



## Management Science

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:  
<http://pubsonline.informs.org>

### Commentary on the Canadian Issue of Management Science

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To cite this article:

Martin K. Starr, (1973) Commentary on the Canadian Issue of Management Science. Management Science 20(4-part-ii):545-545. <https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.20.4.545>

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## COMMENTARY ON THE CANADIAN ISSUE OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCE

*Management Science in Canada* is an exciting publication. It is the first issue of MANAGEMENT SCIENCE that is specifically dedicated to the activities of practitioners of a particular country or region of the world. As such, it can serve as a model. This model must be adapted to reflect the characteristics of Management Science, as its practice has evolved in other nations, groups of nations, industries, institutions, etc.

How real are national differences in the practice, use, or training for Management Science? The answer to this question is important, for at one time (in the first decade of Management Science) it would have been unanimously agreed that there should be no differences—science being science. Today, if we were to say that there are only superficial differences of names, locations, and so forth, we would hope to kick up quite a storm. These are not superficial differences because they are the differences that affect the participatory role of the management scientist in the decision-making process.

Theory development in Management Science is not independent of application. It cannot, for example, be justified on aesthetic grounds. It is focussed on problems for which no adequate theory yet exists. It is therefore, theory which is responsive to society, system and situation. Application and implementation are clearly interwoven with the cultural fabric. Thus, this issue of MANAGEMENT SCIENCE is not only dedicated to Canadian practice, it is also dedicated to what we can learn about ourselves through comparative studies.

Although Canada is physically very close to the U.S.A., where a major part of the body of Management Science was developed, it reflects its own unique concerns for societal questions, systems for living and specific temporal situations. The papers in this issue speak for themselves. Although Management Science in Canada shares many intersections of method and meaning with Management Science practice all over the world; nevertheless, the reader is able to consistently invoke the image of the Canadian manager and the Canadian management scientist in dialogue.

The field of Management Science has advanced with increasingly smaller steps in recent years. And both practitioners and users alike have been asking with increasing intensity, "Is this field contributing all that it can?"

There are many management scientists who now believe that it is essential to get involved with the behavioral as well as the logical aspects of the decision process. Gross views of systems can hide the small keys that are required to analyze and understand what it means to get involved *successfully*. Comparative studies offer the possibility of examining the shades and flavors of the way that management and Management Science interact, in different countries, different industries and different institutions. Ultimately, we may be able to discern the catalysts that are needed to obtain beneficial symbiosis, under a variety of situations, so that greater rationality can be applied to knottier problems.

Perhaps we can improve the model that this issue represents. As the first of its kind, the editors (Peterson, Conrath and Janssen) deserve special commendation. They have also opened a new communication channel between Canada and the rest of the world of management scientists. Other such channels will be opened in the future. TIMS is an international society and MANAGEMENT SCIENCE intends to demonstrate that it is in fact what it purports to be.

*Martin K. Starr*

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