Reminiscences:
The Arctic Institute in the 1960s
JOHN C. REED

ABSTRACT. The author was the executive director of the Arctic Institute from 1961 until 1968 and his reminiscences deal with some of the financial problems and practices of the Institute during his term. Clearly, during his time in office, the provision of financial support for the organization was a dominant concern of the board and of the director. The increase in arctic interest and involvement in both Canada and the United States a little before and into the 1960s pushed the Institute toward an emphasis on service-type activities.

The author was convinced of the growing importance of the Arctic to Canada and the United States. He was impressed by the stature of the members of the Board of Governors and others with whom he worked, and obviously he enjoyed directing the organization and felt that it contributed to a real and increasing need.

Key words: Arctic Institute of North America, international cooperation, research funding, arctic research, Arctic Bibliography

And so I accepted the position of executive director of the Arctic Institute when it was offered, and my family and I moved to Montreal. It was a good arrangement — the position was challenging and rewarding. We liked Montreal. We liked Canada and the Canadians, both French-speaking and English-speaking. There was a lot going on in the Arctic, and we soon felt ourselves to be a real part of it.

Here are a few comments on directing the Institute during my term. They center around funding and people. I would wager that it is not very different today.

FUNDING

Raleigh Parkin, in his article already quoted (Parkin, 1966:17), included a few fascinating paragraphs about the erratic funding of the Institute in its first four or five years. They are worth reading again. My paper in the same issue of Arctic summarizes the Institute's financial record up through the 1960s (Reed, 1966:19):

In 1945, the first year of actual operation, the Institute carried on its business on an income of about $10,000. By 1950 the level of activity had risen to approximately $156,000 and, in the next five years, to around $400,000 a year. Since 1958 the yearly revenues have fluctuated between about $1,000,000 and $1,500,000. The total revenues for 1965 were $1,167,000. This gives a fair idea of the level of activity through the years.

That article also noted that during my tour most of the funding was from government sources, through many grants and contracts, mostly for specific purposes. Significant support continued from foundations, industry and individuals. Also special acknowledgement in the fund-raising area was made to Walter A. Wood for his own contributions and for his active and energetic help to the director and the staff in fund-raising efforts.
THE 1960s

During the interval in which I was director of the Institute the problems of obtaining adequate, or even inadequate, funding of the organization were of paramount, at times overwhelming, importance. To operate at all, to even attempt to do its job as understood by the organization, an imposing amount of money was needed.

To some degree the founders seem to have anticipated this. They placed the responsibility for providing funding squarely on the Board of Governors. We are reminded of this by Raleigh Parkin, who quoted from a Proposal for an Arctic Institute of North America: "The provision of adequate finances should be recognized as a direct and continuing responsibility of the Board" (Parkin, 1966:13).

The idea was great, but during my time it was only partially effective. The members of the board were busy men in responsible positions, and there were many claims on their time. They could give only limited attention to Institute affairs. Further, a goodly number held positions that made it embarrassing or impossible for them to attempt to raise funds for an organization other than the one that held their primary responsibility. A few board members took the fund-raising responsibility very seriously, and they were active, generous and effective in their efforts. But the main load fell on the executive director. He had to plan, organize and carry out the fund raising, of course with the help and participation of such governors as were able and inclined to become involved.

In my opinion, during my watch, too much of the director's time had to go to handling fund raising and related problems.

One incident is clearly remembered. A board meeting had been held near the end of a week. At that meeting was discussed the possibility of obtaining some financial support from a certain foundation. Early the following week I called on the head of that foundation, along with a governor who had volunteered to go along and lend support. We were asked to wait in the reception room because the foundation head had a visitor. Within a few minutes the door to the inner room opened and there emerged another governor, the president of a university, who had attended the board meeting the previous week. I will admit to a degree of discouragement with this kind of competition for funds.

COMPETITION FOR FUNDS

Early in the Institute's history, and continuing into my interval, various sources of funds — government, both Canadian and American, and private, such as foundations, individuals, and companies — could be approached without much direct competition. Of course there were always some special difficulties to be faced, such as the high cost of arctic research compared to the cost in more equable regions. Remember that it was the general lack of interest in the Arctic that helped prompt the organization of the Institute in the first place.

As time went on and interest in the Arctic grew, more and more individuals and organizations, such as government groups, universities, and commercial interests, became involved, and there were more and more claims on the sources of support. Of course a major reason for the organization of the Institute was to promote just such interest. In a way it was the success of the Institute's stimulation of arctic interest and involvement that made it harder and harder to raise funds to support the organization.

Further, a good case could be made, and was made repeatedly, that a university could operate many, perhaps most, research projects more effectively and efficiently than could the Institute itself. A common subject of discussion among those with arctic interests was that the Institute was driving itself out of business. I think there was something to that idea. But there was another facet.

