Watery Wonder of the World

by Sue Monaghan

"AQUATRON" is the name of a new oceanographic research facility in the Life Sciences building. Its a name to remember—suggesting great size, stature and expectations. In the words of Dr. Boyd, it is "...perhaps the best laboratory for biological oceanographic research in the world".

Aquatron foreshadowed a talent for momentous achievements in the days when it was merely a twinkle of necessity—indeed of desperation— in the eyes of its founders: Dr. Hayes, now Killam Research Professor of Environmental Sciences at Dalhousie and Dr. Trost, formerly Dean of Grad Studies at Dal, and now vice-president of University of Calgary [as well as Dr. Boyd]. In the early sixties these men along with other biological oceanographers were situated in the old Forrest building, "...the oldest building on the Dal campus where they attempted to keep watery things alive in a make-shift cold-room by carrying in sea water in 5 gallon carboys."

The three men and their supporters had to persuade the federal government to alter its policy of support for high energy physics or astronomy and include biological oceanographers when distributing government funds.

Aquatron's first grant of $1 million from the National Research Council was followed by an additional $4 million form the Atlantic Development Board. The university then went to the provincial government and received a loan of $13 million under the "Universities Capital Assistance Act". When all was totalled, $5 million went to the building of Aquatron and the rest paid for the entire Life Sciences center.

The Aquatron Laboratory includes a "pool tank"—a cylindrical aquarium 50 feet in diameter and 13 feet deep holding about 184,00 gallons, a "tower tank"—in the shape of a silo 35 feet deep and 12 feet in diameter constructed to mimic a column of the ocean surface layer, 10 sets of aquarium rooms—each consisting of a "wet" room (for organisms) an; a dry room (for electronics and notes), and a high pressure laboratory to simulate deep sea pressures.

Water is pumped up to Aquatron from the North West Arm of Halifac Harbour —a drowned glacial gauge that extends 2 1/2 miles inland.

Aquatron's plumbing system consist of a complicated mass of fuels, pumps and filters maintained by three engineets during the day, and monitored by Pinkerton guards checking gages at night. In addition a systme of souble components was built into the structure as an extra precaution i.e. allowing for a switch to pump no. 2 for example, if pump no. 1 proves faulty.

The aquatron tanks take two weeks to a month per experiment and is completely drained for the next experiment. Only the choosen few PhD Oceanography Students, as well as scientists from academic institutions or government laboratories as well as Dal's Oceanography Professors are allowed to use Aquatron's intricate facilities.

At the moment there is research being done on various forms of sea plankton, as well as an attempt to cross genetic strains in lobsters and oysters to provide for sturdy, reproductive-minded races. (This same sort of selective breeding was done once with wheat in the Canadian prairies with the result that "Marquee Wheat" became the most flourishing and nourishing crop in the world.)

In addition to its scientific potential, Aquatron will no doubt wield some political influence. As explained by Dr. Boyd, Dal's PhD students in Oceanography will eventually be recruited into the federal fisheries department. At the moment Canada is attempting to set fishing quotas within its 200 mile coastal limits. The government means to manage the fish population in the same manner as it is regulating and preserving the deer population. Aquatron and its students will soon be providing the necessary knowledge to assist in setting these quotas to the best advantage —for the fish.

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WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT: More Than A Rumour!

by Mary Pat MacKenzie

For more that a year now the citizens of Halifax-Dartmouth have been hearing about "Waterfront Development". To date several proposals have been put to the various governments levels involved but no actual decisions have been made.

There are 3 levels of government involved: the Halifax Municipal government, the Provincial Government, and the Federal Government; but the actual roles which each play will in the planning and construciton have not been very clearly defined. If and when the various governments decide on how much each will contribute in terms of finances and control then the developers proposals can be given serious consideration and a choice made.

The actual land involved belong to both the public and private sector. According to the Y & R proposal there would have to be a certain amount of land fill involved which adds a fairly substantial sum to the final cost estimates. Centennial Properties Ltd. of Halifax is one of the private land owners whose property falls within the area mapped out for overall development. The company, however, has submitted its own plan for development of this land to City Council. Centennial Properties is almost certain to go ahead with its plans for twin office buildings at the bottom of Salter Street and any overall development plan would have to incorporate, or at least make allownace for these buildings in their plans.

The Federal government almost certainly favor the Y & R plan but possibley the Provincial government will be more concerned with the proposals of local developers. The Y & R proposal is bounded by Purdy's Wharf on the north, Water Street to the West, the Harbour on the east and the generating station on the south. According to the proposal submitted: "The waterfront site should include the proposed major new Federal Building and Provincial Building, linked together for public access, as the anchor to the project. Around this public core will arranged open space, commercial office and retail space, housing, a convention hotel and parking garages." All of the buildings would be under 7 storeys and would not block the view of the Harbour from the Citadel. The CADAC-Baxter plans are substantially the same only slightly larger in scope.

The redevelopment of the Halifax waterfront is certainly a worthy cause, would ultimately benefit all the citizens of the Metro area and obviously one overall development plan is preferrable to piecemeal development that may or may not revive the downtown area. Halifax has the chance to avoid costly mistakes that other urban centers have made but both the local governments and citizens of Metro have to take a long hard look at the proposals submitted to date. It will be too late to complain after the decisions have been made and construction begins.

THe idea of an overall development plan for the Halifax waterfront seems to have originated at the Federal level in the Department of Urban Affairs. The Department hired a consultant, Eugene Chatterton, to study the problems of low investment in the waterfront area and return to them with his recommendations. His report went from Urban Affairs to DREE where it seems to have been picked up by Y & R Properties of Toronto. Y & R hired ARCOP Consultants, who had worked on a waterfront plan for MAPC, to design a development plan for them. In August 1973 Y & R presented this plan to the Halifax City Council who passed it "in principle", but the plan then had to be submitted to the Federal & Provincial governments for them to study. Meanwhile, CADAC, Ltd. of Halifax with the assistance of Baxter Estates, Ltd. of Vancouver drew up their own plans for waterfront development and submitted their proposals to the City Council. Their plans were also approved "in principle" and sent on to the other two governments. The CADAC-Baxter plans are even bigger than the Y & R plans which include office, commercial, residential and hotel -convehtion facilities. The price tag for either one of the proposals would certainly range upward form $150,000,000.

The intrastructure costs of whichever development plan is accepted will be shared by the Provincial and Federal governments. DREE's Don Jamieson has said that the Provincial authorities would have to put up 1/3 of the total cost (i.e. approx. $5 million) but the Provincial Government has not yet agreed to this. Apparently the 2 governments are still negotiating and will come up with an agreement more favorable to the Provincial Government. Mr. Mitchell, the Provincial Minister of Development, has said that the Province does not want an open ended cost sharing proposal which would force the Province to share increased cost due to rising inflation.

Though waterfront development was originated at the Federal level and pursued by the Municipal government the matter now rests with the Province. The tangled web of jurisdiction, land expropriation, funding and private and public involvement has been dropped in their laps and presumably their decisions will be binding.

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