions and established social structures are becoming the objects of attention. Recognition is dawning that the belief systems inculcated in us by these structures may themselves be the roots of our dilemmas. Thus the questioning of "limits to growth", for example, is giving rise to perceptions about the extent to which the growth ethic is deeply

"One of our major problems is the built-in survival mechanisms of institutions. We seem to need if not a periodic self-destruct mechanism for institutions, at least a mechanism which gives persons within institutions the power to walk out - to vote with their feet. Today people perceive themselves to be locked in - by the link between work and income, by pension funds, by all sorts of things. Have we really mined the potential of an adequate guaranteed annual income? Have we really imagined the power it could have to effect institutional change? Have we really given more than a 'shoot-from-the-lip' treatment to the concept of portable pension funds?"

"Bureaucracies condition those within them to see themselves and others as replacable parts; this conditions irresponsibility in the bureaucratic decision-making process; the only model of decision-making which may provide an alternative to the bureaucratic model is that of the family."

"How can we put together organizations which facilitate and bring out 'the good' which is inherent in human beings, institutions which nurture human striving rather than institutional self-perpetuation?"

"The problem we confront is the technologizing of all our human institutions."

"I was doing some research in Sweden on social assistance programs and spoke with one of their researchers. He asked me why a country as affluent as Canada has such a miserly system. When I responded with the standard bureaucratic answer -- that we couldn't afford more than what we're now doing -- he replied with the sharp retort: that's nonsense, what you're really saying is that you Canadians haven't got your priorities right."

ingrained in the mores of Western culture, in our socio-political-economic system, and in our attention to property, consumption and social position as emanations of that ethic. Our free enterprise system has been built on growth -- the growth of investment capital, the growth of demand and the growth of supplies to feed that demand -- as well as on competition and the price mechanism as the means of allocating conflicting claims on resources. But in a secular society, there are few, if any, constraints on the free enterprise ethic, few boundaries to restrain its influence. As a result we are largely unaware of the extent to which the ethic of the market-place has permeated our society. We have conditioned ourselves to accept property, consumption and social position as evidence of social success and personal worth, and competitive behaviour rules as the appropriate mode on which to base our social relationships. The aggressive pitting of individual against individual, group against group is the name of the game, and the weak, the voiceless and the unorganized are its constant victims.

The attempts that are underway, individually and in small groups, to shift to alternate lifestyles can only go so far. Unless our social structures are open to accord them legitimacy, those who would engage in such experiments quickly reach the point where such actions become futile gestures and where their credibility as responsible members of society stands at risk. Persons may perceive options for alternative ways of living but may also be able to exercise those options only at the cost of other things which they value, such as the particular work they are engaged in, the ability to experience the social relationships they desire, and so on. They may wish to lower family food consumption in order to provide more for the poor both in this country and abroad, but the distribution system negates the effectiveness of their sacrifice.

In such situations, it is misleading and distorting to impute immutable value to present Canadian lifestyles and to do so solely on the basis of observed behaviour. Measuring such behaviour ignores the cultural and institutional barriers to the exercise of real choice, and ignores as well the cultural conditioning (e.g., the mass media) which affects attention and perception and ultimately what is valued. It gives scant recognition to the extent to which we are all conditioned by the dominant values of the society we live in and by the norms of our social systems. Until those systems open to alternative norms and possibilities, there is little to entice us to adopt a different social ethic, even though the physical environment is signaling that this is what must be done and the turbulence in our social environment is

"The problem I see is that no one is in a position to maintain the boundary conditions around any existing group of people or any identifiable problem. A problem only has meaning within a certain context. The problem is that that context is precisely what is changing. No person or institution in Canada controls the context..... That is the most terrible thing to report, because obviously it will suggest to a lot of people who have been carefully trained to think within certain structures, certain boundary conditions, that their intellect is useless, since the boundary conditions are no longer maintainable. One of the problems is that our university people have been so well trained that they can't cope with what needs to be looked at.

... By the time it has become clear that the boundary conditions are in fact constructs, they are sufficiently under pressure that people feel forced to defend them. Then it becomes very difficult to ask the rational question: should we find more and better ways of structuring the world or, more modestly, should we find a number of ways, not of eroding boundaries but of crossing them.

... That's the terrible responsibility I lay at the door of all governments -- they are the only ones with the initiative and the power to say that we will now look at this question. Nobody else has the power. Nobody else has vested in them the authority to establish and maintain the boundary conditions. They alone have charge of the common weal; they alone represent the people. They not only have the legal right, they have the moral responsibility as well.

... Only when we are at peace, can we ask the question: how should we restructure ourselves? But governments of all kinds are involved in crisis management. And what doesn't get done, when you are involved in crisis management, is a deliberate, continuing process of renewal, a process which has to go on at all times. It might make a lot more sense to let the bloody crisis take care of itself - I don't think we'd be any worse off."

signaling that this is what ought to be done, if we are to achieve a human and humane future.

d) institutionalization

The questioning of the images embedded in our institutions and the erosion of institutional bonds which are underway today have been referred to earlier in this paper. In addition, there also emerged a set of questions about the inadequacy of our corporate, bureaucratic institutional models, and particularly about their seemingly built-in imperviousness to change. If McLuhan is right in his thesis that the electronic age has set loose a marked acceleration in the rate of social change, then the issue of institutional adjustment to the ever more rapidly changing conditions of the times is critical.

Clearly there appears to be a widespread view that institutions lie at the centre of problems which are acting to impede social change today. The sense that persons are struggling to effect personal change, that attitudes are shifting and that what is being valued is a search for wholeness across the whole realm of human experience is a commonly held perception among those contributing to this project. But the social structure - the system of institutions - has not been open to these shifting perceptions, even though they appear to have taken on growing strength and to hold greater promise. Our dominant social structures continue to operate on the basis of past assumptions about institutional purposes and assume the existence of shared understandings and the viability of traditional institutional aims and objectives. While lip-service is given to the understanding that institutions both shape and are shaped by the perceptions and attitudes of persons, the dynamic, two-way model of an institutional environment which this understanding implies is not part of experienced reality. In fact what appears to be happening is that institutions, in the form in which we have designed them and in the structures into which they have evolved, have become impervious to change and incapable of responding to a shifting environment. They have taken on a life of their own and stifle the very creativity and ingenuity which those at the top of many institutional hierarchies state as necessary for renewal and effectiveness.

Bigness, fragmentation, standardization and hierarchy were cited frequently as present-day characteristics of institutions which together work in ways that frustrate their ability both to perceive

"Look at our universities today. University experience is generally a test of conformity as measured by economic criteria of governments and industry. Entrance into many university programs is controlled in terms of the number of job opportunities available after graduation, not by intellectual curiosity and the needs of students to confront the range of ideas needed for full life growth. Personal reasons for getting oneself educated via a study of anthropology or history, for example, fall away and are not considered. What matters is the number of jobs in history or anthropology that the country and the university administration feel will be available and people should be trained for."

"The traditional religious symbols are no longer operative. The traditional Christian churches have adapted themselves to the requirements of the times ... Their anchoring seems to be where the values of this society are now; that is to say, their interpretation of man's nature and destiny is not grounded in the experience of the spiritual. In other words, they are no longer witness to a different message."

"We get the sorts of politicians we deserve. We criticize them for patronage and scandal but we don't use those terms when it's a case of pulling strings to get my sidewalk fixed. We're such hypocrites."

"Our problem lies in the way we have structured our political system. Politicians refuse to think long-term - their deadlines are the short-term goals of getting re-elected."

"The church is failing to remain true to the roots of its tradition. So too is the university. Look how they both reacted to the counter-culture -- they resisted it because they saw it as attacking both religious and educational institutions. They both identify with the establishment, with those who have a vested interest in maintaining the present images of our society.

and to respond to change. So also does the tendency of persons in our society to identify with abstractions of themselves -- with the institutional roles they play -- to the point where criticisms of institutions, and allegations that their usefulness has diminished or disappeared are taken to be personal criticism and personal threat.

The inertia of big institutions has led to demands for better management and to an array of diverse and often conflicting management theories, in the apparent belief that better management of big institutions would enhance responsiveness and diminish inertia. This has resulted in a concentrated effort to look within institutions and to reshuffle the organization chart, at times with such rapidity that the ink is barely dry on the old one before a new chart appears off the press. In the course of these activities what is seldom, if ever, examined is the social context in which institutions find themselves and the relevance of established institutional aims and objectives to that context. What also frequently goes by the board is a reappraisal of the human needs and aspirations these institutional aims and objectives are intended to serve, and a realistic appreciation of the inter-relationships among sets of institutions.

Adherence to the scientific mode of problem-solving - defining and reducing problems to manageable parts - is probably at the root of the almost automatic tendency to resort to bureaucratic forms of organization as the appropriate mode for institutional organization. Within governments, for example, there is a maze of separate bureaus, each with officers at the top of these hierarchical structures armed with specific terms of reference and specific sets of rules aimed at achieving those objectives. The resolution of conflict between these separate units is usually left to senior management, the top echelons. Distance between various links in the hierarchical decision-making process is accompanied by the greater distance between that process as a whole and the persons affected by the decisions - those outside the particular bureaucracy. In Canada today, that distance is measured not only in terms of geographical and hierarchical space but by the growing accumulation of evidence that there are different ways of "seeing" reality - that there exists diverse perceptual space.

Hierarchical structures demand, for purposes of order and efficiency, the exercise of control over subordinates. This control takes many forms. Obviously, the most important of these is the control which both visibly and invisibly chains the person to the institution - the link between work and income. One of the more surprising

"People are beginning to wring our present concepts of social justice through their conceptions of social reality and are finding that they don't mesh. The present concepts of justice are based largely on a market mechanism - from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs - yet neither ability nor needs has anything to do with social justice."

"The worst signs of social injustice today consist of our unequal salary structures and our adherence to private property."

"In all the questioning that's going on today, we are still refusing to address a major social issue - what to do with dissidents, with those who want to oppose significant change. The Allende experience in Chile should have taught us that in a period of fundamental change, a loose hand just doesn't work. It's a painful issue, but we ignore it at our peril."

"Redistribution of income, both within Canada and between the have and have not nations must be accomplished before we can move to address the environmental issues which are threatening life on this planet."

"I think our view of private property is eroding rapidly. And also capitalism as a viable concept around which to organize resources and to distribute them may also be eroding."

aspects of this enquiry has been the infrequent references to this link. But what those who specifically made reference to it clearly saw as pernicious was the human bondage to the maintenance of the *status quo* which the existence of this link not only reinforces but perpetuates. Given the strength of this link, only those members of the hierarchy with sufficient psychological and material security to engage in risk-taking are likely to question, and to support the probing of, the fundamental assumptions of their institutions. For the most part, creativity, divergence from commonly accepted behavioural norms and the pursuit of new ideas in our society today come from outside the brackets of "the labour force" - from the very young, the retired, and from those engaging in income pooling, in which the basic income revolves around one person holding a "straight" job, while others engage in socially useful creative enterprises. What this says is that our society finances the social creativity and social innovation many Canadians are coming to perceive we need only at the margins of our established institutional activity.

Another factor inhibiting the ability of any one institution to respond to changing societal needs lies in the boundary conditions which delineate the particular kinds of activity it undertakes and the territory covered by its particular mandate. This very process of boundary delineation and problem definition may be a key aspect of our present dilemma. Such boundaries and definitions have in the past been perceived to mark out with certainty areas within which activities could be undertaken and appropriate specialized technologies called upon. What is now being brought into focus by such events as the report for the Club of Rome and the environmental movement, among others, is that these boundaries have been much too tightly drawn. They have conditioned us to look within problems rather than to stand away from them and look at them in order to take account of inter-relationships and to see them in broader context. Since problems only have meaning within a certain context, what was termed a problem appears meaningless or irrelevant when that context is in a state of flux, as it is at present. Shifts in boundary conditions create uncertainty in place of what previously was perceived to be certain and confusion over where the control of situations affected by shifting boundary conditions resides. Since uncertainty is anathema to the reductionist and pseudo-scientific "mindset", what tends to happen is either that technological solutions continue to be applied as if certainty still obtained albeit within broader boundaries, or that the capacity to deal with the changing conditions is relegated to inappropriate jurisdictions or falls into the interstices between jurisdictions.

"Our economic system needs to be transformed into a brotherly economy."

"The time is ripe for consumers to conserve - it pays to recycle, to maintain and repair products."

"I was a principal of a private girls school which catered to the rich and the upper middle classes. Now I'm living on my old age pension and working as an 'advocat populaire' with the poor. Before I thought that the excesses of the capitalist system could be contained, but now that I see its effects every day, I believe that that's not possible and that we must move to a socialist system."

"By concentrating on indicators like GNP and corporate profits, we have embarked on an evolutionary path of resource allocation which puts more and more in the hands of fewer and fewer people. The disenfranchised are alienated, bitter and sometimes violent."

"There is a need for industry to shift to a more conserving economics. And it can now be argued that this would save money. Industries can move now to hold down their energy costs by resorting to electronic information and communications. Electronic business (or electronic ways of doing business) allows us to gain more value added/profit per unit of energy consumed. Electronic banking, for instance, is faster and saves paper - there are many similar situations where it now pays to conserve natural resources."

"We economists need to set about developing a fundamental theory of inflation in the context of the modern world. Keynes knew his general theory would only hold in the context of the world he lived in, yet today in quite a different world, we still follow his theory."

Three of our major institutions were singled out for sharp criticism in the course of this enquiry -- political, religious and educational institutions. Educational systems, and universities in particular, were criticized for their adherence to training for the labour market rather than to training to live wholesome lives and to think creatively in conditions of uncertainty. Established religious institutions, in their efforts to be relevant, are perceived by many as secular businesses; and political institutions, in their desire to govern with certainty, are seen to ignore the need for wise statemanship. All three were criticized repeatedly for their failure to assume leadership in pointing out the damaging consequences of what we are doing to ourselves and to the natural environment through the pursuit of our current social ethics. Their failure to engage in a sustained and public debate about the nature of the dilemmas facing us and about the inadequate moral foundations on which we have built our society is leaving in its wake growing cynicism and distrust. Even when a few leaders of those institutions venture to make public statements about the dangers that lie ahead of us, and at times suggest some beginning areas which appear to be open for experimental new directions, such statements and suggestions are clearly seen to be at the periphery of their institutional concerns. The maintenance of the *status quo*, the support of the existing institutional thrusts, and a concern for the health of their institutions are seen as predominant. The lack of leadership and the resistance to probing the deep structures of our society is giving rise to the perception that "Rome is burning", but our leaders have lost their sight.

Three institutionalized activities were also subjects emerging in these discussions - social justice, economics and science.

Social Justice

The mechanistic concepts of social justice on which our present society is based will need to undergo transformation in the transition to a Conserver Society. The institutionalized system of social justice in use today reflects the social context of the past. It revolves essentially around the concepts of property and the perceived need to protect ownership - concepts appropriate to the industrial era. The sacrosanct character of private property has, however, been eroding most recently under the impetus of freezes on transfers of agricultural and recreational land imposed by several provinces.