There were certain northern projects that could be better carried out by an organization in which a wide range of arctic interests could be brought together, discussed, focused, and made progress. The Institute had that type of structure. Such projects were of the most part service-type activities — a publications program, an information service, a comprehensive arctic bibliography, and advisory functions. Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4 illustrate some such activities. Figure 1 is a picture taken at a general seminar on the Arctic called by the Institute. Figure 2 shows a meeting of the Institute's Arctic Research Laboratory Advisory Board. Figure 3 pictures a meeting of the Institute's Board of Governors where arctic problems were regularly discussed. Figure 4 was taken at a shirt-sleeves meeting called by the Institute to review current arctic and Institute affairs.

Further, a good case could be made, and was made repeatedly, that a university could operate many, perhaps most, research projects more effectively and efficiently than could the Institute itself. A common subject of discussion among those with arctic interests was that the Institute was driving itself out of business. I think there was something to that idea. But there was another facet.

There were certain northern projects that could be better carried out by an organization in which a wide range of arctic interests could be brought together, discussed, focused, and made progress. The Institute had that type of structure. Such projects were for the most part service-type activities — a publications program, an information service, a comprehensive arctic bibliography, and advisory functions. Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4 illustrate some such activities. Figure 1 is a picture taken at a general seminar on the Arctic called by the Institute. Figure 2 shows a meeting of the Institute's Arctic Research Laboratory Advisory Board. Figure 3 pictures a meeting of the Institute's Board of Governors where arctic problems were regularly discussed. Figure 4 was taken at a shirt-sleeves meeting called by the Institute to review current arctic and Institute affairs.

During my term as executive director such projects grew proportionately in the Institute's total package of activities, with some loss to the universities of support for field research projects. The background for such service-type activities was solid and well established, due largely to the foresight and early efforts of A.L. Washburn, the Institute's first full-time director. He it was who presided over the start of the Institute's journal Arctic in 1947, a publication that still continues. He initiated in the same year the launching of the Arctic Bibliography under the editorship of Marie Tremaine. That bibliography is generally recognized as one of the outstanding regional bibliographies. And he started the Arctic Institute Library, which became one of the few great polar libraries of the world. A key step in the beginning of the library was the donation to it of the personal library of Philip Sidney Smith, then Chief Alaskan Geologist of the United States Geological Survey.

FIG. 1. Attending a seminar on the Arctic held at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, on 10 November 1949 under the auspices of the Arctic Institute are, left to right, front row: M.C. Shelesnyak, Director of the Baltimore Office of the Arctic Institute; V. Stefansson, arctic explorer and a founder of the Arctic Institute; Isaiah Bowman, geographer and President of the Johns Hopkins University; Sir Hubert Wilkins, arctic explorer; and John Field, physiologist, Office of Naval Research.
During the 1950s and the 1960s other service activities grew vigorously. These included expanded informational efforts, the holding of symposia on a range of arctic topics supported by various sources, mostly governmental, and inspection trips to various arctic localities in Canada, Greenland, and Alaska. A number of others could be mentioned.

But research itself was also financed, in addition to support activities. In the '60s the Institute was able to support in whole or in part a number of generally small research projects through a grants-in-aid program. Also it carried out for a number of years a larger in-house program on Devon Island in the Canadian Arctic concerned largely with the effects of an island ice cap on the neighboring land and sea environments.

Another in-house project was the Icefield Ranges Research Project, or IRRP, in southwestern Yukon Territory. This was largely a joint undertaking of the American Geographical Society and the Arctic Institute. The key figure in this long-range undertaking was Walter A. Wood. He provided leadership, inspiration, participation, and money to the project for many years. Fiscal support and participation also came from many others — governments, institutions, and individuals. Figures 5 and 6 illustrate a little of the IRRP project.

THE BUGABOO OF OVERHEAD

One aspect of the Institute's financial practices that required a disproportionate amount of time, caused a disproportionate amount of difficulty, and, yes, led to a certain amount of criticism and even friction to the detriment of operations was the matter of overhead. It was a common practice, while I was in the saddle, for non-profit research organizations, including many universities, to finance the organization by assessing project funds, from whatever source, a calculated percentage to pay for general operating costs — salaries of office personnel, light, heat, administrative travel, and the like — and for certain service functions, such as library operation.

The idea is simple, equitable if properly practiced, easily understood, and generally acceptable. But the practice also is full of pitfalls that can trap an administrator when he is not looking. Some universities and some other research organizations have funds available for such general costs. There may be endowments, bequests, and earnings of various kinds that in certain circumstances can be so used, and are.

The Institute, of necessity, used the overhead pattern. I use the
In the fall of 1965 the director of the Institute's Montreal Office (later the executive director), Brigadier H.W. Love, travelled with the executive director and a governor, Richard Nolte, to inspect various research facilities and other places in the Yukon and Alaska. In Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, we were briefed on local problems and activities by David Judd, Commissioner of the Yukon. Nolte is in the foreground, the commissioner is on the right behind and Brigadier Love on the left.

