

Letter to the Editor

Volume 29, Number 2, June 2002

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/geocan29_2let01

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

The Geological Association of Canada

ISSN

0315-0941 (print)

1911-4850 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

(2002). Letter to the Editor. *Geoscience Canada*, 29(2), 87–88.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The Editor, Geoscience Canada:

Congratulations to Roger Macqueen for his term as editor and, in particular, for the fine issue on the Ocean Drilling Program (ODP), v. 28 n. 4, December 2001. As pointed out in the Editorial, the results from ocean drilling have been among the most outstanding accomplishments of the geoscience community during the past 33 years. With the longest coastline in the world and more than 6 million square kilometres offshore under its jurisdiction, Canada has every reason to be a strong participant. My only quibble is that the Preface provides no historical framework and ignores the challenges that had to be overcome so that Canadian geoscientists could enjoy the present level of involvement. In the pre-ODP stage, the level of participation by individual Canadians has been described as "slightly behind Switzerland and slightly ahead of Italy."

The initiative that led to Canadian involvement in the ODP came from the GSC and was first raised at its "Futures Conference" in December 1981 by Mike Keen. He recognized that the full cost might have to be covered by internal reallocations within existing research budgets if other government departments, the academic community, and the NSERC bureaucracy failed to share the cost of participation. The choices that would face the Federal Government were whether Canada would become a full member at a cost of about \$3 million annually or join a consortium of other countries with weak industrial/resource bases or geoscience interests. Designating the ODP as a strategic objective by the GSC occurred during the planning stage between 1982 and 1984.

As it happened, that was an awkward financial time for the GSC and

the Earth Science Sector (ESS). In political context, these were the waning days of a long stretch of Liberal rule and its overturn by the Mulroney government. The Liberal regime gave the ODP cool support and felt that the \$3 million should come from the existing ESS budget, which was already facing an increasing demand for services amid shrinking resources. An indication of how strongly the Trudeau government supported "big science" was that its top priority for the ESS was to spend \$96 million to move half of the Surveys and Mapping Branch to a new facility in Sherbrooke, Quebec (that was accomplished later under the Conservative government).

I was fortunate to have an inside look at how the GSC and the ESS successfully maneuvered through that minefield to gain full membership, and to appreciate the key role played by William (Bill) Hutchison (known as "Hutch" to his many friends) and by Ray Price, who headed the GSC. Hutch, the Assistant Deputy Minister of the ESS, was a respected geologist who, with Jim Roddick, had pioneered the collection of field data in computer-readable form in the Coast Mountains of British Columbia and played an important role in pulling the GSC into the computer age. He also had a long involvement as a volunteer in geoscience organizations and was a skilled and visionary administrator. Hutch had played a pivotal role in the establishment of the Cordilleran Section of the GAC during his years in Vancouver, served a term as President of the GAC, was the Secretary-General of the International Union of Geological Sciences, and later became its President.

Hutch realized that he would have to develop new political skills to solve the funding squeeze at the ESS and recognized

that one method was to enlist the support of industry at the senior level and to convey it to the upper levels of the then Department of Energy, Mines and Resources (EMR). To this end, he established *The Independent Industrial Advisory Committee on Earth Sciences* (IIACES B, one of the most awkward acronyms ever created), which met twice annually from June 1982 until early 1987. The members were drawn from the petroleum, mining, and surveying industries to reflect the composition of the ESS B GSC, Surveys and Mapping Branch, Earth Physics Branch, and the Polar Continental Shelf Project. The real muscle on the committee was provided from the petroleum industry: Gerry Henderson (President of Chevron Canada) and Harry Carlyle (Sr. VP of Gulf Canada), who were succeeded by Ted Best (VP of BP Canada) and Bob Orr (VP of Husky Oil). Paul Kavanagh, (VP of Rio Algom) served as the first Chair. I was a charter member and replaced Paul in June 1985. One of the keys to the influence of IIACES was that it reported to, and met regularly with, the EMR Deputy Minister, Paul Tellier (who went on to a very successful career turning the CNR around). While IIACES used its influence to support many geoscience initiatives such as Lithoprobe, Frontier Geoscience, and Mineral Deposit Research, and opposed others such as the Sherbrooke move, its prime focus was on the ODP.

The economic and scientific advantages of the ODP were obvious to everyone. The bulk of the total cost (about \$500 million annually) was to be borne by the United States, with Canada and the other participating nations only contributing about \$30 million. However, nothing is ever obvious in Ottawa and as the January 1985 deadline approached for Canada to commit as a full participant,

another complication had arisen. The new Conservative government had commenced a government-wide program review (the Nielsen Task Force), which made decision making even more uncertain. Readers in British Columbia will experience a feeling of déjà vu here. IIACES was able to help through direct appeals to EMR Minister Pat Carney and other new ministers, and on 28 December 1984 it was finally announced that Canada would join the ODP. The money was to be provided from a large group of funding envelopes spread across several ministries, but several of these later reneged, blaming the Nielsen review, which placed the funding pressure back onto the ESS. Canada eventually attained full membership during the first cycle by farming a third of its interest to Australia.

Most Canadian geoscientists seem to be unaware of the enormous debt of gratitude they owe Hutch, whose illustrious career was cut short by cancer on 3 July 1987, in his 53rd year. He literally worked himself to death on behalf of his science. It can be argued that the ESS and the GSC were never as influential again. After he and Ray were gone, their successors lost their direct access when generic Ottawa administrators were inserted to shield the Deputy Minister from the science agencies.

It is a serious oversight that the GSC, the GAC, the CGC, and the petroleum and mining industries have never acknowledged the major contributions that were made by Hutch. Perhaps naming a significant geologic or geographic feature after him and creating a GAC award in his honor would give him the recognition his life deserves.

Ray Price, Chris Findlay, and Dirk Tempelman-Kluit have contributed to the historical accuracy of this letter but I accept full responsibility for the views expressed.

Robert J. Cathro
MDD Treasurer
Bowen Island, British Columbia
5 March 2002

CORPORATE SUPPORT (2002)

The Geological Association of Canada acknowledges, with gratitude, the support of the following companies, universities, and government departments.

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