Along with these tentative steps to open the doors to a reformulation of the concepts of property along more socially just lines

"Energy cost accounting should be developed and applied in order to undermine the dollar cost and benefit decision rules of economists and to clarify the real costs in resource and consumer decisions. We might be on the point of expending more energy to develop and operate the Tar Sands than we're likely to get out of them if the costs of the superstructure - the development of new towns and the service supports required - are included."

"One of our problems is excessive demand for commodities not highly flexible in terms of supply -- food and fertilizer for example. In such situations, attempts to expand supply don't work fast enough. Nor do traditional ways of fighting inflation. Yet if we don't move to deal effectively with the food crisis, we face the analogy of the Riel rebellion and the depression of the thirties - we're still paying the price today of our unwillingness to deal with those affected by those earlier events. The same groups are still, over 40 years later, suffering from the effects of our failures. We're beginning to see how high the price is we must now pay for our failure to deal with problems when they arise.

Solutions to the food crisis such as increasing foreign aid are being talked about without recognition of their balance of payments implications. If the Third World countries are genuinely to be helped, the industrial countries must allow them to operate on a negative balance of payments. Yet no economist from the developed world is talking this way."

than the present market mechanism allows, the inequity of our mechanisms of income distribution and redistribution is also being questioned. Until recently, poverty in Canada has been deemed to be the result of personal deficiency, and violence and aggression indicative of personal inadequacy. These concepts are now coming to be seen more as public than as private deficiencies - as inherent in our social and economic structures. In discussing the global nature of our "meta-problems", many persons expressed the view that, alongside attempts to address the disparities among nations, countries in the industrialized world have to remedy economic and social injustices existing within their own borders. Given the indications that industrialization has the inevitable effect of damaging the physical environment, and given that the "trickle down" effects by which its benefits were thought capable of reaching all income levels of the population are proving to be illusory, attention must be paid to alternative ways of income distribution according to more humane principles of social justice. In fact it may well be that without an adequate concept of social justice, one which is consistent with other elements of the whole culture, any society falls to pieces.

Economics

If current events are revealing more clearly the relationships between the institutions of social justice and economics, so too are they revealing the relationships among economics, ecology and the environment. The institutionalizing process through which the Western World has dealt with issues of wealth distribution has resulted in our losing sight of the need for economy. The growth ethic has implicitly carried with it the notion that such limits to supply as may occur are temporary, awaiting only new discoveries of natural resources or the invention of man-made substitutes. In the interval, the price mechanism acts as the guiding hand, rationing available supplies and allocating them among the highest bidders in the race to satisfy demand. The recent rapid escalation in food prices has served to raise the consciousness of many Canadians about the essential inequities of this mechanism. In a country which regards itself as possessing the second highest standard of living in the world, many of those at the lowest end of the income scale are experiencing difficulty in providing balanced and nutritious diets for their families. And ecologists and environmentalists are drawing attention to the fundamental instabilities of the economic system, its inequities and its damaging environmental consequences. With an economic system built upon the growth ethic and upon the seemingly limitless capacities to satisfy insatiable wants, they have warned us that we stand in danger not only of failing to provide the basic human needs of food and shelter but of exhausting

"Social scientists and academics are no help in trying to come to grips with our dilemmas. Like other branches of science, they are highly specialized. Also social sciences are greatly under-funded compared with the physical sciences. As a result, social scientists are trained and supported in the counting of barbs on the tail of an arrow, but they know little about people."

"Our present information systems ignore the possibilities of considering values and emotions. Attempts to interest social scientists in looking at this aspect of decision-making have not been successful. Not only are they too specialized but the scientific tradition leads to an avoidance of the role of values in favour of supposed objectivity."

"It is hard to tell people that the flaw we are discovering in our great dream - the liberal scientific dream of the industrial world - lies in our categories of thinking. Science is postulated on polarity -- we/they, subject/object, knower/known. Social science is now applying that scientific way of thinking, which may be appropriate to the natural world, to man where it is not appropriate."

non-renewable resources and placing human life in peril by polluting air, water and the very biosphere that supports all life on this planet.

The need to invent a life-sustaining economic system is clearly at issue. The price mechanism has its own built-in limitations in functioning as an all-encompassing allocating device. This perception is causing some policy makers to "think the unthinkable" - to shift away from a concentration on gearing up supplies to meet the infinite expansion in demand, to a focus on finite management and demand restraint. But until more attention is paid to the issue of allocation, demand management may only exacerbate social injustices. In an era of fuel shortages, the rush to construct new airports at Pickering and Mirabel is coming to be regarded as insanity and there is as a result some tentative discussion about deliberately allowing bottlenecks to develop, thereby restraining demand and reducing unnecessary consumption.

Planned obsolescence is also under attack. Formerly seen as useful in fueling demand to keep the economy functioning in order to provide jobs for an expanding labour force, such techniques are now seen to be exploitative of both resources and of persons at the low end of the income scale, and therefore as misguided and bankrupt, as excessively short-run in their perspective. Other devices are being examined which have the potential of at least raising public awareness about the inadequacy of current economic decision-making rules. But the discussion has yet to move beyond such peripheral questions as who should pay for pollution, and whether or not such new decision-making criteria as energy cost accounting offer promise of incorporating more long-term considerations into questions of resource use. Mystified by such inventions as national and international balance of payments, management of the money supply and the real workings of the market mechanism, and chained to the system by the work/income link, the public remains largely ignorant of the extent to which exchange values or means continue to override end values. Unless constraints are attached to economic relationships and an economic system evolves which is based on economy, not growth, environmental issues, like consumer concerns, will continue to be subordinated to narrowly conceived economic issues, and the continued workings of the economic system as it has evolved will have priority over human health and human life.

Science

The tendency of our society to focus on objects and to pursue knowledge through the lenses of objectivity is reflected in

"Interdisciplinary research won't work by itself -- there has to be inter-disciplinary education in which each person involved learns in company with others."

"What we are in need of are new techniques and new institutions that seek not to find solutions but to devise new ways of looking at problems."

comments made about current trends in the sciences and in speculations about future directions.

Many of those involved in this project thought that in the future the sciences would focus more attention than is now the case on the area of application, on making effective use of the knowledge already available and on directing it to human ends. The current energy crisis provided the backdrop for several references to the future role of science in relation to energy. Some felt that current efforts to develop fission-based nuclear power should be stopped completely and directed at developing the potentials of nuclear fusion. Many stated that environmentally appropriate technologies need to be further developed and applied, particularly the use of natural forms of energy such as solar, wind, tidal and geothermal power. Work is already underway in many of these areas but the limited support now accorded such research and experimental application needs to be substantially increased. Such activities are as yet at the periphery of more conventional energy research and application. The technological imperative and the fascination with large-scale (and therefore dependency-reinforcing) technology continues to be the driving motivation of scientific work in the area of energy.

Hard scientists are coming to recognize their need for assistance in relating the understandings of the "physical sciences" with the understandings of the "human sciences". But in most instances, the social sciences are little help. It is an interesting commentary on our times that what is increasingly being revealed is the great gap in knowledge in the field of human affairs. Some believe that it is not unfair to say that social science has little to say about the human condition apart from the frequently distorting knowledge gleaned from observed behaviour. Others argue that human and humane knowledge does exist but that what is lacking is the willingness and the commitment to put that knowledge to work -- "file it" being the usual tendency. The myth of objective consciousness, while under increasing scrutiny, is still the dominant methodology pervading both the hard and the soft sciences. Objectivity may be appropriate in dealing with objects; it is quite another step to treat objectivity as the appropriate lens through which to understand persons. Looking only at the world of effects, social science imputes motivation, values and attitudes to explain observed behaviour and then attempts to wrap these observations in a general theory applicable to all. This approach is coming to be questioned in some quarters. The hypotheses underpinning theories of personal choice, like the theory of consumer choice, take for granted the existence of opportunities for exercising real choice, and in many

"As I look into the future, I see a future which results in people being more and more under control. That control technology is already available, and in many cases (Ritalin in the schools) in use; the use will probably increase, all in the name of the need for law and order in a society which is experiencing breakdown. As social tensions exacerbate, as they seem likely to do, the proponents of law and order will increase in numbers and demand more controls for the good of the whole.

Our society tends to be one which leads to control of people, not only through technologies of drugs, behaviour modification, etc., but through more subtle, less dangerous ways, such as for instance uniform government policies, a form of social control leading to homogeneity, standardization.....We don't know how to nurture diversity. Everyone who 'steps out of line' is labelled deviant, and control pressures are brought to bear on him."

"The major question which is not being asked in all the interest in the future is 'who's in control here?' Ask the multi-nationals -- they control this country."

"Power is increasingly shifting to multi-national corporations, yet we have barely begun to understand what this means. One thing is clear though - their operation requires order and cheap labour, and the best way to ensure that is through a police state."

cases such hypotheses grossly distort real experience.

Interdisciplinary research efforts have been mounted in many quarters in an attempt to bring together a variety of specialized disciplines to engage in more comprehensive enquiries. Their success rate has not been noticeably high. Explanations for this lack of success run the gamut from administrative interference and jurisdictional jealousies on the part of the professionals involved on the one hand, to the failure to reconcile inadequate and frequently conflicting images of man and understandings of human behaviour on the other. Furthermore, what is prescribed as scientific and professional methodology may well be part of the problem. What is known and knowable about persons is not contained within uniform concepts of space and time nor encompassed only with sensate data. The perception is slowly growing that persons experience reality in many diverse ways and that there are many ways of knowing which have not been fully legitimated by Western culture. This dawning recognition is thought by some to underlie the rapidly spreading interest in parapsychology, an area to which several persons drew attention as potentially the source of the next major breakthrough in our understanding of ourselves and the human condition. But not all would agree with this view. Some alleged that such interest is only one of a number of indicators of a global escapist tendency, "exquisitely developed in North America", of searching for new concepts and new areas of study in order to avoid the more difficult challenge of dealing with the problems of the "real world."

The future will probably see the social sciences absorbing much more public attention and support than has been the case to date. However, the nature of our present dilemma indicates that social science research will have to move beyond reliance on scientifically-based objective data and into alternative levels of understanding the experiential world of persons. Whether social scientists are capable of achieving that transformation remains to be seen. The social sciences too are not untainted by the technological ethic, with its urge to control. Genetic engineering, chemotherapy, and psychosurgery developed by the basic sciences are "hard" technologies designed to control behaviour, similar to the "softer" technology of behaviour modification developed by the social sciences. What appears to be needed is an emphasis not on human control but on human liberation.

"People spend more time concerned with the definition of problems than they do trying to solve them. If there really were a language problem, a cultural problem, an economic problem, all neat and distinct, then these wouldn't really be problems -- all one would need to do is make decisions. What makes a problem "problematic" is its intractability, its interconnections with other issues which can never be properly defined. Yet we persist in trying to isolate problems and fit them into government departments. Maybe we should hold a referendum and choose the problem of the year!"

"Our present planning models are clearly not suitable to deal with the sorts of problems we face - problems of energy and pollution are far too complex for the simplistic decision-making models we use. We need a period of evolutionary experimentation in order to learn about the characteristics of more adequate models."

"Groups involved in working on Third World problems often end up doing propaganda work for repressive governments and the status quo. They often operate with the best of intentions, yet, because they don't go far enough in their analysis, especially of the economic situation, they often misinform. To explain famine in terms of overpopulation and to stop there is worse than to offer no explanation at all."

e) decision-making, communications and information

Decision-making models, the communication system, and attitudes to information sharing will require reexamination if Canadians are to work together to address the issues facing us and to experiment with alternative solutions.

The criticisms made of decision-making today are many and varied. Content, process, time frame, jurisdictional divisions, the images of persons they reinforce, the visions of the future they imply, were singled out in one or more different conversations as requiring radical transformation. The decision-making models appropriate to the industrialized world cannot be merely transferred, subject only to modest tinkering, to a post-industrial society, a Conserver Society, or any other images used to describe a society fundamentally different from the one we know today. In the transition period ahead, decision-making will need to be open to providing opportunities to approach a particular problem in a diversity of ways and to experiment with a range of possible solutions, rather than settling merely for uniformity and extrapolation.

The functional specialization characteristic of modern industrialized societies, with its accompanying hierarchical bureaucratic organizational forms, has had recognizably damaging effects in terms of decision-making. The boundaries used to define problems have usually derived from functional or disciplinary specialization, and the policy remedies are seen to be only those normally used by that field of specialization. This in turn has meant that the "spillover" effects consequent upon such narrowly focussed processes have had to be dealt with by still other specialized decision-making units. The need to resolve spillover effects and to reconcile conflicting objectives and criteria has given birth to numerous government departments, intra-governmental consultations, interdepartmental committees, interdisciplinary research activities, and governmental-industrial briefings, consultations and other forms of exchange. Competing claims designed to influence decision-making criteria are all too often worked out on the basis of who has the biggest clout -- the most votes, the largest budget, the greatest ability to create jobs and other such aces in the hole. Maximizing output within each decision-making jurisdiction, whatever the form of that output, (more dollars spent, more legislation passed, more departmental projects approved,

"One of the things that we still fail to notice is the relationship between jurisdictional size and the scale of what is deemed to be appropriate technology. For instance, I've been a long-time opponent of our provincial hydro company. But I now realize that it's doing exactly what it was set up to do - maximize the supply of hydro power. With the resources of an entire province to command to achieve that objective, the Churchill project is a natural outcome of decision-making within Hydro's jurisdiction."

"The fact that machines are increasingly replacing routine work gives persons opportunities to use their creative judgment. This in turn leads to a need for democratization within our institutions, for an end to hierarchy. ... One thing that will go in the future is structural authority which will be replaced by the authority of wisdom and virtue."

"Some communities have lousy radio reception - even in 1975!"

"Why do bureaucrats so constantly and so short-sightedly fail to perceive citizen participation in decision-making as a vehicle for effecting social change?"

"The politician has yet to learn that in order to get and maintain power, he must first give power to the people."

"The educational reforms out of the Parent report in Québec were a disaster, because they were based totally on abstract considerations at the expense of experience. This tendency to sterile intellectualism is quite prevalent. It explains the fascination with Marx, Marcuse and now with structuralism. At root, it betrays a lack of imagination and 'bon coeur'."

"The economists' notions of efficiency and economies of scale are out of whack. Efficiency as they count it ends up in terms of 'ripping off' people. And economies of scale are conceived only in terms of economies of large-scale - there's no such thing to economists as economies of small-scale."

larger student enrollment) is taken to be the key measure of success. Such output measures are concepts of flows and few question the assumption that maximizing flows will result in maximizing well-being (a stock concept) in societal and human terms.