At the Icefield Ranges Research Project (IRRP) near Kluane Lake and west of Whitehorse, not far from the Alaska border, Richard Ragle, of the IRRP, describes some experiments going on in a snow pit high on the Kaskawulsh Glacier at Divide Camp to Richard Nolte, left, and Brigadier Love, center.

Some projects, like the Arctic Bibliography, for example, required much less general support than others, such as a complicated field project, because most of the general support was paid by the project itself. Exceptions to or modification of the overhead assessed to any project could be and were made as seemed appropriate.

If an organization is not properly balanced between its projects and its overhead activities, the overhead can easily get out of hand and become an unacceptably large or small percentage. If it gets too large, the organization is trying to support too many projects or too large projects with too little staff and service capability. Or it is attempting to include items under overhead that should not be included. Theoretically, I suppose, the calculated overhead percentage could become 100 — a figure that funders would not tolerate. If too small, it would seem unnecessary to apply the overhead principle at all.

Some people, I am told, enjoy dealing with the kind of administrative activity just discussed. I do not. On the other hand, the Institute had another facet of administration that was most enjoyable and rewarding. That side, and the pleasure of seeing things happen, made it all worthwhile to me. That side was the people one met and with whom one worked.

First, the staff, both in Montreal and in Washington, comprised people who were great. They were competent, devoted, loyal, hardworking, self-effacing, and generally underpaid.

Second, the individuals who made up the Board of Governors were carefully selected, mostly outstanding men from govern-
ment, business, and academia. Many were men of stature and of impeccable reputation. It was a privilege to work with nearly every one of them. My life has been much richer for knowing them and associating with them, albeit a long time ago.

For the most part the same was true of those constituting the advisory boards, committees and inspection and other groups with which the Institute worked. The Arctic attracts that sort of individual.

The kind of people that I have been describing is evident, I think, from a number of the illustrations included in this reminiscence article. Figures 7 and 8 illustrate one incident in

![Fig. 8. Soon, on the way to visit an experimental tunnel deep in the ice, the group was forced to abandon its bus and struggle almost a few hundred yards into the long ice tunnel, where the party was marooned for three days, until the storm abated.](image1)

![Fig. 9. Dr. Treshnikov, the Director of the Arctic and Antarctic Research Institute of the U.S.S.R., at the confirmation well, Sag River No. 1 of Atlantic Richfield, in the Prudhoe Bay area, Alaska, July 1970. Behind the director in the doorway is Colonel Graham Rowley, a leading Canadian arctic specialist.](image2)

1961 that may be indicative. The Institute was guiding a group reviewing arctic research across North America from Greenland, through Canada, to Alaska under contract with the U.S. Office of Naval Research. Between Camp Tuto, Greenland, and an experimental tunnel in the ice cap a violent blizzard stopped our bus when it was within about a quarter of a mile of the tunnel portal. The party was made up of high-ranking military officers, researchers and administrators from a number of universities, the chief science writer of The New York Times, skilled and experienced arctic specialists, and officials from both the Canadian and American governments. The young lieutenant driving the bus said, "We must abandon the bus and walk to the shelter of the tunnel. I hope you all have strong legs and healthy hearts and lungs, for it will be hard going. Do not let yourself be blown off the road or you will be in real trouble. Good luck." Almost to a man, the group replied, in effect, "If you say so, Lieutenant, you are responsible. Let's go." It was impressive.

We all made it, and we were in the tunnel for three days. Incidentally, I had little difficulty. I was more than 25 years younger then, although I did have to stop and rest, and catch my breath, by squatting beside a pole marking the edge of the ramp and wrapping both legs and arms around the pole.

### In Summary

My experience as executive director of the Arctic Institute was rewarding, it was interesting, it was enjoyable. In retrospect it came out definitely on the plus side. Many things of importance in and to the Arctic Institute of North America went on while I was in office, or occurred shortly before or after that interval. It was a privilege to have the feeling of being a part of some of those events. Off the cuff come to mind such items as Alaska statehood, extensive oil and gas exploration in arctic Canada, the annual Alaska science conferences, the cruise of HMCS Labrador through the Northwest Passage, the discovery of the Prudhoe Bay oil field (see Fig. 9), the passage under the arctic ice of the submarine USS Nautilus, the programs of the Naval Arctic Research Laboratory (see Fig. 10), studies by both the Canadian and American governments on the arctic ice, the work of the Canadian Defence Research Laboratory near Churchill, and the Canadian research programs at Resolute. One could go on and on.

I am grateful to have had the privilege of being the director of the Institute during such a stimulating time. I would like to do it again, if I were 40 years younger.

### References
