

There were many question marks when it came to discussing possible repercussions on the environment but preliminary studies indicated that tidal fluctuations would be affected as far south as Boston.

Mr. Owen Washburn from Environment New Brunswick explained the New Brunswick government's role in this project. All of the environmental impact assessment studies must be approved by his Department. There will be the usual problem of scarcely enough time to do much of a detailed environmental impact study before major construction begins. Potential sites have already been narrowed down to seven without environmental considerations. Environment New Brunswick will not be gathering its own data on the project, but merely assessing data submitted by New Brunswick power commission, hardly an unbiased source!

The final speaker was Andrew McKillop from the P.E.I. Institute of Man and Resources. He maintained that conservative use of resources today was the best short term energy alternative (e.g., insulating houses, better gas mileage, more efficient lighting). This would not eliminate the need to search for further energy sources but at least would allow more time to investigate various alternatives. He discussed alternative sources of heating and lighting which included windmills, wood burning generators and solar houses - one of which used beer cans as a heat conductant.

During the conference, there was ample time for the audience to voice their opinions. The audience generally felt that we should proceed carefully and slowly with a project of this magnitude which has so many unknowns and so many potential repercussions to fishery concerns, wildlife, especially birds, and socio-economic concerns in the area of proposed construction. Many expressed fears that such a development would turn into another Point Lepreau or James Bay where energy is to be produced primarily for export for profit. Others pointed out that if equal amounts of money were available for research into other energy alternatives such as wind or solar power, then an economically and environmentally feasible method of producing energy would likely evolve. It was generally felt that a number of small scale productions serving local regions would be preferable to one large one, and environmental problems would probably be fewer and less serious. Several felt that such projects should only be designed to produce energy for local use. The Fundy tidal flats are the major refuelling areas in the Maritimes for many shore birds, some of which must fly as far as South America. Even a small increase in tide level would reduce significantly available feeding areas for these migrants.

I went to this conference with no firm opinion on the proposed Fundy Tidal Power Project. After two days of discussion, I found myself still undecided as to the wisdom of embarking on such a project. My synopsis is thus: New Brunswick cannot continue to increase its energy use for much longer without additional sources of energy production. The Bay of Fundy has very large tidal fluctuations which, if harnessed could be considered a renewable resource. Environmental impact is often directly related to the magnitude of the development structures as well as to the care taken to reducing environmental damage. As to environmental impact, there are a lot of unknowns in terms of environmental modifications (e.g., flooding, silting) and the subsequent effects on habitat, wildlife, marine and estuarine industries, life-styles of people around these developments and aesthetic considerations. I feel also that more money and research should be directed towards small scale energy production schemes utilizing the natural attributes of the area in question. Governments and Power Commissions should actively embark on a program to educate the public towards a "conservative society" by providing financial incentives and literature on energy conservation. Slogans like "Live better electrically" should be discouraged. Small scale projects would reduce environmental problems and eliminate long distance transfer of electrical power, and a conservation conscious society would at least hold in check the ever increasing demand for energy.