

Dear Friends:

On January 23, 1981, the Institute of Man and Resources announced that it had decided to relinquish management of the Ark Project, returning the facility to the Federal and Provincial Governments. I.M.R. indicated its responsibility would end as of June 1, 1981. There are a number of reasons for this decision.

Funding has never been very secure for the Ark Project. The normal funding horizon has been from three to six months. Environment Canada supplied the original funding to launch the Ark, but withdrew from future funding in 1980, and the Canada-P.E.I. Agreement on Renewable Energy Development terminated at the end of 1980. A new agreement, the proposed Canada-P.E.I. Agreement for the Demonstration of Conservation and Renewable Energy makes no reference to the Ark, nor do the criteria for project funding in the proposed agreement appear suitable for the kind of research and demonstration conducted at Spry Point.

However, lack of funding is not the only problem. Although the staff have thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity of working in these exciting areas of research and meeting with the many interested visitors to the site, the Ark was never designed to be a research facility. Numerous retrofits have had to be carried out (the latest is the transformation of a linen closet into a temperature-controlled rearing room for beneficial insects); there are limitations inherent in the building and the location which can never be overcome. The lack of long-term funding has meant that the research staff has not relocated into the immediate vicinity of the building, and most still live from 30 to 70 miles away. The physical isolation of the site, although adding to its beauty in the summer, imposes barriers between the Ark and the Island community, and at certain times of the year, access to the site is a problem.

It is to be hoped that the owners of the Ark can devise a means to continue the operation as an education and demonstration centre for renewable energy and sustainable food production, possibly on a seasonal basis, and in cooperation with a community group.

The research on an ecological approach to food production must continue. However, this type of interdisciplinary research, as the Ark experience bears witness, is difficult to fund. Government departments have not been enthusiastic about this type of research, which crosses traditional departmental lines of authority. Yet, two recent influential reports, The Global 2000 Report to the President and the U.S.D.A. Report on Organic Farming stress the need for this type of research and demonstration.

The Institute of Man and Resources is currently identifying and approaching various funding agencies for financial support to establish a Food and Energy Program for P.E.I. Success will allow the work of the Ark in aquaculture, greenhouse design and management, and organic growing techniques, to continue while at the same time permit a broader examination of the food and energy situation on P.E.I. and identify ways and means of shifting to a more sustainable agricultural system.

Support for this new program would be appreciated, from those who have visited the Ark Project or received information and found it useful. Letters of support can be sent to the following people:

The Hon. Marc Lalonde
Minister, Department of Energy,
Mines and Resources
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario

The Hon. Eugene Whalen
Minister, Department of Agriculture
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario

The Hon. Angus MacLean
Premier
P.O. Box 2000
Charlottetown, P.E.I.

Any suggestions which might assist in the development and implementation of the Food and Energy program would be welcome. Please write to:

The Ark Project
R.R.#4 Souris
P.E.I. COA 2B0

or after June 1st.

The Institute of Man and Resources
P.O. Box 2008
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The Ark Staff