Furthermore, decision-making jurisdictions may be both too broad and too narrow to allow all factors relevant to the decision to become visible and to be given proper weight. The rule of thumb seems to be that the larger the jurisdiction the more large-scale the technology which will be used. Energy policy-making units, for example, are fragmented within and among various levels of governments; so too is the range of policy-making units dealing with communications. Thus, the outcomes of decisions within each unit may be separately evaluated but the total impact, the inter-relatedness, is seldom if ever examined. The Mackenzie Valley and James Bay projects are being enquired into from the perspective of the likely impact of each on the ecology of the North, but there is no mechanism which would permit looking at the combined impact of these two projects nor for including in such examination the activities of other nation states that are also affecting the North. Another decision-making rule of thumb would push unpopular projects and questionable activities out to the hinterlands where the numbers of those "immediately affected" are few. But those who see themselves living in the global village are calling attention to the mindlessness of this "out of sight, out of mind" philosophy.

In recent years, the felt dissatisfaction with current decision-making outcomes has given rise to the phenomenon of demands for public participation. But experiments with participatory processes have on the whole resulted only in increasing frustration, mainly because the role of public participation has been little understood by the public and particularly by decision-makers. Frequently the public is brought into such processes at an inappropriate stage. As frustration mounts, invitations to participate are seen by the public to be mere tokenism, while those ultimately charged with the responsibility for decisions become personally threatened when long-established decision-making criteria are questioned by "non-experts". The net result of many such experiments is that opportunities for genuine learning on both sides and for effecting social change are seldom realized. The experiments are written off as failures because the time required is perceived to be unduly long (although the need for speedy decisions is rarely questioned) and the number of competing interests which require reconciliation has escalated. Mechanical, clockwork concepts of time continue to characterize decision-making, as does a reliance on hierarchical structural authority, whereby authority is vested in the holder of a specific

"As our problems become ecological, our solutions must become ecological, and therefore our thinking must become ecological, integrating the cognitive and the affective, the objective and the subjective, the scientific and the artistic, the descriptive and the ethical."

"As we move into the post-industrial era, we can begin to see a relaxation of the forces pulling people into large urban centres. Smaller more human communities can come into being provided we are alert to the need to provide the cultural and social supports which people from all income groups now find attractive in the large cities."

"We have to think of transportation not as the transport of goods but as a means of allowing people to communicate face-to-face. Transportation must become a free-good."

"Our governmental information systems must be restructured in the light of the fundamental issues facing us. Information systems must change and so must government structures. As things now stand, governments feed on reactionary trends and this in turn breeds cynicism in the bureaucracy."

office or role regardless of personal capacities and abilities to deal with the issue in question. The human rhythms required to develop understandings and to effect decisions are compressed into the mechanical rhythms of bureaucratic processes. Rarely is attention paid to differences in perceptions of reality -- to different understandings of what is and what might be. Although recognition of the fact that persons experience reality in a variety of ways is growing, decision-making still proceeds on the assumption that reality can be and is perceived uniformly.

There is a good deal of work underway which is intent on exploring alternative decision-making models. Much of it is based on current philosophical understandings; thus, many such alternatives merely range more broadly over the list of factors and interests which ought properly to be taken into account in specific decision, adding to the list of checks and balances to guard against omitting critical aspects affecting the outcome. Other explorations are attempting to devise alternative or complementary measurement techniques which might throw useful light on the inadequacies of present models. Energy cost accounting, for example, is being explored to supplement the costs and benefits approach of economics and is highlighting effects which go unperceived under conventional dollars and cents calculus. Another model is being developed which attempts to measure the natural energy forces released by man's intrusion on the physical environment in order to put in perspective some long-term consequences of human activity and to warn of the revenge which nature will ultimately demand if human activity displaces excessive flows of natural energy. Both of these models are attempts to bring closer together energy costs and economic costs, and to move beyond environmental impact assessment to environmental impact prediction.

Some studies are being directed toward the conceptualization and development of models which take account of and give legitimacy to differing perceptions of time and space and different personal skills and attitudes required for the various stages of effective decision-making; however, a much greater emphasis on this aspect appears desirable. Nor is there much attention devoted to eliciting and examining in decision-making processes the different images of man and society which implicitly but nonetheless fundamentally shape decisions. The explication of such images is essential, particularly when decisions necessitate a long lead time and are made in the context of fundamental shifts in the social environment. At the very least, this type of elaboration would be helpful in selecting "minimum regret" policies, policies which do not inadvertantly foreclose future options and so make more difficult

"The urban environment is the ecological problem. Great urban concentrations give rise to insoluble problems. Take transportation. If you have to move the working population of Montréal at peak hours, there is no way of doing that which is not slow and unpleasant. Moreover, the concentration of industrial and commercial activities invariably leads to overconsumption of local resources and degradation of the environment. The obvious solution is to abandon large cities in favour of medium-sized ones, yet the pressures toward growth and concentration are always there."

"I think we need to move toward dispersing our population into new and small towns as a means of reviving the possibility of vitality and a sense of community amongst people. This means that at the same time we would have to do away with our present concepts of economic efficiency and concentrate on providing work in small communities."

"Large cities are more tolerant of a variety of lifestyles and alternative living arrangements than intermediate-sized cities. Exposure to difference allows people to imagine alternatives for themselves."

if not impossible a future reversal of present decisions when such may be warranted. Since what is underway may well be a fundamental societal transformation, planning with certainty must give way to planning for uncertainty. This in turn suggests the need for a new perception of the function of planning. Among other things this new perception would consciously examine the ethics of planning for others as if planners knew what was wanted.

Communications policies and the impact of communications media were also singled out as requiring reappraisal. Their ability to shape perception has been alluded to earlier. Further, the issues of control and distribution of access to communications media, which have been based on marketplace, industrial concepts, have been under increasing question and many are alleging that the net result of present policies has been to increase the difficulties of communicating. Despite their increasing sophistication, access to electronic media is inadequately dispersed across the country, forcing many communities into positions of isolation from the rest of Canada. Long-distance telephone rates are prohibitive for many Canadians. Television has been under mounting attack for the violence of its programming content, for the materialistic and stereotyped images it conveys, and for the proliferation of advertising messages whose impact is to create demand by feeding on seemingly insatiable desires for material goods. Not surprisingly, suggestions for a ban on TV advertising were put forward as a policy suggestion during the course of some of these conversations. Others, however, took note of the effective consciousness-raising potential inherent in the juxtaposition of a broadcast on the Rome food conference with advertising for dog food, for example. Transportation was also mentioned as needing to be perceived as a policy facilitating face-to-face communication among persons, as well as effecting the transportation of things.

In the context of the societal shifts which are apparently underway and which many persons believe must and ought to go on, new policies and stances with regard to information-sharing will also have to be brought into play. Government attitudes to information dissemination were subject to particular criticism; so too was the stance toward public information adopted by academics. The intolerance of the scientific community for uncertainty, the overzealous guarding of information by various bureaucracies and the real or imagined constraints on academics to hew to the "publish or perish" stricture by writing in the jargon of their specialized disciplines for publication in obscure journals, have kept the public in the dark about many of the deepening issues now facing us, issues which both governments and educational institutions now decry as lacking

"The question is: how can we have genuinely human groupings? Small, tightly run communities can be even more productive of human misery than our big cities today, since in-group tyranny is their predominant influence. As Arthur Koestler points out, groups can coerce individuals into malevolent behaviour, into doing things that people wouldn't do on their own. Are groups always malevolent regardless of size? Do we really know how to live together in ways that are not damaging to persons?"

"Decentralization is the key issue facing governments. Governments don't trust people and their capacity and willingness to govern themselves in smaller units. We have created a society where individuals have little or no backup beyond the nuclear family and where therefore they are in situations of dependence. Social systems such as cities reinforce this dependence with layers of regulations prescribing behaviour. We need to move to cooperative interdependent communities. Only when we have done so will it be possible to talk about the options and the opportunities that face us."

"Many of the students who come through this university are so hungry for relationships that they see themselves living in small towns when they leave."

an adequate base of public understanding and support. Full and open disclosure of information about the survival issues and the "meta-problems" of our times is a necessary component to broadening the base of public understanding and avoiding recourse to public deception, manipulation and coercion. Where information is not complete, best judgments on the basis of what is available is to be preferred over silence while evidence is collected, particularly when what is at stake is survival.

Information policies at issue here involve much more than legislation governing freedom of information. Rather it is the whole ethic which pervades institutional information dissemination, especially the tendency to restrict information which does not enhance the image of the institution or contribute to professional glory.

f) the facilitation of community and the centralization/decentralization argument

Were Canada to see herself as isolated from global problems, as somehow protected from the consequences of actions taken outside her borders and unmindful of the needs of other nations, then the most significant and complex problem in the immediate future would lie in the area of urban forms and structures. Many expressed the view that the biggest challenge to Canadian ingenuity lies in the design of urban centres in ways which further human and humane ways of living together in large numbers. But of course Canada is not isolated. In the context of the global village and with an eye to the implications that a period of significant social change lies ahead, this issue fades in comparison with other aspects of our "meta-problems", emerging recast in a variety of other ways.

The mounting social problems which are the companions of urban growth, as well as demands for locating the authority to make decisions closer to those affected by them, argue for the need to restrain the untrammelled growth of urban areas. Canadians in large metropolitan centres today are already beginning to demand restriction on further growth, at least until more thoughtful development plans are put forward for debate. And some are seeing in existing communications technology the potential for linking small urban and rural communities to the cultural and other attractions offered by the larger centres, in order to reduce large centre growth.

"I'm concerned that in the Maritimes today, so many people seem prepared to accept destruction of their long-established communities as the price of progress."

"People talk about decentralization as an attempt to facilitate community and to raise consciousness about the need to change. But that's a myth -- it never really happens."

"Our future in this country will be decided by Latin America. We can't keep on refusing to address the issue of our moral and political treatment of Brazil, Chile and other Third World countries. How can we talk about a future if we don't face that issue?"

But there is another perception emerging which serves to buttress the discussion about the need to focus on ways and means of dispersing population into small urban centres. Cities of intermediate size are seen to offer greater opportunities than large metropolitan conglomerates for social cohesion -- for Canadians to create together a sense of community, to find that lost ground of community consensus. Intermediate-sized urban centres may enable Canadians to find new ways of saying "we" and, by providing more human environments than either the large metropolis or the small rural community, afford opportunities for genuine face-to-face dialogue. Such opportunities may in turn begin to close the perceptual gaps that appear to be widening among us. Such communities may provide environments which reinforce a sense of interdependence and so serve to restrain the pursuit of narrow self-interest and the dominance of a "more for me/ less for you" philosophy.

To be viable, such communities would demand a changed orientation toward work opportunities. Rather than leaving to current market criteria the determination of job openings, efforts would need to be made, and supports put in place, to make work available in communities outside the large centres. Handicraft work, cottage industries and community-oriented projects were cited as illustrative of opportunities that need to be supported. In addition, many large service industries, including governments, do not require the physical presence of all employees in order that the work be effectively carried out. Communications technologies could be linked between headquarters in large centres and employees scattered in many communities across wide geographic areas. This would reduce demands for office space and for residential housing that are severely taxing already hard-pressed metropolitan centres. Such a move would of course require a shift in the image of persons as employees; the concept that work is by definition unpleasant and therefore that employees require constant supervision and motivation needs to be consigned to the garbage can, along with job designs, work modules and other distortions that give reality to this false concept.

There are openings now to begin to experiment with, and provide opportunities for, new urban conglomerates to be established that would enable Canadians to choose places to live in on the basis of broader criteria than job opportunities in the traditional sense. The labour market conventions of the industrial era have resulted in the emptying of rural communities and the swelling of urban communities. But both very small and very large communities have offered, for many of their inhabitants, little room for community in the real sense of that term. There is already underway a search

"Any new cultural model that emerges in the future will have to build on certain views to be viable -- namely, that all members of the human race are first and foremost members of a common biological species. This simple truth is everywhere repudiated by cultural and especially economic models of organization. Capitalism, for instance, is totally incapable of giving rise to any of the necessary care that we must take with our natural environment."

"The Americans chauvinistically try to define what the problems of the Third World are and how they should go about resolving them. Their blindness to the fact that a capitalistic economy is totally inappropriate to the Third World is bringing about a serious crisis of neo-capitalism. It forces underdeveloped countries to opt for revolution first, if they are ever going to be able to do anything about their plight."

for alternatives. Some provincial governments are now exploring "stay options" which would open choices to remain in rural communities. And the federal government is beginning to move in the direction of dispersing some of its employees and employment opportunities across the country with a view to improving the responsiveness of its policies and programs. However, the experimentation with decentralization to date has not met with wild applause on the part of the employees involved. And for good reason. Since power and the ability to exercise influence have yet to be decentralized as well, headquarters staff have resisted moves to the hinterlands, while not infrequently personnel in the field feel compelled to give up their regional positions and move to the central office as the only effective way of injecting regional concerns into the decision-making process. Decentralized decision-making involves much more than the mere tokenistic dispersal of employees across the country.

This is not to suggest that decentralization *per se* is seen to be a pat solution to all issues of decision-making in the current environment. With respect to some issues, greater centralization may be desirable. Not surprisingly, the dividing lines between centralization and decentralization did not fall out clearly in these discussions. But nonetheless the comments made suggested that what needs to be examined, in much less adversarial light than obtains today, is the relationship between the power to make decisions and the risks involved in the making of those decisions. We may need to invent, in the context of the global village, jurisdictional delineations that criss-cross subject-matter lines depending on the regional, national and global implications of those decisions, and at the same time allow, to the greatest possible extent, decentralization of the means to achieve those decisions.

Our present constitution is based on outmoded understandings of the world we all inhabit. But the last constitutional conference was nothing more than a battle for territorial jurisdiction within the understandings of the nineteenth century. The next constitutional conference, whenever it may be, needs to look beyond federal and provincial jurisdiction, beyond the borders of nation states, into a world in which these boundaries are seen as the fictions they are; it must recognize that the major decisions facing us will affect all peoples, regardless of national, regional or other affiliation. We need now to come awake to the compelling needs to develop decision-making criteria and decision-making jurisdictions which take account of diversity within Canada and which at the same time allow the development of national policies appropriate to a global setting. Resource policies in particular need to be viewed not as governing ownership by federal or provincial governments but as policies governing the stewardship of global resources.

"Considering the rate of change and the complexity of our problems, we must make a virtue out of necessity and shift our goals from control to embrace, from mastery to mystery. Mystery is a question without an answer. In the face of mystery, the illusion of mastery is magic -- and magic is dangerous because it is the contradiction of mystery - it is an answer without a question."

