

# THE CONSERVATION COUNCIL OF NEW BRUNSWICK

The Conservation Council of New Brunswick is our province's only environment advocacy organization. C.C.N.B. was founded in 1969 by concerned citizens to advocate public policies that recognize the importance of a healthy environment. Unrestricted by political or commercial considerations, the conservation council is New Brunswick's Environmental conscience. Although the council has faced many difficult problems, (specifically a lack of funding) it has remained an effective and valuable lobby for the good of all New Brunswickers.

The objectives of the C.C.N.B. are; to generate awareness about the ecological foundations of our quality of life, also, to promote public policies that involve the knowledgeable, respectful and restrained use of nature. As well the C.C.N.B. acts as an environmental watchdog regarding political, bureaucratic, and commercial decision making. As part of their role as watchdogs the council attempts to advocate rational solutions to our most pressing environmental problems - ground water contamination, hazardous waste disposal, pesticide abuse, acid rain, energy mega-projects and more.

As with any volunteer group the C.C.N.B. is a membership organization with an elected volunteer board of directors and a small staff of environmental advocates. Due to this basic structure the C.C.N.B. relies on a growing number of members to meet the challenge of expanding environmental concerns. The C.C.N.B.'s activities include promoting ecological awareness and environmentally responsible policies through speaking engagements, educational publications, direct representations to Government, industry, and the media.

C.C.N.B.'s Conserver house project in Fredericton houses its offices and the most comprehensive collection of environmental and energy information in the province. Staff offer advice and referrals to individual and community pollution concerns. The Conservation Council also carries a range of books, booklets, and fact sheets on important

environment and energy issues that can be ordered by mail or phone, if so desired.

One of the chief concerns facing the council is how to attain the necessary funding to sustain a strong lobby. The C.C.N.B. is a registered charitable organization, largely supported by individual tax deductible donations, and by income earned through publications, collector plate sales, honoraria and Government contracts for special projects. In the last few years the Conservation Council has suffered the impact of government cut-backs. Until 1984 the C.C.N.B. received grants from Conservation and Renewable energy Demonstration Agreement, (C.R.E.D.A.). These grants kept two full-time employees working to retrofit Conserver house, a project of the C.C.N.B. Unfortunately C.R.E.D.A. has been dismantled and government funding cut-off. This has placed strain on the council's other full-time personnel who have doubled up their duties in order to keep Conserver house running.

Executive Director and project manager Janice Brown-Harvey pointed out that fund-raising is an important part of the council's work. Unlike other "funded" government projects the C.C.N.B. is not a research institute but a public policy group. Current research that is being done is used by the council as a scientific base to develop policies that reflect environmental concerns. Once the science and policy are merged the council acts as a public advocate in lobbying business and government, to take action.

As Mrs. Harvey points out: "the council attempts to mix the desirable and the practical to come up with a realistic policy, one that applies to the long term effects of environmental abuses." One of the key problems in lobbying public supports is the depoliticization of environmental concerns since the 1960's. Since a recesive economy has made economic concerns the most fought over election issue, problems with the environment have been put on the political back-burner, (note as an example the

dismantling of C.R.E.D.A.)

The Council attempts in earnest to educate the public on just what is at stake. Too often the mass media neglects to come down hard on Government and industry abuses of the environment and thus many of the Council's activities are not well publicized. Mrs. Harvey points out that: "with a lack of financial resources the easiest and cheapest way to push for support is through the mass media, unfortunately their activities are often observed by a lack of quality coverage."

To see the work of the Conservation Council in action one need only head, downtown. At, 180 St. John Street a Century old house has been converted into a community - based demonstration centre for energy conservation and renewable energy techniques. Conserver House is run by the C.C.N.B. It has been retro-fitted to show current technologies available to conserve energy.

Conserver house operates as an energy information centre to assist people who want to learn about and take advantage of conservation and renewable energy methods and products. Some of the activities and services of the house include;

- ...tours and open houses
- ...up-to date energy library
- ...in-depth workshops and seminars on technical issues.
- ...fact sheets and displays
- ...slide shows and films.

The house is open five days a week and the staff are capable of providing practical and down to earth guidance on the latest conserver technologies. Conserver House was created with funding provided under the Canada-New Brunswick Conservation and Renewable Energy Demonstration program. At present the council is attempting to raise the funds needed to buy the house out right from the provincial government. If you are interested in solar heating or wood heating, insulation and air infiltration a stop at Conserver would be an educational experience. Of special interest to students would be the library facilities

available in Conserver House. The library now lends books to members. It is the best conservation and renewable energy library in the province and one that students can take advantage of to further their knowledge on environmental issues.

To the members of the C.C.N.B. Environmental protection and the wise use of our natural resources have become the priorities of the 1980's. Threats to our supplies of water, air and soil are revealed on a daily basis, diminishing our ability to sustain our resource-based economy, and ultimately life on earth. Members of the council realize that more people must act and get involved in tackling these issues before it is too late.

Let us consider just how important a lobby group the C.C.N.B. is. The four Atlantic provinces have exhibited a very poor track record in dealing with environmental issues such as acid rain. The council works to educate New Brunswickers as to the consequences of such inaction. Acid rain will have in the future, a grave impact on Fisheries and our Forests, the 2 primary industries of New Brunswick, if something is not done we will face further danger to human health and agriculture. Due to cut-backs, research into the effects of Acid rain has been lacking (especially, if one considers the severity of the issue). The council acts to take up the slack in dealing with this issue, this is done by constant lobbying of government officials and public education projects. It is in this role, as a concerned citizen group, that the C.C.N.B. and its workers become so important to the future quality of life in New Brunswick.

In discussion with Mrs. Harvey the role of students in this group was dealt with. As she points out; "we have had previously a small number of student members and even 2 who sat, at one time, on the Board of Directors." (Lois Corbett, a St. Thomas Student and former editor of the Aquinian and Justin Manasc, a recent graduate of UNB's forestry program.) As she also emphasized; "students are a very important sector of society and are great-

ly sought after to become involved in the C.C.N.B.."

Although the major role of the C.C.N.B. is to act as a public advocate and lobby group another primary concern is to raise the level of public consciousness to a point where individuals take action and voice criticism and concern.

Citizens and students can be proud of the work being done by the C.C.N.B. but what is needed to make their efforts successful is a higher concern from all of society, action is needed if we are to turn the clock on environmental abuse. If you are concerned with issues of the environment get involved and show your support for the C.C.N.B. At the very least take the time to visit Conserver House, it is well worth the effort. For more information on the C.C.N.B. please feel free to contact them at:

Conserver House  
180 St John Street Fredericton, NB  
E3B 4A9  
(506) 454-7655

#### Editor's Note:

I would firstly like to thank Mark Channing for helping me research this feature. As well, Janice Brown-Harvey the Executive Director of C.C.N.B. was extremely helpful and is obviously quite dedicated to the goals of the council. In our discussion it was noted that there is no student organization to deal with environmental issues. I must strongly encourage students to take issue with environmental concerns, if we don't now, it may be too late in the future. Next Friday, the 26th of October, Mrs. Harvey will be on campus to explain further the role of the C.C.N.B. Interested students look in next Friday's Bruns for the time and place of this event. It will be definitely worth your time to hear first-hand what the C.C.N.B. is doing to tackle the vital issue of environmental abuse.

Richard Hutchins  
Features Editor