

Editorial: Geology and Geophysics in Canadian Universities

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Editorial

Geology and Geophysics in Canadian Universities

A report with this title has recently been published by the Geological Survey of Canada (Paper 80-6, Part 1) on behalf of the Canadian Geoscience Council. This document is the result of a two year study by a seven man committee, co-chaired by E.R.W. Neale and J.E. Armstrong. These two gentlemen are the authors of the report.

I received a copy just as we went to press with this issue, so the following comments come from a quick perusal. Like J.O. Wheeler (see below), I want to bring this report to the attention of the geoscience community and to encourage written comments. I will consider all such submissions for publication in the letter section of this journal.

A number of recommendations are made, some of them surprisingly specific. I can see certain departmental chairmen using this document for "dean bashing", demanding more faculty and better facilities as outlined.

The report shows that it is still a male profession when it comes to faculty positions - there are only *eight* full-time faculty positions held by women. Not only that, but we are still reluctant, it seems, to hire Canadian-trained geoscientists. There has been a net increase of only *one* per year added in the last decade.

Considerable emphasis is given to the problem of the graduate geoscientist and his employer. The latter complain that students cannot express themselves either in written form or orally. The report recommends courses on technical writing at all undergraduate levels. I disagree. Our undergraduate curricula already have too many courses. What is needed is more essay and report writing within existing course, i.e., assignments that are criticized for their grammar and style as well as their content (perhaps the *faculty* should take a course in technical writing?). Mining and Petroleum Exploration companies want more pragmatic courses - drafting, surveying, exploration methods, etc. The report recommends that universities consider adding an extra year beyond the degree program for "professional training". Fair enough, but will industry help, both financially and otherwise? Our chronically under-financed universities do not have the resources at this time.

The subject of money brings us to research and graduate school. Canada has never funded basic (or applied) research to the proper extent. Our rela-

tive position among the industrial nations is pathetic. Despite this, the present Government of Canada shows no evidence of wanting to improve the situation. The report states that industry "generally has rather negative views of academic research". This shows in their lack of support for university research. Apparently, the Canadian petroleum industry gave a total of about \$200,000 in 1979. This is less than that recently invested by *one* mining company, Rio-canex, for fundamental research in mineral deposits. With few exception, a dismal scene for R & D in Canadian earth science. The report makes a number of recommendations for improving the university and industry interface and they all boil down to better communication.

A final point on the graduate student. They report a feeling amongst faculty that the "best" students are not continuing their studies at graduate school, but are being lured (their word) into early employment. Only time will tell what effect this will have on the quality of research and the make-up of geoscience departments in the future.

There is much more in this report. It is the product of a very considerable effort on the part of Neale and Armstrong and their committee. It should be read by all concerned with the future of geoscience in Canada. I await your comments.

R.H. McNutt,
Editor

Geosciences in Canada

The Canadian Geoscience Council solicits published comments in the "Letters" section of *Geoscience Canada* on the recently issued Council report "The Geosciences in Canada, 1979, Part I: Geology and Geophysics in Canadian Universities" published as Geological Survey of Canada Paper 80-6, PG I, 154 pages, 1981 by E.R.W. Neale and J.E. Armstrong.

In this way the Council hopes to generate feedback on the report and reaction to its recommendations from the Canadian Earth Science Community.

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