

## Letters / Lettres

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# Letters

## CGC Questionnaires

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In *Pyroclasts* (Geoscience Canada, v. 8, p. 36, 1981) Ward Neale refers to the CGC report "The Geosciences in Canada, 1979. Part 1: Geology and Geophysics in Canadian Universities" and states that "... all but one department cooperated fully. ...". I suspect that we are that one department; if so the statement is not quite accurate (if we are not that department - don't keep us in suspense - give us the dirt). What happened is very simple.

University departments were visited by members of the review committee who met individuals and groups of faculty members, to ask questions, obtain data etc. We were also asked to submit numerous data on all manner of things. Since this department publishes a detailed report every year containing not only the information requested but a lot of other information as well, we submitted copies of our annual reports covering several years. In March 1979 we were asked to fill out questionnaires which requested information already in the annual reports. Since we considered that we had already fulfilled our promise of cooperation, we simply sent the latest report and assigned a low priority to the questionnaires - something to be done if we had time; we did not refuse to fill it out. In fact, I still have the letter of

request and questionnaire forms sitting on my desk in the pending pile, where they have been since the time of their arrival waiting for attention; unfortunately although they obviously started at the top they are now approximately 0.00006 km from the top (what is a typical figure for annual sedimentation rate?). I assure you that we had good intentions it was simply a matter of ordering our priorities. Had the committee recommended one of the most cost effective ways of improving efficiency by suggesting that provincial governments supply sufficient funds to universities to hire an adequate number of support staff, and in the unlikely event that some action had been taken on such a recommendation, I am quite certain that we would have got around to answering the CGC questionnaires within the next decade or two; hell, we might even hire a couple of people just to fill out questionnaires.

All of this raises questions as to what to do with the seemingly endless number of questionnaires issued by self righteous organizations engaged in a self imposed task of studying a navel - theirs or someone else's. In far too many cases the questionnaires are simply an exercise in reformatting data already in their possession, if only they could exert themselves a little. Undoubtedly, such organizations are short of money and are trying to cut costs; but why do they not realize that in flooding use with questionnaires all they

are doing is seeking to transfer the cost of the survey to the groups (probably in worse shape than they are) being surveyed. I give notice that I am in the process of designing a questionnaire to end all questionnaires; there are approximately 500 questions and my questionnaire will be sent to the questionable senders of other questionnaires for prior completion.

However, there is a much more disturbing aspect of the whole operation of the CGC review process from conception to completion, although since we come out reasonably well, it may be churlish of me to raise the matter.

In a letter sent to Departmental Chairman in March 1979, the following sentence appeared at the end of the first complete paragraph on page 2. i.e. "*In particular, it is not our intention that the report should rate the University departments one against another for any purpose.*"

This leads me to compose a one question questionnaire. In the light of such an explicit statement, how could the committee proceed to spend, and the CGC to endorse the spending of, so much time, effort and good cash doing precisely what they said they wouldn't do?

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