

Role of the Bio-Energy Council

Although US federal funding of bio-energy has been declining of late, the actual use of bio-energy has been increasing across the country—so that it now provides almost as much energy as do nuclear sources and not very much less than comes from hydropower.

Biomass is destined to become a major source of energy in the world. Substantial progress is also being made in conversion to important chemicals. Emergence of biomass to a dominant position will depend on such factors as gradual depletion of oil supplies, a possibly catastrophic CO₂ situation, and concern about acidic deposition. The rate of adaptation of this safe, renewable resource will depend on advances in production of biomass and improved methods of conversion. These technologies are central to the activities of the Bio-Energy Council.

The Council was organized in 1977 as a tax-exempt, non-profit, non-lobbying, information centre serving all who are interested in the field of bio-energy. The Council maintains a special library that is open to the public, with Xerox copying facilities available, and has published the *Bio-Energy Directory* four times, each volume containing only new technical information. *Proceedings of Bio-Energy '80*, a World Conference and Exposition which the Council managed, have also been published (see below). The Council has made research grant 'seed money' awards periodically, and provides special advisory services by arrangement. Altogether it offers a unique service that is not available from other publishers, technical societies, trade associations, governments, or the United Nations.

The *Bio-Energy Directory* has kept track of more than 1,850 projects, covering work in more than 60 countries, and provides a network of over 1,100 organizations and 3,500 technical personnel active in the field, complete with mailing addresses and telephone/telex numbers. The 1981 *International Bio-Energy Directory* was distributed by the United Nations to delegations attending the UN Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy,

which was held in Nairobi, Kenya, in August 1981. The Council also maintained an exhibit at the Energy Fair associated with the UN meeting. Bulk purchases of the *Directory* have been made by SERI, USAID, and UNESCO, for further distribution.

The Bio-Energy '80 World Congress and Exposition, held in Atlanta, Georgia, in April 1980, attracted 1,800 attendees (70 countries), 90 exhibits (six countries), and 275 invited speakers. The *Proceedings* have 2,200 pages of speakers' text (photoreduced), including 765 figures and tables and 130 photographs. This document presents the state-of-the-art and reviews new frontiers.

As a sequel to the latter occasion the Council, together with three Swedish organizations, is sponsoring Bio-Energy '84, an International Conference and Exhibition, to be held in Gothenburg, Sweden, during 18–21 June 1984.

A major undertaking of the Council is now under way, namely to publish a *Bio-Energy Directory Handbook*. This will review some of the important competing technologies which foretell a continuation of bio-energy's phenomenal growth. Short, one-page summaries of advancements in bio-energy that were not reported in previous *Directory* volumes will also be included. *Anyone wishing to have such work reported should send the Council a summary of it.*

The Council's role is becoming ever-more important in meeting the growing needs of those who are seeking markets or general orientation in the field of bio-energy. The Bio-Energy Council continues to function as an information centre for bio-energy activities. Support from foundations, corporations, and individuals, has made this possible.

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Inauguration of a 'World Maritime University'

One of the most important recent developments in international shipping took place on 4 July of this year with the official inauguration of a World Maritime University (WMU) at Malmö in Sweden. It will offer the developing countries their best opportunity so far to close the technological gap between themselves and the traditional maritime countries.

The aim of the World Maritime University is to provide top-level training for senior administrators and other officials from Third World nations which is not available in their own countries. Initially, the University will have about 75 students, but ultimately this will increase to a maximum of 150. Most of the students will be on two-year courses leading to the award of a Master of Science degree.

For many developing countries, the creation of a national fleet is a priority—particularly for those with a growing overseas trade. Many of them have turned for help to the International Maritime Organization (IMO)*, a specialized agency of the United Nations system, which is responsible for promoting maritime safety and preventing pollution from ships.

With strong financial support from the United Nations Development Programme, IMO has built up an extensive technical assistance programme which now provides aid to many of the Organization's 125 Member States and is particularly concerned with training. Experience has shown that most accidents at sea are caused by human error, which can often be attributed to poor training.

IMO has helped to create maritime training academies in many countries and has evolved a successful fellowship programme which enables young people from developing countries to obtain training abroad. This assistance programme is closely linked to IMO's primary task, which is the development of international standards in the form of conventions, codes, and recommendations.

Despite the success of this programme, a major problem remains—the shortage of trained, experienced staff at the highest levels of administration and in other key areas. Most developing countries have severe shortages of administrators, surveyors, lecturers for training academies, technical managers in shipping companies, and others on whom the successful implementation of international standards widely depends.