VIII. A RESUMÉ OF THE MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE REPORT

A lot of ground has been touched upon in this paper and it seems appropriate at this stage to try to bring together the main themes which have emerged and the principles which appear to flow from them:

- the social context in which Canadians find themselves in 1975 is one of disintegration and change;

- there is growing consensus that the dominant social ethos of the industrial era is no longer tenable - that we cannot go on the way we are; however, this consensus rests on divergent perspectives, ranging from perceptions regarding the inevitability that various disasters will occur if we do not shift direction, to optimism and hope deriving from perceptions that change is already underway (in terms of both a growing awareness and understanding of the "meta-problems" facing us, and a growing number of experiments in lifestyles that are less environmentally-damaging, more resource-conserving and more personally-satisfying than the lifestyles of the dominant society) and that these processes need to be extended and accorded collective support;

- from one of a number of historical perspectives, the present may be unique in that, unlike other turning points in human history, we live in an era in which:

    a) we face the possibility, if not the probability, that we are approaching the limits to what till now we have assumed to be in indefinitely large supply (e.g., energy and "non-renewable" resources) and have placed serious constraints on that which we have in abundance - human energy and human creativity;

    b) our problems are not only intensifying but are converging to the point where the solution of one is often the aggravation of another;

    c) the termination of life on this planet is within our capacities;

- from another perspective, the turbulence we are experiencing can be described as an instance in man's long search for life-sustaining,

"Our present society reinforces a perception of un-responsibility. We don't accept responsibility not because we deliberately choose not to but because we don't even see it as ours."

life-enriching set of principles by which to live - as a turning point in the history of religion;

- Canada may be in a more fortunate position than many other industrial countries to begin to shift direction, since we are relatively unimpeded by a strongly-rooted national sense of identity and purpose and have few deeply-felt, widely-shared national mythologies;

- on the other hand, there exists little sense of common purpose or community among Canadians today for a number of reasons (e.g, diverse cultural heritage, perceptual differences arising from changing understandings of reality); this may have serious implications for our ability to make the critical choices that face us now and in the immediate future; in the absence of community and commitment to a common cause, persons tend in times of stress and crisis to react selfishly (i.e, on the basis of narrowly-perceived self-interest) rather than selflessly (i.e., on the basis of broadly-perceived self-interest); unless we find the will and the means of animating shared understandings and discovering common ground on which we can stand together to make the major decisions that are required, we risk abandoning our future to the decisions of others, either other nation states or small groups among us seeking to impose their own goals;

- some Canadians appear to be quietly asking themselves "what kind of people do we wish to become?"; this search for expression of national identity differs from the industrial-era concept of "nation state" in that it appears to be an effort to seek belonging and kinship with others in this country and to do so in the context of responsible membership in the global village; only from the vantage point of the global village does it appear likely that any newly-arrived-at sense of national community will be both life-sustaining and compelling;

- in the process of searching for basic broadly-shared understandings and common fundamental agreements, we need at the same time to attend to and to nurture the natural diversity which exists as a function of differing traditions and heritage and of differences in perception and valuing;

- unless we begin the process of discovering common ground on which to base survival and nurture well-being and do so sensitively and with regard to differing perceptions and heritage, we risk the danger that we will confront crises unprepared and in an atmosphere of alienation and anger; in such situations, there is

the further risk inherent in the control technologies which we have developed; these technologies are both visible (e.g., drug therapy, behaviour modification, the multi-nationals) and more subtle (e.g., standard national policies and programs, the work/income link) and in situations of crises may be used to repress divergence from traditionally accepted norms, to coerce behaviour and to stifle change;

- the dominant values now embedded in our social structures and institutions are the creations of the industrial era; they condition the way we perceive the nature of man, the nature of reality, what constitutes "the good" and "the moral", and the way we structure knowledge, define problems and seek to solve them;

- these values give emphasis to the pursuit of economic well-being and have come to reinforce an image of persons as greedy, self-seeking and avaricious, and therefore as requiring control; they have also given credence to the belief that persons are able to control their destinies through science (including planning) and technology; and the techniques of objectivity and measurement have been used to the point where persons are viewed as objects, having standard needs and aspirations, and reality is taken to be uniformly perceived;

- these values are coming to be seen by growing numbers of Canadians as no longer wholly tenable, as damaging to human well-being and as constraining the possibility of achieving human potential; many are coming to recognize that the pursuit of material self-interest is resulting in damage to both the physical and social environment and in the diminution of the non-material aspects of well-being;

- under the industrial world "mindset", the efficient functioning of the economy, bureaucracies and other institutions takes precedence over the needs and aspirations of persons -- our institutions have become ends in themselves rather than firmly rooted in serving human needs and aspirations; and persons are seen as necessary but replacable parts in institutional machineries; our social structures are thus reinforcing the values of the industrial era and resisting the shift necessary for survival;

- decision-making and bureaucratic institutional processes have been organized around the implicit assumption that it is possible to define problem areas with certainty, to break them into manageable parts and to solve each part; in the period of transition, what is required is to recognize that boundaries between

problems which were formerly thought to be fixed and certain are now in a state of flux, that inter-relationships must be taken into account in holistic and integrated ways, and that planning with certainty must give way to planning for uncertainty;

- fundamental impediments to achieving a viable future are pessimism and the experiencing of powerlessness and impotence -- conditions of the mind; both these conditions exist in Canada today but there also exists hope and a sense of opportunities to be seized.

From these general themes, the following principles appear to follow if we are to take advantage of opportunities for effecting change in humanizing ways:

- change will come about through a continuing and dynamic process in which the purposes and actions of institutions are more firmly rooted in human needs, including the non-material as well as the material;

- in this process, attention must be given to developing new concepts of decision-making, planning, efficiency, evaluation, etc., in ways which take account of the need for integrated, ecological thinking, the validity of different ways of perceiving reality, and the full range of factors which impinge on human well-being; the health and survival of persons must take precedence over the health and survival of institutions;

- this process will involve the trial of alternative kinds of decision-making and planning, rather than concerted efforts to draw up and follow some "master plan" based on conformity;

- within this context of dynamic planning, recognition must be given to the necessary balance between a material standard of living and the quality of human living;

- scientific models of planning and decision-making, while offering some important elements, are incapable in themselves of constituting human and humane planning required for survival;

- as one means of facilitating community and in the face of mounting uncertainty, goals must be seen as dynamic and changing, rather than as rigid and static, and must be open to diversity with respect to definition, jurisdiction and administration; to the greatest possible extent, goals should also open to decentralization of the means to achieve them;

- technologies that are neither destructive of nature nor oppressive of people must have precedence over other technologies.

IX. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE POLITY AND THE POLICY MAKERS

As reference to the earlier discussion of the project and what it was attempting to do makes clear, this enquiry was not primarily designed to be a vehicle for instant policy prescriptions. But this is not to say that the issue of policy implications was either avoided or ignored. Only a few of those involved in these conversations offered specific policy suggestions, doing so tentatively and with the comment that they seemed little more than small steps through some obvious openings in the maze of public policies with which Canadians find themselves surrounded in 1975. Others, when asked specifically whether policy suggestions occurred to them or, alternatively, "what would you do if you were Prime Minister?" expressed a sense of dismay, the severest critics of government among them. The prevailing view seemed to be that the roles of statesmanship, leadership, dialogue, perception-raising and the symbolic act were of critical importance, and that the identification, design and implementation of major policy shifts had to await the furthering of public understanding (both inside and outside government) about the critical choices facing Canadians.

The Prime Minister and the Cabinet in particular were deemed by many persons to have a special responsibility to further public understanding about the issues facing Canadians, "since they alone are charged with the health of the common weal". Among a number of persons who contributed to this project, there was extreme frustration and even mounting anger over the failure of political leaders to deliberately challenge Canadians with the implications of the issues facing us and to take even the small steps that are obviously going to be required to bring a halt to activities which are contributing to human and environmental damage. Political leadership, they felt, must be provided now to raise the consciousness of Canadians and to legitimate public discussion about the implications of continuing to pursue present pathways, and about the opportunities unfolding to seek out more life-sustaining directions.

Others disagreed. Some felt that what was at stake was far broader than the interests and the role of federal politicians and the federal government. They would argue that in a human, democratically-based society, the responsibility for exercising leadership and the criticism for failing to assume it should not be laid solely at the doors of politicians and governments. We may be losing sight of the fact that democracy can only be healthy when leadership comes

from the people, not only from their elected representatives. In part, this is due to impotence and powerlessness in the face of large institutions and complex interrelationships. Impotence and powerlessness have, in industrial societies today, resulted in what Sir Geoffrey Vickers, at a recent Ottawa conference, described as "the decay in human self-confidence"; he stated that, in his view, science-based cultures have come to sap people's ability to sustain dialogues about choices and debates on public concerns. But many involved in this project felt that it is possible to abandon such conditions of the mind and to take advantage of the increasing disaffection existing in Canada today by talking with one another about the important questions facing us.

The strongest and most consistently expressed recommendation for action that has emerged in the course of this enquiry is:

- THAT A NATIONAL COMMUNITY DIALOGUE BE MOUNTED WITH THE PURPOSE OF ENGAGING ALL CANADIANS IN UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF THE DILEMMAS FACING US AND THE OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES THEY PRESENT.

The interim report attempted to set out in a very preliminary way some of the factors which might be taken into account in considering this proposal. The covering letter attached to that report invited interested readers to take note of that specific suggestion and to share with me their thoughts on it, so that further fleshing out of this notion, if it still appeared appropriate, might evolve for inclusion in this paper. Most of those who responded to that invitation supported the need for such a dialogue but would approach the issue of federal role in it with great caution, if not total rejection. Some assert that for such a dialogue to move towards a new and shared understanding of "what it means to be Canadian" and from there to an understanding of what it means to be global citizens, it must be firmly rooted in community dialogue. It appears that many who responded would subscribe to the strong statement offered by one person:

- IT WOULD NEED TO BE MADE CLEAR AT THE OUTSET THAT NATIONAL ISSUES ARE NOT TO BE EQUATED WITH FEDERAL ISSUES.

Federal are a subset of national societal agreements; so too are the objectives of provinces, corporations, and other institutions. As noted in Section VII, the issues seen as facilitating or impeding the possibilities of attaining a viable future extend beyond the capacities of governments alone to deal with. It is therefore

crucial that the public be centrally involved in the process of articulating national purpose.

The interim report contained the following paragraph setting out some preliminary thoughts on the launching and sustaining of this dialogue:

> This dialogue, to be effective, would need to be initially legitimated by the Prime Minister, and the responsibility for its continuing evolution assigned to a body akin to, although significantly different from, a Royal Commission. Persons appointed to this body, perhaps called a Citizens' Commission of Enquiry on the Future, would need to be carefully selected. Conventional criteria such as regional representation and political affiliation would need to be abandoned in favour of criteria based on a critical awareness of the issues that must be encompassed, on a capacity for openness, on ability to transcend institutional self-identification and on a capacity for probing the fundamental assumptions on which we have built our society. The terms of reference would be broadly set and the Commission well funded so that its members could travel across the country, engaging in community dialogue and supporting research work into the issues raised in this report as well as others identified during the course of the Commission's lifespan. Such research would be carried out not only by academics but by persons in communities across the country interested in deepening their own understanding and in engaging in social experimentation. The Commission could also bring together groups from various regions, providing resources to enable them to exchange ideas and understandings. One of the outcomes of the Commission's activities would be that of assisting in the creation of open learning networks of persons in Canada interested in pursuing similar themes. As with the experience of this project, the Commission would probably quickly discover individuals and groups existing in isolation from one another but moving toward similar understandings, and it could assist them in making contact with one another. There is no dearth of commitment, talent and human energies available for the tapping in such an exercise."

At this point let me stand aside and give space to some of the specific comments and suggestions on this notion received to date from readers of that earlier document (other more general reactions, both for and against, form part of the Section following).

"Overall I would suggest that the line that your group is taking is certainly a very valid and, to my mind, a necessary one. And the attempt to introduce the national dialogue that you talk about ....is possibly one of the most important things that could be done in the country today. I'm not at all sure that it should be confined to, or even start at, the national level, or at least, if it's going to be undertaken at all, I think it must have a very strong local component. I would think that Newfoundlanders, for instance, would only engage in a meaningful dialogue about what it means to be Canadian if they have some notion of what it means to be Newfoundlanders. And that same principle can be argued up and down the scale. That is, that Canadians, in order to be world citizens, have to know what it means to be Canadian citizens.

I don't agree with the suggestion ..... that this national dialogue needs to be legitimated by the Prime Minister. For example, I think that for too many people in the country today, the participation of the Prime Minister or any other prominent political figures would do the opposite of legitimizing it. It would define the undertaking as political, it would define it as too similar to many other things that we've had in the past.

I think that legitimation for this national dialogue can only come from the people themselves. And I think that the way to try to initiate the process, which is, after all, all that a government can do, would be try to get legitimation from the institutions that represent the people in a variety of ways - that is: all the political parties, churches, unions, any large scale organizations of that kind that people belong to.

It would also seem to me that it would have to be accompanied by actions that will make it very clear to people that the government is going to take it seriously, that it's going to make a serious effort to do something about it. One way of demonstrating that would be, I think, the establishment of real alternative uses of the mass media. It seems to me that the solutions to the many and daunting problems that are outlined in this document are not going to be imposed on people. The solutions are going to have to come about because people first of all recognize the problems, and secondly, have some form of consensus about what they would like to do to solve the problems. I think that the process of working

towards a consensus has to arise out of small scale organization. I think it has to start with building up some basis of community on a small scale in those places where it doesn't already exist, and taking advantage of it in those places where it does exist, because I think that most of us don't really comprehend the large and complex systems around us except as we can comprehend them through knowledge of, and experience with, the smaller systems."

* * * * * *

"On the topic of a Citizens' Commission: I think it is a useful idea, particularly if it could be experimental, using a number of new styles of operation which would try to be consistent with the concerns expressed, as well as being flexible and subject to change. Hopefully, the format would not have to be spelled out in such a way as to prevent this - everything about it should be subject to review in terms of building a model indicative of a new lifestyle and institutional style.

A few ideas:

- *although financing should be adequate, the method of operation should be frugal, i.e., use train transportation or bus rather than car or plane; use billeting instead of hotel accommodation.*

- *perhaps build from regions rather than the top down, i.e., from those you have talked with and their contacts, a regional group could be formed and each regional group would take responsibility for stirring some interest in its area.*

- *instead of a "representative" national body, form a group in the National Capital Area which would take responsibility for things which should be done here - but would not be superior in any hierarchical sense.*

- *don't set up separate and costly offices; instead try to get attached to a compatible body already in existence and use its office and establishment for a fee; for example in B.C., it might be S.P.A.R.C.; in Saskatchewan it might be University Extension, etc.*

- *also use T.P.R. (transferring participatory resources) organizations for resource distribution of materials: example - R.E.P. in Victoria and Nova Scotia.*

- *Don't establish a national magazine but provide material and support for existing newsletters, etc., in regions.*

- *form teams or task forces on various action and research tasks - e.g.,*

  an advocacy team to try to influence an agency such as the Ontario Educational Communication Authority

  a research team to study the green paper on immigration

  a strategy team to advise on participation of voluntary groups

  a team of reviewers to study books, film, TV, art, etc., and write critical reviews from a new perspective

  a team of speakers, inquirers, group leaders who would become skilled in discussing these issues

- *invite organizations and institutions to use the resources for conferences, study sessions, evaluation of programs, speeches, etc., i.e., build into everything that is happening that is responsive but only respond to requests which allow negotiation and clarification.*

- *instead of an "interdisciplinary" approach, develop the concept of a "trans-disciplinary" approach.*

Well, you can see some of the thrust toward non-hierarchy, decentralization, non-discipline, participatory ... in these suggestions. In addition, I would count on a good deal of voluntary and part-time help. Perhaps some new financial notions could be thought up - which elude me at the moment. Anyway it should be endowed .....rather than set up like a Commission.....

