

Quarterdeck

Richard W. Spinrad, Editor

"A billion here, a billion there,
and pretty soon you're talking
about real money."

Those, the famous words of U.S. Senator Everett Dirksen, describing our arcane American Federal budget process. Maybe what we oceanographers need is some "real money."

We're pretty good at justifying our individual chunks and professional interests. Right now, in Washington, there are independent reports identifying separate needs for: 1) ocean bottom seismometers; 2) an updated research fleet; 3) an integrated and sustained ocean observing system; 4) fisheries survey vessels; 5) next generation military survey ships; 6) autonomous ocean sampling networks, etc. At 10s to 100s of millions of dollars apiece, collectively these requests represent "real money". The trouble is that nobody has come forward with the single statement of community need for infrastructure support, so, instead, we stand divided. Decision makers see us as a community that—as one senior political official once described us—"eats its own": we seem to believe that the gains realized for constructing one ship come at the expense of supporting an observing system. Bosh! As long as we perceive it as such, so it will be. Instead, we need to let the public at large know that we have a broad and comprehensive set of plans and priorities for all of our observational capabilities. It would not be hard to knit together the existing, well thought-out strategies for observatories, ships, buoys, etc. and present them as a comprehensive community statement of need. The arguments supporting the benefit to society have also been carefully crafted. What seems to be missing is the will to pull this together.

Our community leaders, internationally, nationally, in government, the private sector, and academia need to feel the pressure to develop this will. An alphabet soup of organizations (IOC, NORLC, TOS, SCOR, CORE, etc.) are positioned to provide support in all forms—from convening meetings, to influencing decision-makers, and sometimes even serving as chief "javelin catchers." The goal is a clear, concise and compelling argument for investing precious resources in oceanographic infrastructure. Then, maybe, we can chase the *real money*.



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