

Says speaker:

Resource Managers at centre of social change

By DERWIN GOWAN
Managing Editor

Are we in for a "sweeping revolution" in regard to attitudes towards land ownership and development?

According to philosophy professor Richard Baer of Cornell University who addressed a group of foresters in Fredericton last Tuesday, we are.

He based his case on the philosophical argument that people are coming to see themselves in a new light with respect to the environment around them. Coupled with this, he said, is the fact that the resources available to North American industry will not sustain the present level of economic expansion.

Baer said ancient people divided knowledge into two categories—subjective, intuitive knowledge and knowledge attained by an objective, analytical, disciplined approaches to specific problems.

People in the western world have paid so much attention to the second type of knowledge that they have forgot about the knowledge a mother gains nursing a baby or the knowledge gained by watching a sunset, said Baer.

Baer said this has distorted people's views concerning the natural world, "intoxicating" them with a sense of power.

Resources, he maintained, are

seen as merely a resource to be utilised. "The forest has some integrity and value just due to the fact that it is," he claimed.

Professional foresters have become "too fascinated" with the fact that everything has a use, according to Baer. "Technical brilliance alone is not going to do the job."

Baer said foresters would have to be responsible to more than "a narrow definition of utility," but should look at the whole picture. "The first challenge is to catch hold of what life is all about."

"We don't need engineers that are just good bridge builders. We have enough of that mentality."

Baer said there was a new sense of accountability by which people would no longer be able to ruin the environment. The ecology should have rights, he maintained, and be protected by law. Although he said it was "absurd" to think of a tree or lake having legal rights, he said people used to think it was absurd to think of slaves as having rights.

"I'm making a kind of plea that we broaden the field in which we work."

Baer said resource managers were at the centre of the changes of people's attitudes. There is a tension, he said, between what foresters would do if left to their own devices and what they are asked to do by their employers.

"Our conceptions of the kind of world we live in are being broadened and deepened," he said. Canadians and Americans realize that the world is finite and they can't keep "moving West."

Baer said changing conditions and attitudes would bring about a change in concepts of property ownership and social justice. The relative rights of the community and the individual would have to change.

For example, he took the case of a new highway through an agricultural area. Baer said the increase in the value of the land for commercial purposes brought about by the road was created by the community at large and not the individual landowner. Therefore, he said this value should go to the community. Under the present system, Baer said the individual is effectively given this increase in value to which he/she has no moral right.

He said individuals should have to bid for the right to have their land rezoned from agricultural to commercial. If a community wanted a new commercial zone, the area that submitted the most bids would be rezoned. This would

provide a new source of revenue to the community, reduce the role of land speculators, and reduce corruption.

Baer said that where it was shown that people were injured economically by rezoning, they could be compensated. Where the owners wished to develop the land commercially, they would have to pay back taxes.

Baer admitted that his system had some defects. For example, one questioner said that such a

system in itself would not stop agricultural land from going out of production unless there were further guidelines. However, he maintained that his system was preferable to the present method of allowing urban development to sprawl out into the countryside or along highways in unchecked "ribbon developments."

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Refunds will not be made against a cash register receipt unsupported by a prescription bill, and it is essential that the drug store receipt indicate the student name and number.

During the summer months, refunds may be claimed either by mail or in person.

S.S. Mullin
Comptroller

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