It would be a fun thing to brainstorm."

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"...I don't especially like the sound of your roving Commission, or of the information functions proposed. The latter sounds too much like John Fisher. The Film Board, during and right after the war, was quite effective but it had an overriding national purpose then, and as you know, was emasculated before 1950 for political reasons; similarly, the Company of Young Canadians. A travelling Commission would, I imagine, quickly be accused of wasting public money. The idea of an ongoing agency responsible for examining and developing policy-making processes in Canada is enticing, and I wish the government would see fit to do that instead of the Ritchie model; but it didn't. Nonetheless, I would push for that. The best thing I've seen is a monograph by a man named J.P. Roos, in Helsinki. The centre he works in does better than most, but generally the Scandinavians do better than anyone else in this field of "meta-policy". If I had the authority, I would hire some good people to pick up where they are and push it further. So I agree with your recommendation of government action and support but not with what you suggest they do."

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"...let me make a suggestion about your recommendation for a Citizens' Commission of Enquiry on the Future. I believe that what your Commission would most lack would be legitimacy--even if (or maybe because) the Prime Minister recommended it. One of the "good" social inventions of the past several hundred years, however, is the voting system. The electoral system does a good job of distinguishing between people running for office. (Standing? Riding?). If a mechanism presently exists whereby an election could be specially called of people who would be elected to a Commission of Enquiry on the Future, then the Commission might become "legitimate"; the "people" would be directly involved in the issues of the future by having to vote for (select between) people who offered different images of the future; the Commission could then be expected to act on the "mandate" of their election (resolve differences; find new ideas: formulate proposals) and submit a proposal (or set of proposals) back to the public for their acceptance or rejection. If something was accepted, these could then be referred to the Legislature for enactment (with modifications) into law as appropriate. (If no mechanism exists for such an election, it might be worthwhile to create the mechanism for it first, and then have the election). I believe this suggestion avoids most of the objections

you raise to the Commission idea -- which would probably be too elite, too boring, too remote from the people, and (like other Commissions) get absolutely nowhere. My elected Commission could (ideally) help get the people involved from the beginning, assure that it was not elite, be legitimate, and perhaps not be ignored. There may be objections to it (aside from being "impossible"), it might also simply result in current politicians trying to foist off their pet ideas as somehow especially appropriate to the future; but I think not. Rather, I suspect an election devoted entirely to the issue of what Canada should be like in the future, and what it should do now to get that way would be exciting and challenging, and would activate many present apathetics and still some politicians."

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"The proposal for a commission on the future is a good one but it should be fleshed out a good deal. Is it like a Royal Commission or like the Food Prices Review Board? Does it sponsor research or is it primarily interested in development issues? Does it have provincial counterparts? Is it a granting agency? Public, semi-public, private? Furthermore, I think such a proposal should be made within the larger context of a multi-faceted approach to an important and complex problem, including recommendations concerning education, media, social services, research priorities, and community animation."

An interesting assortment of caveats, questions and specific suggestions that, as their authors stated in advancing them, require further thought. But what they seem to be suggesting is a new style of dialoguing, one which tries to avoid institutionalization in favour of flexibility, one which is rooted in community, at local, regional and national levels, and which by its mode of operation and its style points toward a future which is conserving of both human and non-human energy. It is hoped that this working document will serve to spark further consideration by growing numbers of persons (Funding would have to be thought through more carefully, for example, and attention given to appropriate evaluation, perhaps deliberately experimenting with new concepts of evaluation and accountability. The role of research, demonstration projects and other social experiments also requires attention. So too does another suggestion: that discussing "futures" is too big a question to put to the public, that perhaps some specific issue having broad ramifications might be a more effective starting point.)

Even while such a dialogue were going on,

- ALL INSTITUTIONS CONSIDER SETTING IN MOTION THEIR OWN PROCESS OF INSTITUTIONAL REFLECTION.

In this process, the issues raised in this document might be discussed, with a view not only to increasing understanding on the part of persons within the institution concerned but also from the perspective of their implications for institutional activities.

To take the federal government as an example, the Cabinet might consider requesting each federal department and agency to discuss these issues, to extend and deepen them in the context of facilitating a learning environment. In such an environment, policy planners and advisers and operational personnel might think through the implications of what is meant by the statement that "we can no longer go on the way we are" and what it could mean to focus attention on ways of achieving a human and humane environment for all Canadians. Resources appropriate for this process of institutional reflection would need to be allocated. Groups charged with supporting this process of institutional reflection might be asked, as part of their responsibilities, to make explicit the hidden cultural assumptions on which each department at present bases its present activities and its proposals for future policies, and to probe the validity of those assumptions. They might also enquire into the extent to which regional differences affect, or seem likely to affect, policies and programs, and examine the knowledge base from which such differences are alleged.

Other governments, corporations, trade unions, churches, educational establishments, professional associations, voluntary organizations, might also consider setting in motion a similar process of reflection.

These then constitute the major suggestions for action which flow from this project.

X. FOOD FOR FURTHER THOUGHT

As mentioned earlier in this paper, the response to the interim report was both heartening and encouraging. Helpful suggestions for clarifying, amending, tightening and editing the flow of the argument were offered, and many of these have been incorporated in this document. Many wrote at length exploring more deeply into the major themes, while others extended the discussion beyond the contents of the interim report. Rather than attempting to work this additional, high-quality material into the body of this paper, I decided to share the highlights of some of the responses in order that readers of this document can themselves assess their merits and assimilate, reject or amend them according to their own lights.

One reaction was expressed by several respondents: surprise at the extent to which perceptions they have held are apparently more widely shared than had been realized. It might be said that this exercise has set in motion, even in its limited way, the beginnings of a networking process. If those involved in the project are any test, it may well be the case that there are significant numbers of Canadians who share many of the feelings and impressions contained in this document and/or who have different understandings of the present and more developed images of a desirable future, but who are experiencing the same sense of isolation from any community of persons sharing similar interests.

Here are extracts from letters sent by three readers of the earlier paper:

"First of all, let me say that I am grateful for the opportunity to comment at this time, and I am also impressed by the obvious scope of your project as indicated by the content of the interim report. You have obviously talked to a great number of people and it is somewhat sobering to me to note that concerns that I have long held are apparently shared by many others across the country".

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"Reading it through, I must confess my gratification and dismay at the evidence that others share many of the concerns and apprehensions that I have been voicing to myself - gratification because I see I am not alone, dismay because this suggests that my views may have a more solid basis than jaded hormones!"

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"My initial feeling as I read into the report was one of personal renewal. My feeling of isolation melted away and I thought, "I'm not 'off the track' after all, I'll keep on plugging away". The 'plugging away' refers to my daily work in which I so often find myself encouraging people to look at things in another way."

The major themes attracted considerable comment. The balance of this section is abstracted from a number of letters in which the writers addressed a specific theme.

Commenting on the prevalence of pessimistic views (perhaps more dominant in the earlier version than in this paper), one person wrote to say:

"...I would like to make clear that I for one do not subscribe to the "doom and gloom" trend that seems to be so fashionable at the moment. This does not mean that I am not fully aware of the disaster potential in the world today. However I feel that if our vision is shortsighted and shallow in this period of such profound transition, we shall fail to see the larger lines of what can potentially emerge, and this could well place our energies and allegiances in the wrong places, thus merely aggravating the difficulties. Nor do I see <u>everything</u> in our society as being no longer viable or even evil. There is so much that is at least relatively good and useful that has evolved slowly and painfully for centuries that, if we were to lose it, would mean a setback for the race of incalculable consequence. Even things which, to the narrower view, appear repulsive can often be seen, with a deeper and more far-reaching look, to be merely the surfaces or crude beginnings of potentialities that could lead ultimately to unimagined breakthroughs. For instance, could not the multi-national corporation phenomenon, even with all its present excesses, be the prelude to the evolvement of a global infra-structure that could radically alter all our present concepts of providing for the basic needs of individual human beings throughout the earth? Once again, what we need are nobler images as a precedent to making this kind of realization possible. This is one of the great works to which Canada can begin seriously to address itself."

Critical of the theme of "the bonds between us", one writer stated:

"As you probably know, I disagree thoroughly with the overall tone of much of your paper, by which I mean those many parts where you tacitly contrast the awful present with the wonderful past. You say you don't do that? Go through the paper and see how many times you say that we (or Canada) have "become" something; or that

something has "eroded" (very often used). The entire section on "critical issues" implies that Canada was once a happy, unified, peaceful nation -- that Canadians once knew "bonds" of freedom and personal enhancement. I just don't believe there is any evidence to support this. What "national ties" are you talking about on p. 59? What "erosion in the relationships between institutions and those they serve"? Do you really believe that Canada once was more "democratic" than it is now? Where was the "common ground" (p. 71) of yesterday which is being eroded? What is the "Canadian cultural heritage"? What are the "ties with self and with nature?" What in the world is "nature" except the environment around each of us now? What "self" do I have other than the self I have now? Where is my "true", my authentic self except the one with me now, as ever full of contradictions and uncertainties, and hopes?

I can well imagine that many (all?) of the people you spoke with uttered such sentiments -- they are the new orthodoxy, and if so many speak in this wise, it must be true -- or at least it will become true because everybody believes it. But I do not. I do not believe we should seek to recover "bonds" or to establish new ones. We need to encourage people to be free, freely interactive, freely trusting and inquiring. Bonds are bonds. You may feel comfortable and secure, but you are bound. And I am not interested in it -- though bondage is, I believe, the true meaning of the Conserver Society, and why I am not too enthusiastic with it. I don't want "bonds" between people, but communication -- may I say, intercourse?

I hope you fully understand that I have no truck whatsoever with the industrial, consumer-oriented society. I am a total failure as a consumer. I am totally willing to save, do without "things" (but not without communication with people who are different from myself -- who are not members of my "community"; to whom I am not bound.) I do like the (last) quote on page 72 however."

And the "image" theme attracted the following comments:

"Models of society are based on models of man. Among these models are:

(1) Romantic (Rousseau, Illich): Man is basically good but institutions are corrupting him.
(2) Puritan (Calvin): Man is basically bad and must be formed (i.e., controlled) in goodness. (Skinner)
(3) Industrial: Man is basically useful and must be programmed.
(4) Existential: Man is basically meaningless and must be left free.

(5) *Spiritual: Man is basically consciousness and must ignore the material.*
(6) *Evolutionary: Man is naked ape and must avoid pretensions.*
(7) *Equilibrium: Man and his environment must be in homeostasis."*

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"The images I have of 20th century man are those of the cheerful robot, the one-dimensional man, the alienated marginal, the suburban bourgeois, the dispossessed farm worker, etc. - is there something wrong with these images, that they 'damage the very possibility of a humane future' - or is it rather that that future is precluded not by images but by structures? But perhaps I am just too much of an old socialist to accept arguments about 'new images and new myths' - these are not the sorts of things which are consciously created anyway - when they are offered as a substitute for an analysis of the human condition".

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"First, I have only one critical comment. The part of the report which I feel falls down is the section on "Images of a Most Desirable Future" (pp. 43 ff). Images for the kind of future we find desirable are shaped by the images we have of our past. The images that I found in this section were obviously primarily shaped by images of a <u>mythical</u> past, of humanity before The Fall. What I found missing in these brief sketches of the kind of future society we might find desirable was some appreciation of the struggle which would be necessary to arrive at a future society. One of the images which should be appropriated from our <u>historical</u> past is the realization that change occurs basically through controversy, the efforts of pressure groups, and the concentration of sufficient power to persuade established power groups to modify their positions.

I did find some appreciation of the necessity of force (and by pressure, power, and force I am not talking about violence) to accomplish change in some of the quotations included in the report, especially those which stated that only some kind of profound energy or food crisis could accomplish a re-orientation of our culture's values. What I want to point out is that if this re-orientation occurs, the resultant society will still not, nor will ever, be free of the need to balance power with power to effect change, or even to stabilize the results of the change that has occurred.

Second, I am concerned about the future of the report. I feel that as long as it remains an internal, government document its usefulness will be limited; it won't be able to make a substantial contribution in promoting the kinds of change it talks about. I would therefore support the kind of national dialogue on the future which you wrote of in both your report and your letter. I would also like to recommend that a final version of this report be published and be made widely available as a starting point for this dialogue".

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"What is really wrong with having a "God-like" concept of ourselves? I think it's time we started improving our self-image. A great Rabbi was once asked by his disciples why he always wore a vest with two pockets. He replied that in one pocket he carried a quotation which said: "Man is but dust and ashes" and in the other pocket he had another quotation which said: "Man is but little lower than the angels". We have been stuck too long in the former pocket and a shift to the other side is I think warranted."

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"I have finally been able to read Conversations ..... about the Future and I would just like to give you my direct, unrehearsed, untutored response. You have done a great deal of work to identify themes and to bring them into a coherent shape. I have no problems with the sampling and I think the methodology chapter is a bit over-defensive in this regard but I know you had good reasons for this. I do have a problem, however, with what I would loosely call level of analysis. To give an example, when I read the two images of the future of Canada, I could not help but feel very strongly that the first one (the most likely future) is in fact the desired one by the respondents even though it appears that it is the future which is feared. Comparing my experience of life in Canada with images presented, I feel very strongly - and I think there is also good evidence for this - that many people have a hunger for doom and crisis. In other words, for conditions which would call on their capabilities in a necessary way. In contrast, the images given of a most desirable future are, in fact, those which, in my experience, people are most afraid of. What we seem to be least equipped for is the matter of actual human relations and "the bonds between us". Therefore, in the case of both images, fear and desire is a curious paradoxical mixture.

Now this is clearly a personal stance and why should this reflect on your analysis? I think it does to the extent that the document itself purports to give a descriptive account and yet it is, of course, evaluative and critical at the same time."

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"You have probably done justice to the average "environmentalist" (p. 79-80 and elsewhere) but I would like to set out below an ecologist's viewpoint. My personal feeling is that both the current social dissatisfactions, and the hopes for fulfilling future, revolve around difficulties in the man-nature (ecological) relationship primarily and the man-man (sociological) relationship secondarily. The dangers that practitioners of the humanities and social sciences pose to man and his future stem precisely from their fixation on the human species, on human nature rather than on nature encapsulating humanity. Without a lively sense of the beneficence of nature, and of the foetal situation of man-in-nature, there can be no escape from the inturned, stultifying, "everything-is-relative" attitude that characterizes current approaches to values, goals, activities.

There is first a philosophical (epistemological) problem to be cleared up. Regardless of what the noumenal world may be, man evolved in a phenomenal world. The Kantian categories of space, time, causality, etc., by which we apprehend existence must be accepted as meaningful. The adaptive value of "common sense" perceptions and language is axiomatic; the mind evolved to help us find food and mates, and to prevent us from bumping into trees and falling prey to the sabre-toothed cat. Therefore, the space/time environment, the world as perceived around us, is important. In parentheses, one of the problems of sophisticated science is that it identifies another reality, a mathematical realm, to which the common-sense world does not necessarily relate. It explains things in ways that are at once truthful but meaningless, logically elegant but without validity (in the sense that they have no adaptive worth). Lacking bonds with evolutionary validity, the truth of science has made us free in a strange way; free to depreciate the biosphere and to demean ourselves. Science can only be a constructive force when it is "ecologized".

