

BANQUET ADDRESS - 25TH NORTH AMERICAN MOOSE CONFERENCE July 13, 1990

F. Manuel

Deputy Minister, Dept of Municipal Affairs

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Good evening ladies and gentlemen.

I was delighted when Mr. Oosenbrug asked me some months ago if I would play a small role in your conference by being guest speaker at your banquet this evening. It has given me an opportunity to rub shoulders with some old friends and to reminisce about the good old days when tagging moose meant crawling on your belly through boggy water to get within fifty feet of an animal to ensure that the CO₂ powered capture gun delivered a dart that was going to reach its target, then be prepared to run like blazes to be sure you saw where the animal fell so that you didn't lose it in the underbrush.

Quite a difference today when one hovers over the target in a helicopter, darts it and stays hovering until the animal falls, then lands beside it and finishes the job. Technology is a great thing.

The theme of your conference, "education and public participation", is so important to the success of our wildlife management programs. Productive wildlife habitat on our planet is shrinking at a frightening pace and the pressures on our resource have never been greater.

I learned a long time ago that we will never force people to do the right thing. They must be educated as to what the problems are and after that be encouraged to work with us to solve them.

There is a saying I recently read which goes like this, "don't just try to get people to do what you want, get them to want to do what you want". I think that's the answer. Once people, through education, understand the issues they will want to do something about them. The key is getting the message

through.

I remember when I started in the field of wildlife management some thirty years ago the pressures we have today were not even a figment of our imagination. I met the late Doug Pimlott for the first time in the late '50's. He had a small office on the old Memorial University campus and I had an opportunity to talk to him briefly about his work with moose and the budding science of wildlife management. Really it was a turning point in my career as I had just completed a pre-med diploma as a prerequisite to the field of medicine and was debating whether I should pursue this avenue or some other area in the sciences. My short talk with Doug certainly had a major impact on me and the next year I commenced work with the wildlife division as a field technician. My first job was working with Tom Bergerud in assessing moose damage to balsam fir in central Newfoundland. Certainly, in those days there was no thought of any threat to our moose numbers. In fact, there appeared to be too many moose and the paper companies were screaming because their forest regeneration was being destroyed by as many as eight to ten moose per square mile in some regions of the province.

Although there were no great pressures on our wildlife population in those days, it didn't take me long to learn that people can be a major factor in the success or failure of any program.

I realized this a year or so later when I was based in central Newfoundland as a regional biologist. I was working on a beaver census in a small area south of Grand Falls. Although we used tents in those days, there was a cabin about ten miles from the town where I was headquartered and I felt that if I could get the use of this camp it would be much

more convenient than staying under canvas for the summer. I approached the owner, who I knew, and asked him if I could use his camp when he wasn't using it. He had no problem at all in making his camp available to me as long as I did not enforce the wildlife regulations in the area. He said that if his friends knew that a game warden was using his camp, they would make it very difficult for him. This was my first run-in with ignorance as it pertains to the welfare of game populations. Needless to say, I stayed under canvas that summer.

The incident did, however, drive home the fact that people in the area should have been educated as to what I was doing, why I was doing it, and hopefully, gain their respect, and certainly their support for future programs that might take place in the region. I was, at that point in time, looked upon as an intruder, someone who was going to disrupt a way of life that had been going on for hundreds of years, a way of life that these people felt should continue regardless of the long term consequences.

So you can see, very early in my career I realized that education would have to play a major role in the success of our wildlife programs in this province. But as you all know, everybody is an expert in wildlife. It was evident that the task at hand would be very difficult, if not impossible to accomplish. And we would have to start with the younger generation if we were to have any success whatsoever.

The problem was what mechanism to use to get our message across. Certainly we had to work with the school system but we also had to try to get our message across as well to our adult population. Our department had access to some television programming which we used, and, as well, our technicians visited schools with slide presentations and spoke at rod and gun club meetings, boards of trade or any place where one could identify an audience and be permitted to speak.

In those days, our staff numbers were

small and we worked long hours. We did it because we believed in what we were doing and we loved what we were doing. Your reward was an intelligent question from the audience because you knew then you were getting through with your message.

I remember talking to the late Charlie Bartlett about building a wildlife park in Newfoundland, an area where we could show our wildlife species in an almost natural environment. Such a park, I felt, could be a big drawing card for children and adults alike, a centre around which an educational program could be developed. I remember sitting down with Charlie and drawing up a plan for the park. It's the same area we have today at Samonier, 140 acres which, in those days, we estimated would cost approximately \$100,000 to develop. This was a major expenditure in the '60's, however, the project got started, government bought the idea.

