

# Club of Romer at Dal asks The big bang little whimper, or wise choice?

"Opposition to the construction of pipelines or nuclear power plants whether for ecological reasons or for violation of native rights, often gets brushed aside by the dimmer prospect of not meeting present energy requirements," according to Dr. Alexander King.

Speaking at the Dalhousie Faculty Club last week in the Public Administration lecture series "Change and uncertainty," King warned that "the increased use of fossil fuels, together with the expected increase in population may create an irreversible problem".

As individual nations appear less and less capable of dealing with major problem trends, the need for a new collective approach towards public management becomes imperative, he said.

"The present world population is 4.2 billion. Although there are a few signs of fertility rates levelling off in some countries, the world population is expected to double and redouble. How are we preparing?"

"It's taken centuries to build our present infrastructures. Is it possible to double all this? What does it mean in terms of capital, materials and energy? If it is not possible, what extent of disharmony and human suffering can we expect?" asked King.

Governments and administrations need to face the con-

flict between short term and long term solutions, he said. The five-year-cycle of elections keeps most governments busy with immediate issues concerned with retaining votes. The trouble is, he said, that these short term interests are endangering our long range interests in a global sense.

"My own sentiment is that we are reaching a period where many more levels of decision-making must be created closer to those who suffer their consequences... Governments have neither the time, nor the energy or mechanisms to tackle major problems today," said King.

The United Nations, Sweden and France have taken some initial, progressive steps by creating secretariats for the future, said King. These secretariats draw up "contingent scenarios" to prepare government leaders and peoples for possible, future crises.

"Until the end of the last decade, the spirit of the world was based on technological advance. Since then a gradual awareness of pollution, ecological waste and other bad symptoms of rapid urban growth have revealed the dual role of science and technology as both a treasure chest and Pandora's box."

"We have to ask ourselves if the growth of technology and the increase in material standing add to the quality of life," warned King.



University maintenance workers Jose Martinez and Curtis Martin scrubbing away at the horrendous SMU slogans. They say that the orders to purify the sidewalk came from university cleaning services.

Numerous "think-tanks" have emerged as profitable consultation agencies for business and government, he said. Administrations are saturated now with theories, statistics and forecasts of every kind.

In concluding his lecture, King quoted American scientist Harrison Brown who expressed what options today's technological societies have

left before them.

"Our first option is the big bang, the nuclear power horse. Second: the whimper, the quality of life will continue to fritter away through wars, strikes, sabotage, over-population, unemployment etc. The poor will inherit the earth and live in misery forever after. Third: by making small, gradual, collective, wise decisions, we can attain new

peace and prosperity."

A member for 24 years of the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development, King—a scientist and writer—became Chair of the International Institute of Advanced Studies in 1974, a position that he still holds.

He is also co-founder of the Club of Rome which published the influential book, "Limits to Growth".

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