The concept of "real world" hierarchical structures shows the planet earth, the biosphere, encapsulating geographic-cultural systems and these in turn encapsulating man. Hierarchical theory proposes a number of laws of which two are particularly important; (1) the <u>mechanisms</u> of systems are understood in terms of the interactions of parts (lower hierarchical levels) and (2) the purposes

of systems are understood in terms of their roles in the larger systems they compose (upper hierarchical levels). Thus the mechanism of the heart is found in the relationship of its tissues and cells, while its purpose relates to the body in which it functions as a pump. Self-analysis of man never reveals purposes, only mechanisms. The role of humanity must be found by reference to a larger system in which it participates. Religions agree in calling on man to renounce selfishness and to find a larger framework of meaning than herself.

If the universe, the earth, brought man forth in four billion years of evolution, humanity must be fitted to the biospheric ecosystem in various complex, delicate and supportive ways. There must also be deep archetypal structures in the mind and body, a "racial intelligence", that roots us in the biosphere. Each of us who is not sick is, by necessity, a worshiper of life, of the sun, the sky, the waters, the earth. A religion of nature-worship, of earth care, of stewardship, must be latent in all. It seems likely that here is the fount of new values, attitudes and ideas that, when realized, can restore the adaptive balance between intelligent life and the rest of the supportive biosphere.

This particular world-view does not mistrust human nature; it only asks that the ecological nature of humans be recognized. It does not question man's primacy over other species; it asks him to recognize their complementary roles. It does not propose a new, strange ethic but a very old one, somewhat in the line of pantheism. It does not write off the importance of individual man and culture, but it places both in a realistic, creative context."

The theme of "valuing and perceiving" elicited the following comment:

"Your report addresses itself to the fundamental question of how we decide what is good, within the range of the possible, and how we go about achieving it. Certainly we think we know what is not good, not beautiful or conducive to happiness, yet we see it happening all the time, all around us: the centre of Vancouver being torn down and replaced with buildings which in my view are hideous, but someone must admire them, else why are they there? We know that our large high schools do more to corrupt our children than to educate them, yet we have worked and struggled (and enjoyed doing so, by and large) for four years to achieve a small, precarious, precious alternative for kids in grades 8-10. Somebody must approve of the soul-destroying factories to which teen-aged people are condemned, otherwise they would not be so resistant to change. We tend to think, because our friends agree with our values, that

most other people do too, but the more I have even a little to do with the world at large, the more I see that this is a delusion, and a dangerous one, because it does not correspond to the reality in which we have to achieve things. The men who run these high schools like and approve of them. Our views are so diametrically opposed that it is impossible to discuss our differences, because we have a completely different sense of reality, we don't even talk the same language.

One thing I liked about your report is that it recognized this radical circumstance, which one must start with, that what separates us is not differences of opinion, which could be talked about, but different perceptions of reality. To us this is a truism, we assume this. But I'm afraid that a great many people assume that they see what I see, that because we share a "real" environment, we share a common version or perception of it. Similarly with the premises of your report: that we are living through a time of historical crisis, catastrophic social change, and that it behooves us to pay attention to what is happening so that we can make the kinds of choices which will help us to determine the direction in which we are going. How many people, say, in Canada, believe this, live with it? I should think not very many. Democracies are always uneasy about elites, but does that make of the people who "know" these things an elite with a special responsibility? Yes, it does. But then there are other self-styled elites, they abound in our society, who also think that they possess special insights into our condition and have their own solutions for them."

On the theme of institutions, the following comments:

"From my perspective, most of the social institutions you describe as being presently inadequate were specific inventions of the 17th, 18th and 19th Centuries, brought into creation because the old Mediaeval institutions were themselves inadequate to the needs of the emerging industrial state. This must be clearly understood (and, if understood, clearly stated). There is nothing inherently evil about, say, the present educational system, or the bureaucracy, or urbanization, or the economic system (for example): it is rather that they were more or less conscious inventions or the pre-industrial time, and had as their main purpose shifting attitudes and behaviors of people away from the old "traditional" images of the future (and the purpose of life, etc., etc.) and towards the attitudes and behaviors necessary to be good, obedient, skilled, hardworking members of industrialized society. That this is in fact the case for these institutions for Western society is made clear (so it seems to me) by the fact that every book I've

ever read on how to help developing nations develop (or the lower classes to advance) says that what has to happen is that the old institutions have to be replaced with a "modern" educational, political, bureaucratic, etc., set of systems.

Now if it is the case (as, again, I believe it is) that we can no longer tolerate humans behaving according to "developmental" images of the future (we cannot tolerate it either because the ecosystem won't permit it -- whether because of energy/materials depletion or pollution; or because humans can't bear to live under such alienating conditions any longer; or because the mood of the moment -- and foreseeable future -- simply is fed up with "development" and we've invented the environmental and alienation myths to scare us out of more "development" -- I don't care what the reason is, but I do believe the West will not permit more "development") then we simply cannot expect our present institutions to be major vehicles of change into the new society. To repeat, they were invented to get us into industrial society -- they can be no other than development-oriented -- and they can no more be helpful to our present needs than the Catholic Church and the Monarchy were helpful 400 years ago.

In short, we have no option but to invent new institutions if we really want any kind of post-industrial society, be it "conserver" or "electronic" or whatever".

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"I am convinced that continual emphasis on an apocalyptic future is in some fundamental sense wrong. I have the sense that bureaucracies are addicted to solving crises in that somewhere in every good bureaucracy there is some bureaucrat worrying desperately about the particular form of almost every perceived crisis. He can be quite zealous in attending conferences and advocating that his is the one that must somehow be addressed. Tired bureaucrats, like old pot heads, stumble around from one crisis to another somehow convinced that with their slow reaction time, that many of the crises will disappear (and in fact many do). In some sense, is it not natural that those of us who indulge in the "high drug induced crises" where desperate action must be taken now, should not be the very ones who are incapable of perceiving the bonds between us, incapable of stating shared images, have a desperate need for values as a "thingafied" concept that we can rationalize our decision-making around, or be the very ones who wish to indulge in the bureaucrats' game of talking about decision-making models, institutionalization and the inevitable centralization/decentralization arguments?

Are there fundamental value questions to be addressed or are these merely questions about the adequacy of technological solutions to age-old needs? Can we really address the questions as an individual much less as a society about who we are, where we stand and what we would like to become, or is it no part of the definition of being human that we do not know the answers to these questions and that life is a process of living in spite of and with this face? Do not some of us know what it is to be human? Surely not all of us are at square one in everything? Even in answering no to the last question, is not somehow the very search for the newness of things (pace of change) part of the problem? Perhaps my predicament is with the language. Maybe our language does not enable us to speak of these problems without carrying over concepts of space, time and information that are too concrete or too "thingafied" to apply to my perception of a more "person oriented" concept of action. And yet the very myths we search for to unify our societies are the very things that bureaucrats at lower levels create as objectives which are supposedly concrete enough to either alleviate the problem or prove that its definition is inadequate. In short, the experimental science model again. I don't really know how to express it. Can we fix or repair institutions in a "thingafied" language or is what is required the giving up of this notion, and an attempt to psychoanalyse, provide loving support for, or whatever it is we do when humans go astray?

On page 59 I agree with your question about the shift from the how to the what, and yet my problem remains. Surely we cannot live always in the existential mode, with the adrenalin coursing through us, asking existential questions and giving apocalyptic answers. There has to be some sense of what our expectations are, which affirms our basic faith in our ability to overcome problems. After all much of the problematic which we are facing is one that is caused by past successes. In short our slogan should be "nothing fails like success".

* * * * * *

"In the section "The Bonds Between Us" considerable attention is given to the question of national ties or bonds: "National ties seem to be growing even more fragile", "common bonds appear to be in a state of rapid breakdown in Canada today" etc. (p. 55). This discussion raises the question as to whether the nation-state is any longer an appropriate unit for identification, ties and bonding. It should be hardly surprising that an institution as classically representative of 19th Century industrial culture as the nation state shows considerable fragility today, particularly at the level of relationship and identity.

Some observations following on the above.

a) It is important to differentiate between nationalism (a gut-level feeling) and the nation state (a 19th Century mechanism).

b) Given the high-mobility, high-diversity characteristics of post-modern culture, the attempt to equate national identity with geographic location seems highly questionable, - the phenomenon of the "Free City" seems a much more fruitful analogue from our historical repertoire.

c) A model of "state" that recognizes differentiation and integration seems necessary. Differentiation related to sense of place, common local interests, small scale for decision-making, etc., integration related to common problems of species survival, conservation of the environment, good management of space ship earth, etc.

The nation state hardly fits either pole of this model. Nationalism in the post-industrial world emerges as something you carry with you - a very important aspect of personal or small group identity, (sense of kin-ship, roots, etc.) but largely de-institutionalized, e.g. - the Jew, the Scotsman, the Irishman, etc. (the successful nation-state has generally resulted in great disasters - we've been lucky in Canada to have so far exhibited such an "incoherent, confused and confusing state" (p. 55). Heilbroner is completely off the mark. (p. 67). (It's not surprising, he is such a pessimist).

d) The issue of centralization and decentralization cannot be understood in an either/or manner. The redesign of our institutional extensions would generally involve the co-existence of both phenomena; with the human face-to-face activities gravitating around the de-centralized pole and the global systems and high technological systems gravitating around the centralized pole.

Institutions that are short-lived, task-oriented, ad-hoc would seem to be more appropriate for human uses than the "fear-of-death" permanence of existing institutional models."

In the previous section, some of the specific suggestions for a national dialogue were cited. What follows are some broader comments and caveats on the notion itself.

"There are a number of things in the report that evoke my enthusiasm and agreement. It might be more useful, however, to focus on the questions that occurred to me regarding your findings and proposals.

I tried without success most of yesterday to draft a carefully worded response that would convey my concerns without fading off into a dissertation on the sociology of religion. I will start this draft with a quotation from Thomas Luckmann's, The Invisible Religion, that identifies the theoretical underpinning, as well as the various levels, of my concern. The questions which emerge from this quotation are: 1) How do the beliefs about our situation, the future, etc., function in the lives of the individuals you interviewed? Do they integrate the person's whole life, or do they occur in privatized enclaves that are basically unrelated to public behaviour? 2) What are the social bases of the different "ways of perceiving reality"? That is, in what social settings, or in relation to what social identities (institutional self-identification? p. 132), do they grapple with ultimate issues? Or, what tradition, patterns of interaction, etc., appear to have shaped their responses (this may differ for the participant and the observer)? And finally, 3) What is the nature and social base of the "cosmos of meaning" that legitimates the images and taken for granted procedures of our dominant society (assuming that your respondents primarily yearned for an alternative future)? Here's the promised word from Luckmann:

'The decrease of traditional church religion may be seen as a consequence of the shrinking relevance of the values, institutionalized in church religion, for the integration and legitimation of everyday life in modern society .... The shrinking of church religion, however, is only one ... dimension of the problem of secularization. For the analysis of contemporary society another question is more important. What are the dominant values overarching contemporary culture? What is the social-structural basis of these values and what is their function in the life of contemporary man? (The sociologist must ask) what secularization has brought about in the way of a socially objectivated cosmos of meaning. The survival of traditional forms of church religion, the absence, in the West, of an institutionalized antichurch, and the overwhelming significance of Christianity in the shaping of the modern Western world have combined in obscuring the possibility that a new religion is in the making' (pp. 39-40).

In relation to the third question it would be interesting to know how persons with a "business-as-usual" mentality view the situation and imagine the future. Does Harry Johnson's image of the "opulent society" reflect the dominant society against which your respondents are reacting? Is Thomas Hockin's image of the "Canadian Condominium" (McClelland and Stewart, 1972) an alternative or mainline image?

My main interest is in the second question because it is related to my negative reactions to your emphasis on having the Prime Minister, etc., legitimate the discussion, and to your proposal for a Citizens' Commission of Inquiry. In asking whether the persons you interviewed have constituencies I am not concerned with the representativeness of your sample (I accept your defense of your method), but with the danger of overlooking networks, etc., which already support individuals in their struggle with ultimate issues. From the point of view of the sociology of religion, it is interesting to ask whether traditional churches continue to provide the setting for reflection and action; whether new settings are emerging (political movements and/or parties, professional associations, citizens' groups, voluntary associations, trade unions, etc.) which meet the needs once met in the churches; or whether, as your report suggests, there are hundreds of individuals cut off from one another waiting for Federal initiative to get them involved in a discussion about their future.

My own bias is that more, rather than less, attention should be paid to existing networks, both in our attempts to understand how the political process actually works (Elite Accommodation), and in the ways we spend Federal money and encourage Federal initiative. Isaiah said: Without social vision my people will die. A sociologist would add: Without a social base social visions are private dreams. Although I am a socialist in terms of public ownership of the economy, I am voluntaristic and pluralistic when it comes to finding a setting within which theology, ecclesiology and worship can be integrated. I share the theology that undergirds your proposal for a Citizens' Commission of Inquiry, but hesitate at the "state as church" implications.

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"My immediate reaction to the concept of a Citizens' Commission on the Future is one of support and even enthusiasm. However, just having such a commission accomplishes nothing unless there is good reason to believe that the government of the day will respond positively to its findings. There are ways in which the government can show its concern and give rise to the public belief that it listens and is positively responsive. It can happen starting tomorrow. Current practice, as I perceive it, is designed to totally discourage participation by ordinary people in the democratic process.

In the process of providing a focal point for this national discussion I think that a published final report would also contribute to increased national self-consciousness of present problems and

future directions. It is important not only that more people become aware of and think about the issues discussed in the report, but that the issues are thought of as Canadian problems which may perhaps be amenable to Canadian solutions. Greater national awareness of the issues discussed in this report would be a necessary, if not a sufficient, condition for any large scale change."

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"The desire for a universal dialogue seems laudable (citizen planning, participatory democracy, etc.) but I suspect that here is where the conservatism of the collective unconscious is strongest - the record of communes, unions, communal societies, citizen projects and neighbourhood schools, etc., is not a happy one. And the reaction of minority groups suggests to me that, like small sectarian splinters, they tend to be even more reactionary than society-at-large, partly because they are responding to past patterns of treatment and defining the struggle in these terms - (compare the behavior of the elderly who are still responding in terms of their experiences during the depression).

And so, much as I desire to see a democratic ethos prevail, I am driven to believe that this will be no easy matter. Looked at historically, any major upheaval of this kind is usually either grafted on to an existing belief system over a long period of time or is embodied in a particular figure (e.g. Christ) or both. Indeed, ... what is lacking in the report and the comments of interviewees is a philosophy of history or a metaphysic of any kind. And perhaps this is a reflection of the inherent inability of the conscious planning process to determine the working out of unconscious processes, either in the individual or in the society as a whole.