I think the park that is in existence today is one of the finest in North America. It's small but unique. It has also cost us more than \$100,000. I heard some years ago that the cost exceeded a million dollars at that point in time. I think the figure is still climbing, however, I say these are dollars well invested. I am sure that that park has had a major impact in the positive way many people support our wildlife programs.

Dennis Minty, who is here this evening, has played a major role in ensuring that education has become an integrated part of wildlife management and protection programs. He has worked with the department of education to have wildlife education integrated with the school curriculum. He has been the driving force behind "Project Wild", and as well, has worked with the high school system on their environmental science program. He has worked with the Salmonier Nature Park, the Hunter Education Program, the Trapper Education Program, and on it goes. He has been a tower of strength to the wildlife division of this province.

But the job is not finished. In fact, it is just

starting. It seems like every week there is a new lobby group rearing its head to have a say on some wildlife issue. We can, however, use these people to our advantage if we can get them to want to do what we want them to do, and really that's our job.

I feel today dollars for information education-programs are probably more important than dollars for research. I say this without hesitation because I feel if we do not get our message through, and get it through fast, we won't have anything to research. The science of wildlife management is the best kept secret in the world. we get in our labs, our offices and our field camps, and work our butts off and we think we're doing a great job. I felt that way as a biologist, but now as an administrator, I feel somewhat differently. The world out there is much bigger than I thought it was. The competition is much greater than I thought it was and the knowledge of the field of wildlife management is much less than I thought it was.

An informed public is a great ally. They elect governments. An informed government is your best ally because they make policy.

So what I am really saying is the message must get through to the top. You must use everything at your disposal to ensure that the message gets through to the top. And you know the message itself is not difficult. Wildlife management is plain common sense. So our message is simple. We just have to keep preaching it in the right places, at the right time, and using every mechanism at our disposal to reach our audience.

There is one other important thing that I have learned in the last few years as a senior bureaucrat and that is to be prepared to compromise. As wildlifers we get caught up in our little world and don't realize that other forces are at play that might dictate the final outcome of many of our plans.

Often one can't see the woods for the trees. A small compromise could mean saving the day where rigidity could mean losing the whole ball game. I have seen that happen

so often. so it is important when dealing with major issues to have a fall position, a position to which you can compromise without prostituting yourself in the bargain. That I am sure none of us would want to do.

Usually there are two sides to all issues and both should be explored. Most issues are not merely black and white, but there is a measure of gray which can usually be identified and if a goal can be reached by staying in the gray area, by all means stay there.

I have stressed how important it is for us to get our message across as to what we are doing and why we are doing it. The other side of the coin, however, is the importance of the wildlife manager understanding what the people want. In a democratic society the majority will dictate our future so we must learn about the likes and dislikes of the people we are trying to educate. We must identify the strengths and build on them. In this age of computers, there is a wealth of information and we must identify where the sources are and tap into them. You know we are fast reaching the stage where it is going to be critical to have essential information on our public because I think people management is going to be the ultimate answer to our dilemma and not merely wildlife management. It is being done now - very shrewdly - by some of our major animal rights groups - they are managing people, using the information that they have - possibly faking it if they have to - to make a point. I don't suggest you fake your data but I think you've got to play that game. It may be the only way we're going to get the public support needed.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have a long way to go but I think the issues are finally receiving the prominence they deserve and we must pursue them with great vigor.

I am sure it's been a long day but there is one parting story I want to tell before I sit down. This is not tied in with the topic at all, but it just a human interest story that happened to me which I want to share with you. It concerns the rationale I used in hiring a

biologist some years ago. I didn't stick with the black or the white or the gray or the scientific method. I just used the old term "gut feeling" and I must say it worked out well. Back in the '60's I was looking for a senior biologist. Wildlife management was not taught at the university here in St. John's, so there were no local graduates around to take a senior post. I had to recruit abroad. In fact, even in Canada, at that time, there were no qualified candidates to be found so I looked to the United States for a suitable individual. While going through the applications there was one that intrigued me. It came from Vietnam. I couldn't believe it when I saw it. It was during the Vietnam war, and I said that any man that had the optimism to write from Vietnam for a job as a biologist in Newfoundland had to be damned good. So I hired him without even an interview. That guy is here today in the audience in the person of Neil Payne. Neil, where are you?

Mr. Payne got through the Vietnam war, bundled up his wife and dog into a volkswagen beetle in California and drove to Newfoundland - I don't know how many days it took him - but he made it. He turned out to be a fine biologist, a gentleman and a good friend and I look forward to sharing a drink with him later on this evening.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much. It has been a pleasure to reminisce for awhile and I hope the work of wildlifers will be recognized for its true value to society and when we reach this goal we can all take a little breather.

Thank you.