NOTES

SECOND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE APPLICATIONS OF MICRO- AND MEIOORGANISMS TO ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS (AMMP ‘2000)

The conference was jointly organised by the Avalon Institute of Applied Science, Winnipeg, Canada; University of Angers, France; and BioDigestor Technologies Inc., USA at Winnipeg, Canada from 27 August to 1 September 2000. The President of the Conference Professor Valentina Yanko-Hombach of the Avalon Institute and Vice-President Dr. Jean-Pierre of Angers University welcomed the participants. Hundred and sixty-seven abstracts were included in the abstract volume. Fifty-six scientists from 19 countries, including two from India presented papers.

In the Plenary Session, four eloquent lectures were delivered. Professor M. S. V. Douglas, University of Toronto, Canada spoke on the Application of Diatoms in Assessing Environmental Conditions; Professor Pamela Hallock, University of South Florida, USA spoke on Foraminifers as Bioindicators in Coral Reef Ecosystems: the FORAM Protocol; Professor V.G. Galtsova, Zoological Institute, Petersburg, Russia highlighted the importance of Meiobenthos as Indicators on Environmental Stress; and Dr. Peter Hambach, BioDigestor, Canada delivered a talk on Micro- and Meiobionts in Waste Management: an Economical Approach to an Ecological Problem. He highlighted what the industries dealing with environmental monitoring were expecting from the scientists working on micro- and meiobionts. Interpretations based on foraminifer, ostracoda, diatoms, bacteria, dinoflagellates and cyanobacteria, like the study of present and past environments, pollution, background assessment, impact, environmental monitoring, industrial applications and taxonomy of foraminifer were discussed in the three technical sessions.

The first session on Microorganisms as Indicators of Recent and Past Environmental Pollution covered case studies on foraminifer, diatoms, and meiobenthos on measuring the anthropogenic stresses. Seventeen papers were presented in the second session on the background assessment, impact, environmental monitoring, and recovery based on the microorganisms. Stress was given to the ‘pore parameters’ of foraminifer family Discorbidae as an indicator of ‘low oxygen environments' of the past and present; foraminifer re-colonisation artificial neural network of diatoms; and macro algae. The third session witnessed presentations on the industrial applications of micro- and meiobionts. Lastly, in the fourth session on the taxonomy of foraminifer, Professor Mikhailovich of Russia delivered a very informative talk and proposed a new classification of foraminifer. In the Poster Session a total of twenty papers were displayed/presented.

The concluding session was chaired by Dr. Irena Montenko, and Dr. S. Hombach Avalon Institute of Applied Sciences, Canada. The studies on foraminifer were reviewed by Dr. J. P. Debenay, France and Professor Valentina-Hombach, Canada; on diatoms by Dr. M. S. V. Douglas, Canada and Dr. F. Selvestre, France; on meiobenthos by Dr. V Galtsova, Russia; and on bacteria by Dr. A. Hohman of Israel and Dr. H. P. Hombach, Canada.

The following suggestions and recommendations were made at the conference:

1. Importance of micro- and meiobionts in studies on anthropogenic stresses should be informed to the public and policy makers.
2. Scientists should approach various problems related to the environment with simple tools.
3. Scientists should access the enduring problems based on the case studies of other areas but with the tools developed on the basis of the ‘local environmental parameters’.

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CORRESPONDENCE

DECLINING INTEREST IN GEOLOGY

The weathering of the geological sciences in India cannot hurt anybody more than Dr. B.P. Radhakrishna of Geological Society of India, whose total devotion to geology is legendary. While the lack of awareness of the earth sciences in the average public is unfortunate, we the earth scientists have none else to blame except ourselves for the degradation. If fieldwork alone does not take us anywhere as Pradeepkumar feels (Jour. Geol. Soc. India, 2000, v.56, p.342), armchair geology will not take us anywhere either. Further, it is not that the revival plans of Jaikiran (Jour. Geol. Soc. India, 2000, v.56, pp.106-107) are new to anybody, but it is the indifference of those who can do something but could not care less. In my perception the causes for the decline and degradation in geology can perhaps be summed up as follows:

1. After glorious work by the British and Indian geologists for a century, which has seen nothing but high quality fieldwork and high fidelity map making, the geological work culture in India has started sliding slowly but steadily.
2. With the introduction of drilling, the exploration geologist involved in supervising drilling and logging, found it more comfortable and glamorous to be attached to exploration, where one may go to the work site once or twice a week or a fortnight, to log the boreholes, thus avoiding strenuous daily fieldwork.
3. Sophistication in the form of introduction of computers, use of satellite imagery, GIS, etc. has created a new breed of white-collar geologists, who consider themselves of to be a privileged class and feel that field work is only for lesser mortals.
4. While the introduction of exploration and drilling marked the first downfall for field geology, the introduction of sophisticated branches, has marked the second downfall.
5. Meanwhile, developments in geology have made it a more complex science where almost every problem needed a multi-disciplinary approach. This 'incursion' of the allied sciences has never been accepted wholeheartedly, but was only tolerated as a necessary evil. This has led to the clash of egos and apprehensions, superceding science and its objectives.
6. In the exploration sector, the ancient Indian civilization has exhausted all shallow resources and easy finds. A stage has now reached where success in mineral exploration is possible only with the collective wisdom of highest standards and commitment, which is nowhere in sight. The outlook of geologists and geophysicists in an integrated exploration programme