Again this may not be wholly negative. (As you can see my ambivalence shows itself strongly). If we did conclude that the complexity and urgency of the problem seems to require an elite, a saving remnant (and I think there is a very real possibility this will occur - e.g. Club of Rome), they too would be either set up by or coopted into the bureaucracy, functioning not as a bridge or mediator between the conscious and unconscious forces within our society and culture, but as a controlling ego attempting to dominate and dictate rational, but wholly ineffective solutions. This would at best be simply a lid on the volcano and, while it might buy us some time, the vicious and irrational forces finally exploding would be catastrophic.

So what are we to do? Some of your suggestions, like self-sufficient communities or groups, are laudable experiments and from one or more of these may emerge some answers. However, I think most of these will be fated to suffer greatly for two reasons. The first is that we will tolerate them as a small minority, but given any size or visability we will harass them unceasingly (compare the Hutterites and other minority groups); the second is that the accomplishment of their goal inevitably demands a radical change in their philosophy of life and the structuring in their belief systems (our society in microcosm!). Those who seek to copy or adopt the approach of another culture (Zen, etc.) as a quick solution will be disappointed because these approaches were derived slowly and laboriously out of the forces active in <u>that</u> culture at <u>that</u> time and are hardly likely to apply directly to our own situation. (My struggle for salvation will not be yours.)"

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"With respect to the substance of the report, I believe you are right in stressing that what is implied by the "problematique" is a fundamental restructuring of our society. I don't know how this can be accomplished better than anyone else, but I believe that when we discussed this matter I suggested that what was implied was a virtual revolution of ideas that could occur only if there were an equivalent of what I might call a "religious" revival. The issues are so basic and so ingrained in our culture that it will take something in the order of a spiritual revival to effect the changes required. In the absence of a latter-day Mesiah, I'm not sure how this can be accomplished but when one reflects upon the zealous following that other less important ideas have acquired, then perhaps it does seem feasible that somehow, when the pressures mount a little more, that the ideas you have discussed can, in fact, catch fire and we will see some change.

Whether or not your notion of an ongoing Commission of Inquiry into the Future will have any visual impact, I don't know, but I would heartily endorse this as a recommendation worth pursuing. I certainly don't think it would do any harm, as long as it was conducted by people who really understand that what we are talking about here is in the order of spiritual change rather than mere academic discussions of perplexing problems. I suppose what I am saying is that we won't see any significant change until this debate is somehow set forward in words and ideas that the great majority of the population can relate to. This might mean that such a group must make concerted efforts to present their message in a great variety of forms--some of them even approaching the absurd if that is what is required to get a message across that strikes at the very roots of our value system."

And, finally, the difficulties of policy-making and the lack of a theory of social change elicited these two comments:

"In many ways the most distressing part of the paper (I clearly understand the nature of the task and the limits imposed upon yourself) is its failure to draw out policy implications from the set of problems enumerated. You have focussed on categories of policy concerns which are good but it seems to me that today we have excessive concern with a specification of problems with fairly little detail of policy alternatives. I think this is the crux of the problem about thinking about the future as far as I am concerned -- how to conceive of policy directions and generalized social policy in an age where we are overcome by the complexity of our lives and the environments in which we live? I think a lot more thought ought to be given to conceiving of policy directions outside of the normal experimental mode of policy development. This is an area which I have given some thought to and find it extremely difficult but overwhelmingly relevant today. Along with this problem I am also struck by the lack of conception we have about what kind of society we want to live in. We pay lip service to a vacuous notion called Canada but we have failed to develop images of what a content-filled real Canada would be like for people. In that sense, I think this country has suffered a major failure of nerve and a failure of political theory. We know our problems and you have specified them quite well. But what is the image of a real Canada etc? That is the problem and that is the concern that we must have in the development of policy."

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"In attempting more general comments, I find myself overwhelmed by the sheer range and volume of the issues raised, bewildered by their complexity, and disturbed by the superficiality of many of the opinions you have uncovered about them. Perhaps the latter is unavoidable, given the brevity of the treatment and the nature of the approach; but it leads me to ask a number of questions not so much about the issues but about the purposes of the document itself. I wonder, first of all, to whom it is addressed, and what impact it can be expected to have on them? Is it aimed at the converted or at the unconverted? I find that, for my own part, I am broadly familiar with most of the perceptions you have described, and, while I do not share all of them, I am persuaded that the questions they raise are important ones. But I have no idea how such a document would appear to those who either do not experience a profound disenchantment with our society, or those who continue to cling to the present system of values, problems, and solutions.

In short, it seems to me that these perceptions need to be embedded within a theory and a strategy for social change if they are not merely to add to the paralyzing sense of impending doom which (rightly or wrongly I cannot say) now dominates the best minds of our generation. In my view, that theory and that strategy must be essential Marxist - but that's another debate for another time."

XI. POSTSCRIPT

A project such as this never really ends -- it passes into successive evolutionary phases, involving growing numbers of persons in a process of reflecting upon the present and upon future possibilities that are opening before us. In this project, I have had invaluable assistance from well over one hundred persons who shared with me their understandings, their hopes and their fears about where we stand and where we might be going, about who we are and what we might become. But there are countless others who may share many of the understandings reflected in these pages, and a still greater number of Canadians to whom these views, while seemingly new, unorthodox, perhaps even painful, may discover, should they happen upon this document, that at least some of its contents evoke a sense of fit with their own personal experience. To the extent that this document entices them to share their experience and their aspirations with others in this growing community of Canadians in search of ways and means of living in harmony with one another in a human and humane environment, this project will have succeeded. We have much to learn and much to unlearn in this journey, and there is much support to be drawn from discovering that others too are engaged in the same enterprise.

For my part, I hope to continue, in whatever way I can, to participate in this evolving learning process. With this in mind, I extend to any and all readers of this paper an invitation to share with me their comments, suggestions and further thoughts.

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APPENDIX A

A CAUTIOUS COMPARISON WITH OTHER CURRENT SURVEYS OF CANADIAN OPINION

In Section III of this paper, reference was made to a frequent criticism made of this project, particularly in its early phases, --, the question of its representativeness. Mention was also made of two projects of a somewhat similar nature which were being undertaken by two other organizations during roughly the same time period as this project. This appendix contains the comments made by the directors of the other projects in response to my request that they read the interim report both from the perspective of their own personal responses to it and also from the perspective of noting similarities and contrasts between their findings and what this project was discovering.

First, though, a general word about the question of representativeness. This project was never designed to be representative. Rather it was an attempt to secure the most thoughtful opinions possible within the constraints of time and interest on the part of those contacted. And those contacted were in turn approached not because their views were representative of any of the institutions with which they were associated but rather for the quality of their own thinking as judged by those who suggested their names. There are precedents for the approach used, variously called "the small world technique" or "the snowball approach", and the fact that they are rarely used speaks more of the prevailing preference for quantity over quality, for objective over subjective opinion and for representativeness over what might be termed "leading edge" viewpoints. Both have their uses, and both also have their limitations, particularly when they claim to be more than they are. But this particular method appeared most suited to assist the Advanced Concepts Centre in trying to get some feel for the advanced concepts that were being mooted about in Canada in 1974/75.

In the early stages of this project, I discovered two other projects also underway which, while not closely comparable because of different methods and different questions, are of sufficiently broad similarity to warrant some attention. The Canadian Catholic Conference of Bishops is sponsoring Grant Maxwell in undertaking "Project Feedback", a survey involving "man on the street" interviews and indepth interviews with opinion leaders selected

on the basis of more representative sampling. The second project is being undertaken for the Canadian Council of Churches by Janet Somerville who has invited "activist" groups in the Protestant Churches to reflect on what they have learned in the course of attempting to effect social change. Both these projects are still in progress, and this should be borne in mind in reading what follows -- a preliminary assessment, by Mr. Maxwell and Ms Somerville, of similarities and differences between this project and the work in which they are engaged.

May 26, 1975

Dear Cathy,

"PROJECT FEEDBACK calling CONSERVER SOCIETY PROJECT"

I've just finished reading your interim report. Virtually all of my reactions are positive.

Most of all, reading your report has been a confirming experience. Your Project findings in the main appear to verify my experiences in PROJECT FEEDBACK. I'd say that the "intellectually elite" with whom you talked for the most part, and the "average citizens" with whom I had most conversations do NOT appear to be fundamentally at odds in how they view the quality of daily life, societal conditions and future prospects--contrary to the expectations of some of your critics. Although their modes of expression differ markedly, social specialists and typical citizens appear to share many similar perceptions and concerns.

I venture this overall comparison, Cathy, before my own Project homework is completed. Field interviews are concluded but I have not as yet begun to review, select and try to synthesize the responses contained in a formidable collection of tapes, notebooks and related data.

A careful review of these materials will be necessary to report in adequate detail, and as much as possible in peoples' own words, how a cross-section of Canadians see life today and the future.

As of now, some strong overall impressions stand out in my mind at the end of the field trips. Well aware that they may have to be modified later in the light of detailed findings, these overall impressions are my reference points in offering an initial comparison of our two Projects.

Before offering any specific comparisons, probably some backgrounding and updating on PROJECT FEEDBACK is called for.

As you know, PROJECT FEEDBACK is a social experiment designed to help the Canadian Catholic Conference of Bishops become more aware of the signs of the times, and especially more sensitive to the voices of people at the grassroots. The research project is testing the effectiveness of field interviews--informal conversations rather than formal survey questions--as one means of

improving two-way communications between the general public and the national conference. This grassroots' feedback is expected to assist the CCC in deciding policy priorities for the future.

From mid-October, 1974 to mid-May this year I talked with more than 750 citizens, local leaders and media representatives in some 40 urban and rural communities in all 10 provinces. Most conversations were arranged by local co-ordinators. The cross-section of respondents ranged from collegiate students to retired couples, from fishermen to city planners, from poor to rich, from committed Christians to professed atheists. In selecting this cross-section, preference was given to those who are often ignored, "left voiceless", when opinions are solicited. Overall, I consciously aimed for a "generally representative" cross-section of the Canadian populace. For certain, I achieved variety.

Conversations were held with individuals, with couples, and with small groups. Six broad, open questions were posed as discussion starters. Respondents were invited to describe how they experienced everyday life, what kind of society they wanted, what they expected of civil and religious leaders, their views on spirituality, and how they felt about the future.

Now, finally, to compare some main FEEDBACK impressions with your CONSERVER SOCIETY findings:

* Reception by Respondents

You report a warm welcoming, together with scepticism on the part of some as to any positive federal response to your findings.

I had a similar experience. A friendly reception was extended by almost every person and group, regardless of background. People in all avenues of life welcomed the opportunity to express their views forthrightly. For many, this was a new experience. And most were prepared to trust, to hope that their opinions would be faithfully reported and then heeded by leaders.

Most Canadians I talked with feel remote from, virtually cut off from, civil and religious leaders. (Sometimes I could feel the psychic distance myself.) Most civil and religious leaders are perceived to be "out of touch" with ordinary people in their everyday lives. "Leaders should be present and listening to what we have to say". This popular and deeply felt perception is probably why PROJECT FEEDBACK was so widely welcomed. Many saw it as a sign that at least some leaders want closer communications with average Canadians.

* Experiences during Conversations

Like you, I found virtually every conversation of any duration (some of mine were very brief encounters, as with taxi drivers, shoppers on the move, etc.) both a rewarding and a draining experience.

Rewarding in that every person or group has unique experiences and insights to share about the human condition. (Oftentimes, the most perceptive comments seemed to me to come not from "the elite" but from "the little people", from the humble. Frequently, I also was persuaded that most women respondents probed to the heart of issues with practical wisdom, while most men tended to circle around the issues on high-sounding but not very illuminating "head trips". I'll risk opprobrium from both sexes for making such generalizations in this enlightened age!)

As you did, I also found these conversations fatiguing. Extra psychic and emotional energies were required of the observer - participant. But there were also compensations, of course, and on balance the conversations were an enriching and enjoyable experience. After talking with 750 diverse Canadians, I can say honestly, even though it is hard to explain, that I feel better about our ambiguous human condition. From what I saw and heard at the grassroots, I think we're going to muddle through!

* Changing Perceptions. Plural Perceptions

Your report speaks tellingly of the widening perceptual gaps you encountered, cutting across all age groups.

I too found change and plurality almost everywhere. People's outlooks are in a state of flux; popular perceptions are shifting, and shifting radically, at least as far as personal "moral standards" are concerned. Eg. witness the new patterns in marriage and family life.

Across Canada I found a bewildering variety of diverging viewpoints and competing values. There appeared to be much less social consensus than I had assumed. This plurality - in-flux is found as much among Canadian Catholics (once mostly uniform, at least in religious/moral outlook) as among other citizens.

I hasten to add, Cathy, that I also encountered certain common perceptions and convictions which are shared coast to coast. From a geographic point of view, I recall a few nationwide

themes (such as the conviction that leaders should be more aware of citizens' everyday experiences), some regional differences and also local variations. Numerous concrete examples await reporting in the field data.

* Canadian Society Today

Most of your respondents spoke of contemporary society in language you describe as "critical and often harsh".

Most people I talked with said, often with more sadness than anger, that they were less than content with the quality of their daily lives, and less than satisfied with prevailing social conditions in Canada, or abroad in the Third World. The so-called "good life" of affluent consumption was widely questioned, although few of the critics appeared to have altered their own living styles in any noticeable way. I got the impression that some of the more affluent had troubled consciences, but were not yet sufficiently troubled to convert to a more simple mode of living.

(Like you, I did meet a few men and women who have "crossed over": undergone a change of heart, radically revised their living patterns, and found new freedom and creativity in serving their chosen causes. Each of these remarkable persons has the benefit of belonging to some form of "intentional community".)

As could be expected, I found low-income respondents were inclined to emphasize quantitative needs (more income, more food, more room to live), while those with higher incomes often stressed qualitative needs (closer relationships between husband and wife, parents and children, etc.).

You know better than I do, Cathy, that the Ottawa milieu has its own flavor. I recall a B.C. respondent who, after three days in our capital, spoke with disgust of "the slime of cynicism" he has encountered in federal circles. Probably this was a visitors over-reaction. Yet one Ottawa respondent, a senior civil servant, may well have spoken for most when he remarked that Oscar Wilde's definition of a cynic aptly describes Canadian society today, or at least bureaucratic Ottawa's view of it: "We know the price of everything but don't know the value of anything ... You can only have values if you have some appreciation of what being human is all about".

* What kind of society do Canadians want?

I paraphrased a question often asked in public addresses by Prime Minister Trudeau and received a variety of answers, some of which concur with responses you received.

A decentralized society with more local autonomy, genuine equality of opportunity, wider sharing in decision-making, more income-sharing, a fair deal for native peoples and other minorities, fair trade with the Third World, a better information flow between "brass and grass": these were some of the more expected replies.

Many respondents in Québec, the Atlantic Provinces and the West chose to answer the question in regional, provincial or local terms, not in a national or international perspective. A majority of Québec respondents expressed some degree of support for "separatism", variously defined - at least as a political ideal which, like a lever, might bring about a just arrangement with the other members of the Canadian experiment. I experienced a distinctive cultural climate, sometimes accompanied by separatist feelings, in every region of Canada except Ontario: British Columbia certainly has its own flavor and feel; so have the Prairie Provinces. Québec, of course, is "a large francophone island in the anglophone sea of North America". Biculturalism is alive and well in Moncton, New Brunswick, despite the Jones. Many Cape Bretoners are intent on developing their Celtic traditions and a few of them speak of "separation" from the rest of Nova Scotia. Prince Edward Island has a cultural climate distinctly its own. And Newfoundland has perhaps the most distinctive cultural milieu next to Québec. As one Newfoundlander explained to me: "You Canadians on the mainland are still searching for an identity. We Newfoundlanders don't have to search; we found our identity long ago". Only in Ontario, where I interviewed the widest "mix" of citizens, did I gain an impression of bland homogenization. Is Ontario becoming an American-style melting pot while the rest of Canada becomes a disparate collection of regional, provincial and local mosaics? (No doubt, residency in Ontario colors my perceptions.)

Comparatively few respondents in PROJECT FEEDBACK expressed a global outlook in answer to the question about social goals. However, I encountered an articulate, growing minority of Canadians who are actively supporting the Third World nations' call for a "new international economic order". Also, a sizeable number of interviewees look to China for lessons on balanced social development. And more citizens than expected, in all parts

of the country, used Marxist-like language to describe their social hopes. Most of them, incidentally, are also committed Christians.

Many respondents expressed a yearning for a society with more of the friendly, neighbourly qualities popularly associated with rural life in the past. I did not find anyone, Cathy, who used your term "convivial society" to sum up their aspirations, but I did meet many who, in their own ways, were seeking "community with self, with nature and with others". I heard numerous voices which confirmed your insight that many Canadians are grouping "to create together a sense of community, to find that lost ground of community awareness".

* Quality of Civil and Religious Leadership

You report that societal structures in general, and the educational, political and religious institutions in particular, were singled out by your respondents as major obstacles to human growth and social change. You found "extreme frustration and even mounting anger over the failure of political leaders to deliberately challenge Canadians with the issues facing us".

From 750 citizens, media observers and some local leaders I received similar messages. Most respondents were sceptical, some even cynical, about political leadership today. Still, a number felt rather positive about some federal MPs and/or the federal cabinet. A sizeable proportion, mostly in Ontario and Québec, singled out the Prime Minister as a leader from whom they expect wise leadership - and more leadership than at present.

Schools and universities, governments and bureaucracies and most churches at national, provincial and local levels came in for frequent, sometimes fierce, criticism. The news media also was criticized by respondents who saw the social power and hence social responsibility of press, radio and television. Not as many seemed aware of the social impact exerted by multi-national corporations.

A frequent comment, almost a demand, was that of the need for "more action and less talk" by both religious and civil leaders. Citizens are clearly tired of brave rhetoric; they are looking for courageous deeds to match the words. For example, many look for more evidence that social justice is practised within the churches as well as preached to civil society.

* Nurturing the Human Spirit

The same "search for wholeness" which you observed, Cathy, was evident to me from coast to coast. I'd say this searching, which takes many forms and heads in diverse directions, is a positive effort by many Canadians to overcome the fragmentation and alienation so prevalent in today's society.

Many and varied means of "nurturing the human spirit" (your phrase is exactly right, I'd say) are being attempted. In religious terms, quite a few of the respondents I interviewed are searching for what could be called a "whole spirituality": not an either/or but rather a both/and spirituality which unifies worship and everyday living, faith and justice, hope and social commitment. A growing number are seeking this spiritual fulfillment, or nurturing of the human spirit, in small groupings: "intentional communities", "social justice constituencies", etc.

Comparatively few respondents saw the Church/Churches in the bold perspective of the Second Vatican Council: not as a clerically-dominated institution but as a pilgrim community of diverse believers following the Christian way to wholeness.

* Future Prospects

In my soundings, as in yours, most respondents spoke more of what they expected in the future than what they hoped for.

Very few of the citizens I interviewed subscribed to "disaster" scenarios" you heard (which perhaps are mainly in vogue in Ottawa?). Many, perhaps most FEEDBACK respondents are at least mildly apprehensive about the short-term future ("I'm an optimist, but...), and vaguely hopeful in the long term. Some expect a serious depression, some foresee another world war, a few expect a "holocaust" or the end of the world as we know it, but most are much less apprehensive.

If memory is accurate, collegiate youth are more "scared" of the future than any other group I talked with - "scared" of marriage, family, and job prospects, it seems. Senior citizens appeared the least worried ("After all, look at what we've already survived in our lifetime".)

Reluctantly I'm almost persuaded that we Canadians, whether young or old, are afraid to dream dreams and see social visions. Time after time, when asked about future hopes, or what kind of

society they would like, most respondents replied, almost with embarrassment: "This probably isn't very realistic ...." Then what was voiced by way of future hopes was usually very sketchy (as you also experienced) or very obvious. Thus many respondents said they hope for "more sharing" or "closer relationships" in future.

Granted some notable exceptions, few respondents appeared to be actively working for these or other social goals. It would seem that most Canadians, myself included, prefer easy bitching to difficult doing. At this stage I have the distinct, if unwelcome impression that we Canadians are not actively seeking "the moral equivalent of the CPR"; which, as Dr. Frank Underhill once observed, is the only national dream we have ever had.

I very much hope that a detailed review of the FEEDBACK field data will show this personal impression to be faulty; will reveal, instead, that a goodly number of Canadians are committed to a more human future and are actively working for its realization. I hope that this is one of the quiet, hidden messages awaiting discovery in tape recordings and notes of conversations with 750 fellow citizens from Victoria to St. John's.

So much for this initial comparison of our two Projects. Later on, when your final report and my detailed summary of responses are both at hand, it should prove more enjoyable and instructive to compare our experiences and findings.

Gratefully and fraternally,

Grant Maxwell
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May 4, 1975

Dear Cathy,

Your interim report was tremendous fun to read. You write with such intelligence and such cool. You are so conscious of the various mindsets that will disagree with you lock, stock and barrel; you set about discreetly dismantling their foreseen arguments, but never slip into the mode of railing against them. It's a sophisticated and delightful piece of writing.

I'm going to keep this reaction fairly short. If something I say sounds as if it would cast a bit of light if it were explored further, just call me up.

Just as a light-hearted preliminary .... a comment on cycles in the history of civilization. Do you think we are now in some kind of Dark Ages, in some sense? Why do I ask? Because look at the desires expressed:

-- to walk again on common ground, to reweave the social fabric;
-- to end impersonal, mechanical modes of delivery of services
-- to subordinate technology to other human values
-- to re-root most decisions in a vigourous local base, yet with strong international authority to handle crises or fundamental common issues when needed
-- to dethrone competitiveness as our mode of interaction
-- and especially, to bring it about that "a concern for spiritual and psychological well-being would displace material well-being as the appropriate focus for the liberation of human energies"...

...How much mediaeval history have you read? Because when you look at those desires, it really seems that all those learned individual Canadians scattered all over the country are unconsciously trying to re-invent the High Middle Ages! The goals listed above would be a pretty fair description of the self-organization of twelfth and thirteenth century Europe. Ain't that fun? Has any historian read the report yet? What was her/his reaction?

Now just some brief reactions on the main differences between the people you've been talking to and the people I've been talking to. My people, by and large, have not been intellectuals, certainly not academics. They have by and large not been as "well informed" as your people. BUT they have been much more

inserted somewhere; otherwise, I would not have gotten to see them. By and large, they have been active members of some smallish group, with links in turn with a real live church. They are, as it were, well integrated into a tribe and into a clan. I think that's why they feel less pessimistic and less overwhelmed than your people. So I identify with your comment on pg. 18 (the quotation) --"The way to get rid of the pessimism is to get out and do things with people. Then you discover that there is all sorts of room to solve small problems and in the process to raise consciousness about large issues". For example, the small "Ten Days for World Development" inter-church groups I met with in Regina, Calgary, Edmonton and Camrose are looking at many of the same enormous problems described by your people. But their mood was almost exuberant, in spite of frequent temptations to hopelessness; and it was obviously their insertedness that fortified them.

With that difference in mind, I heard people say many of the same things you heard. The world food problem as a moral crisis (What kind of society will we be if we let people starve while we dine and watch it all on TV?). The need to move past a fixation with personal income and consumption. (By the nature of the church network I was moving through, I met lots of people who have already moved past that fixation, or who never had it).

Your point f) on pg. 119 about centralization/decentralization, is being discussed everywhere; that seems to be a major preoccupation. The remark (p. 79) about the modern consumer as glutton is also echoed everywhere. The role of China in people's imagination -- and their nervous, respectful curiosity about China -- I also found very common. And yes, people are concerned about the fragility and unconvincingness of our "social bonds"; but my people are, I think, still more in touch with social bonds than your people. (I have some more feelings about that, but they won't come clear enough to share right now).

About technology and technique, I found a great unevenness and lack of consensus among "my" people. In the church-related networks, Jacques Ellul and George Grant have had an influence, but so have Bucky Fuller and McLuhan and Teilhard de Chardin. In a few places, small groups are meeting to talk about "intermediate technology" or "appropriate technology", somewhat after the manner of Ivan Illich. These groups seem to have found a good via media between the Luddites and the technological utopians who can still be found in the churches. I think their numbers will grow.

There are some assumptions in your report which sit strangely with me. This may be only because I personally don't share them, but it probably reflects some different assumptions in my "network" as well.

One is the role of government. Once on pg. 130 and once in a quotation, the Prime Minister and the Cabinet are exhorted to exert charismatic, indeed prophetic leadership, because "they alone are charged with the health of the common weal". I guess church people more or less assume that everyone in a society is charged with the health of the whole -- each according to his capacity, but each relating in some real way to the whole, not just to private interests or domestic ones or whatever. We have lots of symbols for expressing that each-for-all vision. Obviously, everyone's role and effectiveness has its limits -- but that is just as true for the Cabinet as it is for a church or the CMA or the Choir School or a public-spirited family. I think that the role of the government of the day in shaping the common culture is exaggerated -- or at least seen in somewhat distorting isolation - at several points in the report. Almost as if the government were the only purposeful body in the land; whereas a healthy society is full of purposeful, organized, socially concerned, future-oriented, somewhat autonomous bodies. We can't do without our government, but it certainly is not the only channel through which we consciously or unconsciously shape our common future.

Perhaps related to this is the concept of the federal government "legitimating" discussions about future options. I meet lots of people for whom federal (or provincial) sponsorship of a dialogue would invalidate it more than it would legitimate it. And that's not pure cynicism, either. The seal of the government is not necessarily a legitimating seal for ideas about the social future! One quote says: "Governments are the only ones with the initiative and the power to say that we will now look at this question. Nobody else has the power. Nobody else has vested in them the authority to establish and maintain the boundary conditions". Maybe I don't understand what this person means by boundary conditions. But I don't like the remark. When the Québec labour movement undertook a huge adult study program on the social structure of Québec capitalism; when Catholic bishops, parents and religious orders decided in Ontario that we would have a Catholic school system; when, to get much smaller, "As It Happens" on CBC decides to hammer away at Canada Lead, it seems to me that someone besides the Government is saying "Now we will look at this question". People can say that and make it stick, if they know how to organize and if they understand their

constituency. In fact, I would be closer to saying that a government is functionally unable to say "Now we will look at this question" if many significant constituencies or tribes in the country have not already decided that the question is an important one. We can change the water in which the political fish swim -- if we are inserted and awake.

Perhaps I'm already into some musings about where culture comes from -- how "common ground" gets its topsoil and its manure. I felt an ambivalence in the report on this score. Sometimes there is tut-tut language about "the burden of stereotyped categories which society forces on (people)", or about "primary relationships ... constrained by conventional stereotyping". At other times there is happy language about "those common understandings and ... common agreements which are the hallmark of any society", and without which "there is little hope of avoiding major disasters and ... totalitarian responses". But there is no pondering about how you tell the difference between a "stereotyped category" and a "common agreement". One woman's life-sustaining social image can be another woman's male-dominated brainwashing. Isn't it often the case that the same tradition can be a stereotype or a life-nourishing vision ... depending on whether it is understood cheaply, crassly and contemptuously, or reverently, profoundly and generously? What is the hallmark of whether or not a "common agreement" is liberating? It certainly doesn't have to be new to be liberating. I'm not even sure it has to be all that conscious, in every case, to be liberating and life-sustaining. By their fruits you will know them; debate about it all has an important place, but it can be destructive unless other forms of witness are going on at the same time; wordless, acted-out, lived conviction.

All this is a setting in which I see the limited (though still real) possible validity of a Citizens' Commission of Enquiry on the Future. I'm certainly not against it; I just feel a slow, cautious response to it.

The fundamental reason for this is probably our experience all year of how exceedingly difficult real reflection is. The phrase "institutional reflection" (and especially the phrase "their own institutional reflection") is exciting, is beautiful, is full of high hope. (Like the phrase, "faith reflecting on experience".) But the human conditions under which people are actually free to reflect and want to reflect and get the awesome courage to reflect -- they are very rare. Perhaps they cannot quite be constructed -- perhaps they can only be given, when the time

suddenly comes ripe. I (we) have found in myself and in others, all year, an initial enthusiasm for honest and integrated reflection, then a sharp drawing back as the implications begin to show .... the pain, the unveiling, the question mark hanging over one's job, one's priorities, one's symbols, everything .... Real reflection is rare. It's a grace. It's something like real conversion or real revolution; avoided as well as longed for, dreadfully easy to imitate but not quite ever within our grasp.

But that doesn't mean it's irrelevant to the actual challenges and messes facing us. The "process of institutional reflection" might turn into an inquisition if it were tough and too authoritatively "protected at the Ministerial level". Or it might turn into mere therapy, mere group self-stroking if it were not tough. I don't know if we yet have enough common ground to stand on while we do this task; I suspect we probably haven't. BUT '... BUT .... in those moments when it worked, it would be a really liberating idea. Maybe it's worth all the thrashings around it would entail.

I enclose a letter I wrote about our project to the General Board of the Canadian Council of Churches. In fact, I enclose the whole Report, with all its enclosures; but unless you get hooked, just read the opening letter, typed on white. Since I wrote it I have become even more convinced that FRACTION, as a project, was misconceived and is the failure it deserves to be.[1] (Though "faith reflecting on action", as an idea and a goal, is as valid as ever.)

I hope my sadder/wiser (?) mood isn't discouraging to you. Stick to your lights; they will lead you where you should go. Good luck with your final draft; and may your good seeds drop on the best soil for them! God bless!

Love,

(Janet Somerville)

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1. *Note: In response to my query about the meaning of this comment, Ms. Somerville explained that the failure to which she referred lay in not taking account of the human or community rhythms necessary for effective reflection; the attempt to provide a centralized stimulus to the process failed in many cases to capture the interests of the groups approached because it was out of tune with group needs at that particular time.*

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